

Resisting Ricky



Caption

After Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico's governor Ricardo Roselló became the brunt of harsh criticism -- partly because his government ignored and denied a health crisis on the island. The government stated that only 64 people initially died in consequence of Hurricane Maria, for example. Researchers and journalists have reported a mortality rate beyond 4,000. Furthermore, the Puerto Rican government praised the Federal and Executive branch of the U.S government for their response to the hurricane, overlooking the fact that they were responsible for stopping food and relief supplies at Puerto Rican ports desperately needed by storm victims. With the image here -- a poster plastered on walls around Puerto Rico (circa. 2018-2019) -- artist Anti-llano pushes back, turning Rico into a comic figure at best. Governor Ricardo Roselló is shown dressed up as Puerto Rican trap artist Bad Bunny. The text plays with words, writing "Bad Gobby" instead of Bad Bunny.

Design Statement

This image conveys how the people I work with and study ethnographically in Puerto Rico are using art and humor to wage political critique, bringing to the surface the public outcry that Ricardo Roselló has been bad for Puerto Rico. This image thus shows how a storm disaster coupled with political disaster, is provoking creative response by local artists.

Project Statement

On September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria struck the island of Puerto Rico. The consequences were disastrous: no water, no electricity and no communication within the island or with the outside world. Although almost two years later, precarious conditions continue. The hurricane triggered a massive relief response from governments, NGOs and individuals. In many ways, however, the disaster response was a second disaster -- exposing the continuing effects of colonial relations with the United States, Wall Street interests, and a historically top-down mode of island governance. This photo essay explores this second disaster, highlighting how disaster response can itself become toxic, both literally and figuratively.



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Perez-Figueroa, Omar. 2019. "Resisting Ricky"

In "Trapped in the Toxic lens of Hurricane María." In Visualizing Toxic Subjects, curated by James Adams and Kim Fortun. The Center for Ethnography. May.

<https://tinyurl.com/yy55ag8s>

