

Climate Change Theatre Action LA: At the Intersection

Saturday, November 9, 2019, at 2 p.m.
Natural History Museum of
Los Angeles County

Theme guide written by Grafton Doyle,
Zharía O’Neal, and Katrina Richard



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Climate Change Theatre Action is a worldwide series of readings and performances of short climate change plays presented biennially to coincide with UN conferences on climate change. CCTA 2019 is taking place September 15 through December 20, 2019, all around the world.
- “CCTA LA: At the Intersection” features short plays, monologues, music, puppetry, and spoken word exploring the effects of climate change on L.A. communities.

PROGRAM

- Beneath the Surface** by Jennie Webb
Birdy, a proud pumpjack, has been hard at work in the Inglewood Oil Field for almost 100 years, polluting people’s backyards. Perhaps it’s time for a change.
BIRDY – Gbeke Fawehinmi
- Home** by Zury Ruiz
A haunting story of what happens when nature and economics betray us and there is no room left for anyone except the very wealthy.
VENTURA – Hong Lei; LOS ANGELES – Jonathan C. K. Williams
- Ms. Rambo and the Lawn** by Velina Hasu Houston
A comedic look at neighbors plotting how to get their revenge on a neighbor whose grass is just too green.
KIMI – Aliyah Muhammad; MARGIE – Emma Elliott
- Jade Her Skirt** by Tira Palmquist
A fisherman catches more than he bargained for in the Los Angeles River as he finds a mysterious protector in the polluted waters.
MANNY – Jonathan C. K. Williams; CHACHI – Lisa McNeely
- Jump Out of Sight** by Mary Kamitaki
A piece set against the innocence of the “Teddy Bear Teddy Bear” jump-rope rhyme, as kids try to jump rope, but the air is so bad that one of them can’t breathe.
ONE – Emma Elliott; TWO – Jonathan C. K. Williams; THREE – Hong Lei
- Extinct-LA** by Jennifer Maisel
A pregnant woman who is part of the Birthstrike movement (which pledges not to bring a child into a world that is suffering from humanity’s huge carbon footprint) has to learn to hope.
ADDIE – Lisa McNeely; KYRA – Aliyah Muhammad; WALLACE – Hong Lei
- Tree** by Carlyn Flint
A tree knows how to save Los Angeles . . . if only the humans would listen.
TREE – Jonathan C. K. Williams
- A Hole in the Sky** by Paula Cizmar with music by Guang Yang
A mini eco-opera in which a child tells her mother about the eco-crisis she learned about at her school under a freeway.
SERENA – Emma Elliott; MAMA – Gbeke Fawehinmi;
ENSEMBLE – ALL
- Return of Las Maris** by Diana Burbano
A dystopian futuristic piece set in The United Monolith, where the border is a force field and it hasn’t rained in twenty years.
LULU – Aliyah Muhammad; TOÑA – Lisa McNeely; BUTTERFLY – Emma Elliott
- Lemonade** by Amanda Black
A child is ill . . . but no one knows why. Until a puppet doctor performs “surgery” showing that she carries the weight of the dirty world inside her.
MA – Aliyah Muhammad; BABY GIRL – Hong Lei; DOCTOR – Gbeke Fawehinmi; NURSE – Lisa McNeely
- Roomies** by Julie Taiwo Oni
An exploration of the consequences of income and wildfires, as college students with money make plans to evacuate and stay in a hotel while their low-income roommate is stuck on campus.
JUNE – Gbeke Fawehinmi; PATSY – Emma Elliott
- Dally Changes the World** by EM Lewis
A spoken-word piece in which Dally challenges her friends and neighbors to help her clean up their street, one step at a time.
ENSEMBLE – ALL

THE CAST



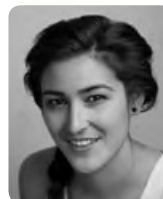
Emma Elliott



Gbeke Fawehinmi



Hong Lei



Lisa McNeely



Aliyah Muhammad



Jonathan C. K.
Williams

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Amanda Black's plays often explore the humor and violence that exists within the black woman's identity in America, while playing with the myth and magic of her southern roots. Amanda is pursuing a MFA in Dramatic Writing at USC.

Diana Burbano, a Colombian immigrant, is a playwright, an Equity actor, and a teaching artist at South Coast Repertory and Breath of Fire Latina Theatre Ensemble. She was in Center Theatre Group's 2018-19 Writers Workshop cohort and is under commission by Alter Theatre in San Rafael.

Paula Cizmar (paulacizmar.net) is a playwright and librettist whose work uses poetry and comedy to explore the issues of the day. Honors include an NEA grant; a residency at the Rockefeller Study Center in Bellagio, Italy; and a TCG/Mellon Foundation On the Road grant. Cizmar is an associate professor of theatre practice at USC's School of Dramatic Arts and a member of the Playwrights Lab at Antaeus Theatre.

Carlyn Flint is a playwright, poet, and visual artist pursuing an MFA in Dramatic Writing at USC. She graduated from Vassar College, where she won the Marilyn Swartz Seven Playwriting Award for her plays about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Velina Hasu Houston (velinahasuhouston.com) is an internationally celebrated writer. Current projects are with Los Angeles Opera, Playwrights' Arena/Center Theatre Group, San Diego Repertory Theatre and Amigos Del Rep, and National Public Radio. She founded graduate playwriting studies at USC and is Distinguished Professor of Dramatic Writing, Director of MFA Dramatic Writing, Head of Undergraduate Playwriting, and Resident Playwright.

Mary Kamitaki is from the Big Island of Hawaii. Her work explores the ways women build and perform identities in intimate relationships. Her play *Southernmost* recently received its world-premiere production through Playwrights Arena. Mary holds an MFA in Dramatic Writing from the USC School of Dramatic Arts.

EM Lewis is an award-winning playwright, teacher, and opera librettist. The World Premiere of *How the Light Gets In* is currently playing at Boston Court Pasadena. Lewis is working on an opera commission for American Lyric Theater and a big new political play called *The Great Divide*.

Jennifer Maisel's *Out of Orbit* was awarded an Ensemble Studio Theatre/Alfred P. Sloan rewrite commission, made the 2016 Kilroys List, and won the Stanley Award and the Woodward Newman Award for Drama. Jennifer was one of five writers invited into the prestigious Humanitas 2018 PlayLA workshop. The world premiere of her play *Eight Nights* is currently at Antaeus Theatre.

Julie Taiwo Oni (julietaiwooni.com) is a Nigerian-American playwright and English professor whose plays are inspired by areas of focus in her courses, from American pop culture to African diaspora to mixed-race identity. Oni is Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Pepperdine, a Robey Playwrights lab member, and a member of the inaugural Semele Scribes workshop. Her current research and writing focus on global Black albinism. She holds an MFA from the USC School of Dramatic Arts.

Giovanni Ortega (director) is a performer, author, director, and educator. He has devised and directed works for the stage in Singapore, Colombia, and the United States, where he was one of the associate directors of the site-specific *Hotel Play*, produced by Playwrights Arena for the 25th anniversary of the civil unrest after the Rodney King verdict. He is an assistant professor of theatre and dance at Pomona College.

Tira Palmquist is known for plays that merge the personal, the political, and the poetic. Her play *The Way North* was a finalist for the O'Neill and an Honorable Mention for the 2019 Kilroys List. Her plays *The Worth of Water* and *Safe Harbor* will premiere in 2019.

Zury Ruiz is from Inglewood. She received her MFA in Dramatic Writing from USC and is a former member of the Latino Theatre Alliance/LA's Writers Circle and Ensemble Studio Theater/LA's New West Playwrights. She is a member of Semele Scribes.

Jennie Webb (jenniewebbsite.com) is a playwright and dramaturg at Theatricum Botanicum (where she runs the new play development program, Seedlings), with works produced by Rogue Machine Theatre, Inkwell Theater, Santa Monica Rep, EST/LA, Virginia Avenue Project, Theatre of NOTE, and La Jolla Playhouse's Without Walls Festival, among others. She is the recipient of Max K. Lerner Playwriting Fellowships and a Women in Theatre Red Carpet Award, and a co-founder of LA Female Playwrights Initiative (LAFPI).

Guang Yang's music has been performed in China, Korea, Germany, France, and the United States. Her opera, *The Night Flight of Monerva's Owl*, written with librettist Paula Cizmar, won the Pittsburgh Festival Opera Music That Matters competition and will receive its premiere in July 2020. A native of China, Yang is the recipient of an International Artist Fellowship at USC, where she is pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition.



Amanda Black



Diana Burbano



Paula Cizmar



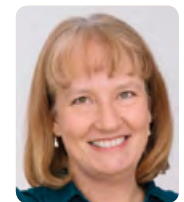
Carlyn Flint



Velina Hasu Houston



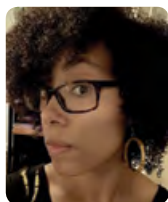
Mary Kamitaki



EM Lewis



Jennifer Maisel



Julie Taiwo Oni



Giovanni Ortega



Tira Palmquist



Zury Ruiz



Jennie Webb



Guang Yang

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Stage Manager: **Simon Chau**
Stage Manager: **Alex Rehberger**
Sound Design: **Howard Ho**

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM STAFF

Ilana Gustafson, Manager, Performing Arts (Co-producer)
Laurel Robinson, Director of Programs (Co-producer)
Brian Meredith, Supervisor, Performing Arts (Stage Manager)
Betsy Zajko, Technical Coordinator (Stage Manager)
John Conant, Theatrical Technician (Sound Designer)
Josephine Wang, Theatrical Technician (Lighting Designer)
Jonathan Williams, Puppeteer (Performer)
Lisa McNeely, Puppeteer (Performer)

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

A movement that promotes the equitable and fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Low-income communities and communities of color often suffer a bigger share of negative environmental impacts. Advocates of environmental justice use education, public policy, and law to solve this imbalance.

ISSUES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN URBAN LANDSCAPES

The biggest environmental challenges facing those of us who live in Los Angeles are air quality, incompatible land use, oil drilling and fracking, and cyclical water shortages.

- ◉ **Air quality:** Living in an area with bad air quality, or a polluted area, can lead to respiratory issues, chronic illness, and shorter lifespans. While the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that air quality changes constantly, the L.A. metropolitan area is consistently ranked among the most polluted in the nation. Contributing factors include the warm climate, population density, the surrounding mountain ranges, and cars, trains, and factories.
- ◉ **Incompatible land use:** Incompatible land use refers to an instance in which two areas of land and their conflicting uses result in negative environmental effects. For example, placing an elementary school next to a polluting factory would be incompatible land use. Residents of South L.A.—sandwiched between three freeways, incinerators, industrial facilities, and landfills—are constantly affected by incompatible land use, which has lasting negative impacts on health. Heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer are unusually prevalent causes of death in South L.A. Across the United States, the communities affected by incompatible land use are disproportionately low-income communities of color. The phenomenon in which people of color are subjected to disproportionate effects of climate change due to racialized policies is known as environmental racism.
- ◉ **Oil drilling and fracking:** Fracking is the process of drilling down into the earth using a mixture of high-pressure water, sand, and chemicals to release gas for commercial use. Environmental concerns include the excessive use of water and possible chemical contamination of any groundwater surrounding the chosen fracking area.

- ◉ **Cyclical water shortages:** Water shortages don't just mean shorter showers—they frequently lead to the failure of crops, which affects food supply and the agricultural economy of a region. After a series of droughts over the last few decades, in March 2019 California was declared drought-free. But that is not a permanent condition. Shifting weather patterns and hotter temperatures can easily bring back dry conditions. Just seven months after the drought-free announcement, 1 percent of California, or 384,000 people, were suffering from water shortage.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

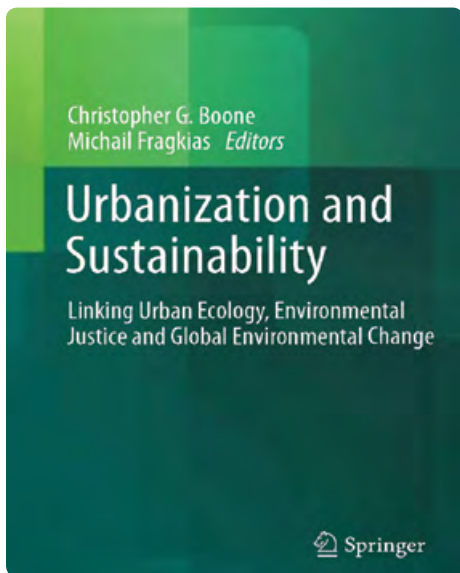
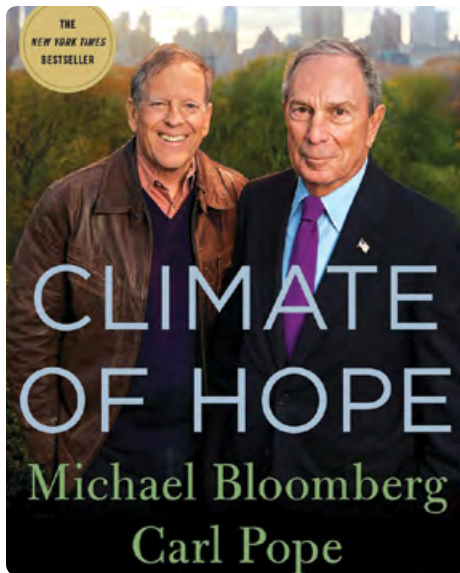
- ◉ How does socioeconomic class affect how climate change is experienced by different groups of people?
- ◉ How do the plays propose to combat urban climate change issues?
- ◉ Several of the plays incorporate children into the narrative. Why is it important to include children and youth in the conversation about urban climate change issues?
- ◉ How does the use of Native stories and/or characters affect the overall message of the plays in which it is used?
- ◉ How is the relationship between humans and nature illuminated in the plays?
- ◉ How are climate change issues affected by politics and vice versa?
- ◉ Why does a dystopian future seem realistic in a society ravaged by climate change issues?
- ◉ How can you help prevent the effects of climate change in your everyday life?

IF YOU WANT TO TAKE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT

- ◉ Climate Change Theatre Action
climatechangetheatreaction.com/about
- ◉ Amigos de Los Rios
amigosdelosrios.org
- ◉ Antelope Valley Conservancy
avconservancy.org
- ◉ Endangered Habitats League
ehleague.org
- ◉ CA Native Plant Society
(Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter)
lasmcnpns.org
- ◉ Climate Cents
climatecents.org
- ◉ Communities for a Better Environment
cbecal.org
- ◉ Heal the Bay
healthebay.org
- ◉ The Climate Registry
theclimateregistry.org
- ◉ Friends of the L.A. River
folar.org
- ◉ Homeboy Industries
homeboyindustries.org

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DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

CHRISTY KANE of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about today's event. With the exception of the one item below with a call number, these are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND DISSERTATIONS

- Bloomberg, Michael, and Carl Pope. *Climate of Hope: How Cities, Businesses, and Citizens Can Save the Planet*. St. Martins Press, 2018.
 Leavey Library: QC903 .B56524 2017
- Boone, Christopher G., and Michail Fragkias. *Urbanization and Sustainability Linking Urban Ecology, Environmental Justice and Global Environmental Change*. Netherlands: Springer, 2013.
- Kim, Esther Grace. "Restoring a River to Reclaim a City? The Politics of Urban Sustainability and Environmental Justice in the Los Angeles River Watershed." PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2017.

RECOMMENDED DATABASES

- Environmental Issues Online
 This database uses text, archival primary sources and video to address major past and present environmental issues in comparative, historical, global and interdisciplinary ways.
- GREENR (Global Reference on the Environment, Energy, and Natural Resources)
 This database focuses on the physical, social, and economic aspects of environmental issues.

JOURNALS

- *Climatic Change*
- *Climate and Development*

ARTICLES

- Boer, J, Manuel Pastor, James Sadd, and Lori Snyder. "Is There Environmental Racism? The Demographics of Hazardous Waste in Los Angeles County." *Social Science Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (December 1997): 793-810.
- Bonacich, Edna, and Jake Alimahomed-Wilson. "Confronting Racism, Capitalism, and Ecological Degradation: Urban Farming and the Struggle for Social Justice in Black Los Angeles." *Souls* 13, no. 2 (April 2011): 213-226.
- Hegger, Dries L.T., et al. "The Roles of Residents in Climate Adaptation: A Systematic Review in the Case of the Netherlands." *Environmental Policy and Governance* 27, no. 4 (2017): 336-350.
- Koski, Chris, and Alma Siulagi. "Environmental Harm or Natural Hazard? Problem Identification and Adaptation in U.S. Municipal Climate Action Plans." *Review of Policy Research* 33, no. 3, (2016): 270-290.
- Macey, Gregg P., Xee Her, Ellen Thomas Reibling, and Jonathon Ericson. "An Investigation of Environmental Racism Claims: Testing Environmental Management Approaches with a Geographic Information System." *Environmental Management* 27, no. 6 (June 2001): 893-907.
- Pulido, Laura. "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, no. 1 (March 2000): 12-40.
- Stevenson, Fionn, et al. "Resilience, Redundancy and Low-Carbon Living: Co-Producing Individual and Community Learning." *Building Research & Information* 44, no. 7 (August 2016): 789-803.