

# Voices of the Caribbean: Stories That Help Us Prepare for the Future

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### Abstract

The professional and personal experiences of natural resource managers in the Caribbean , during and following extreme weather events, often go unexamined. When captured through oral histories, these narratives become valuable tools, documenting perishable information. Oral testimonies preserve knowledge of weather, plants, animals, ecosystems, and natural and cultural resources that are conveyed through storytelling.



Farmers in Puerto Rico, May 2018  
Photo by Aranzazu Lascurain

### Objectives

- 🎙️ Capture and share the unique experiences of individual resource managers and their communities
- 🎙️ Reveal gaps in resources, witnessed firsthand
- 🎙️ Examine how past oral traditions inform the present
- 🎙️ Describe first person observations of plants, animals and people before, during, and after events
- 🎙️ Consider what communities lose when perishable testimonies are not collected and shared



Photo by Emily Fort

### Methods

In May 2018, the project team conducted oral history interviews with nine resource managers working in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Interviews focused on Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, the extended drought of 2015, and ancestor weather stories.



*“One of the things that we know about the way that we absorb information is that there is no better way to absorb information than storytelling.” – Aranzazu Lascurain on the impact of oral tradition*

Aranzazu Lascurain interviews Felix Aponte Gonzalez and other narrators in Spanish



James Currie documents with images



Soledad Gaztambide being interviewed by Melody Hunter-Pillion



- 📷 Identify narrators attending U.S. Caribbean Drought Workshop
- 📷 Follow oral history protocols established by the Oral History Association (OHA)
- 📷 Conduct interviews in English and Spanish
- 📷 Capture experiences in audio and video formats
- 📷 Gather images of nature, people, and animals
- 📷 Provide transcripts, audio files, and video files to researchers and community members
- 📷 Develop web page/portal to Digital Library of the Caribbean repository - dLOC.com

### Results / Conclusions

Each resource manager shared stories unique to their lived experiences. They connected experiences to past information handed down through the years from family, friends, and community. Hurricanes, drought, and climate change are shaping oral narratives. Climate stories inform us about the past, but also provide lessons to develop resilience for the future.



Vanessa Forbes

Photos by Cari Furiness



Marianela Torres Rodriguez

*“When I go out to teach the farmers, or to teach the students in the schools, or to teach the homeowners, I always try to teach them to remember that drought... has always been a part of us, but we seemed to [have] forgotten it... we need to remember it. It's now, first and foremost, in my mind to keep teaching them ways to, again, conserve water.” - Vanessa Forbes speaks about drought*



Kristin Wilson Grimes

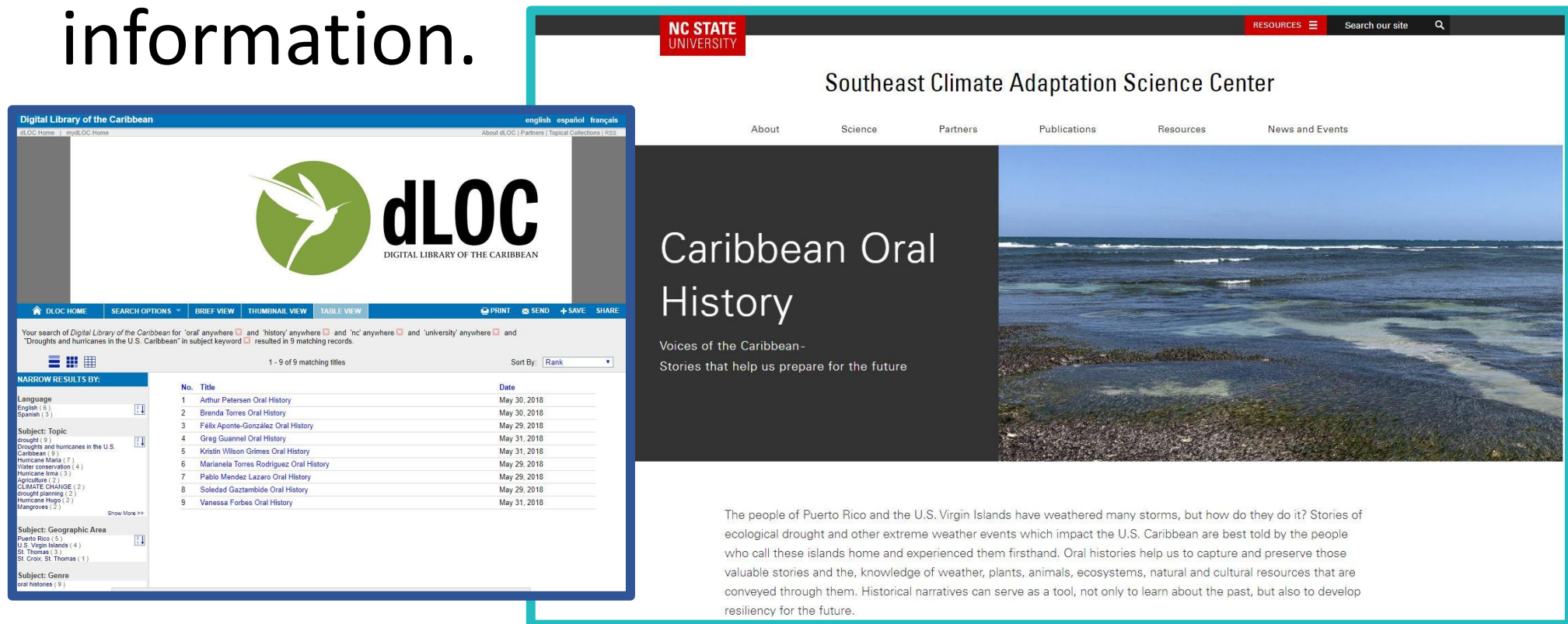


Arthur Petersen

*“When I got in town I was ... amazed to see trees that I grew up with us as a child, and my parents told me that they were there when they were children, and those things had all gone.” – Arthur Petersen describes Hurricane Maria's destruction*



Use the QR Code to visit the web site and hear these oral histories. Or contact [mhunter@ncsu.edu](mailto:mhunter@ncsu.edu) for more information.



#### The Project Team:

James Currie, Cari Furiness, Melody Hunter-Pillion, Aranzazu Lascurain, Kate Malpeli, and George Murdison

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