

USC Arts and Climate Collective – Spring 2021 Awardees



Cam Audras is an L.A. native who studies Viola Performance and Environmental Studies at USC. As an undergraduate researcher studying attitudes towards solar energy in the desert, he became fascinated with the role that storytelling plays in engaging communities with environmentalism. He's performed in acclaimed venues across the United States, Europe, and Australia and hopes to combine his passion for environmental advocacy with his love for music to encourage tangible progress towards environmental sustainability and justice.

Project Description: The Resilience Project unites USC composers, musicians, dancers, and storytellers to demystify and engage audiences not only with the scope of sustainability challenges but also tangible solutions. In pondering critical facets of sustainability, the project breaks down the overwhelming climate crisis in a digestible and engaging way through spoken word poetry that informs choreographic interpretations, accompanied by a world premiere from composer Quenton Blache, performed by Cam Audras and Elise Haukenes. Audiences will be encouraged to craft their own climate action pledges to take tangible steps towards climate resilience, with the potential to engage students across USC and beyond.



Jordy Coutin is currently a second year Master of Public Policy student at USC and will begin a PhD in Public Policy and Management at USC in the fall of 2021. His substantive focus is on local government responses to homelessness, immigration, and health. At USC he founded The Price of Policy, a student-produced public policy podcast focusing on the hidden and explicit consequences of public policy decisions in LA. Prior to joining USC, he worked as a Housing Coordinator with Brilliant Corners, allocating housing subsidies and providing property related tenant services to formerly homeless clients to improve housing stability.

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Project Description: Jordy’s two-part podcast will explore the relationship between climate change, air pollution and homelessness in Los Angeles. Unhoused residents face the direct impacts of climate change—extreme heat, extreme weather events, and inhospitable air quality from wildfires—in addition to the direct impacts of urban air pollution. The podcast will explore this intersection by interweaving the perspectives of individuals with lived experiences of homelessness who are adapting to and enduring environmental degradation, the efforts of organizations that support unhoused residents, and the views of climate and air pollution experts.



Arabella Delgado is a first-year Ph.D. student in American Studies and Ethnicity at USC. She received her B.A. in Anthropology and American Culture from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Arabella’s research interests revolve around the representation of ethnic Mexicans in preservation projects along the U.S.-Mexico border and how this impacts public history.



Cassandra Flores-Montañó is a third year Ph.D. student in the American Studies and Ethnicity department at USC. She attended Wellesley College in Boston, MA where she received a B.A. in Women's and Gender Studies. Her research interests include women, gender, sexuality, social movements, and public history. Cassandra’s dissertation research is broadly invested in questions of identity formation, community activism, and the circulation of cultural aesthetics and political ideology.

Project Description: Arabella and Cassandra’s project is a historical and contemporary study of environmental racism and the climate crisis in Boyle Heights, focusing on how environmental change in Los Angeles affects the daily lives of Boyle Heights residents. Partnering with Las Fotos Project and the Boyle Heights Museum, the pair will combine archival research and youth photography submissions to explore the historical roots of the neighborhood’s environmental activism alongside its current day manifestations.

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Sue Dexter is currently a Ph.D. candidate at USC's Sol Price School of Public Policy, studying goods movement, urban spatial structure, and technologies to reduce carbon emissions. This interest stems from her concern for the environment, numerous years working in logistics, and living near the USA's largest port complex. Her dissertation investigates life-cycle impacts of alternative fuel heavy-duty cargo vehicles on greenhouse gas reductions, as well as impacts to firm operations. She holds a

master's degree from the London School of Economics in Operations Research and serves on the Advisory Board for Cabrillo High School's Academy of Global Logistics (AGL) program.

Project Description: The USC Solar Car Team is currently building a solar race-car to compete in the Formula Sun Grand Prix this summer. Sue's short film will document the last stages of the building and testing of this vehicle to showcase the talents of these USC students and their engineering skills, as well as their unbridled passion for sustainability. The Futures in Transportation (FIT) program, which encourages under-represented high school students to pursue transportation STEM-related fields, will include the film in its Clean Fuels segment. The film features directed interviews with team members as well as technology explanations geared towards inspiring high school students.



Irene Franco Rubio is an activist, writer, and organizer based in Phoenix, Arizona. She is studying Sociology at USC and minoring in Race, Ethnicity and Politics. Irene is an Agent of Change within the Dornsife Civil Rights Advocacy Clinic and a Norman Topping First-Gen Scholar. A young Latinx woman of Guatemalan and Mexican descent, Irene is rooted in community and devoted to movements for social, racial, and environmental justice. She is committed to advocating for BIPOC communities through

intersectional movement building and uplifting historically underrepresented voices. Irene is a

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Gen Z media professional centering her work at the intersection of activism, media, and journalism as a catalyst for change.

Project Description: “If You’re Feelin’ Civic” (IYFC) is a BIPOC community-led podcast and digital movement based in Phoenix, Arizona that centers environmental, social, and racial justice in its content. Through critical community conversations it gives space to BIPOC individuals and communities to uplift their voices and share their perspectives on fighting systemic racism, inequality, and various forms of injustice while educating BIPOC communities on the increasing importance of civic engagement, community advocacy, and activism. Far more than a podcast, IYFC is a movement that seeks to engage and mobilize communities of color to become civically engaged, to make “civic” a feeling that inspires action and ultimately creates long-term sustainable change for historically oppressed communities.



William Higbie is a producer and documentary filmmaker studying in the USC School of Cinematic Arts. Growing up in a leafy suburb just two miles beyond the Detroit border, he quickly saw the economic and racial inequities that exist within America. This put him on a mission to understand how these differences came into existence in Detroit and explore what his own privilege meant. William spent four years crafting the short documentary *Painting the Town: the Street Art of Detroit* which won best documentary at the All American High School Film Festival and gained acceptances into DOC NYC, Mill Valley Film Festival, and the Traverse City Film Festival. His passions for politics, the climate crisis, and criminal justice reform are at the root of many of his new projects.

Project Description: The act of divesting from fossil fuel is bold. For decades, activists have called on schools, unions, and local governments to actively remove their investments in dirty energy and reinvest in clean energy. This used to be a political act. But now it also makes financial sense. William’s short documentary tells the story of DivestSC, a group of students and faculty at USC who’ve spent the past year and a half encouraging USC to divest from fossil fuels. This documentary opens a window into the hurdles DivestSC and its members had to overcome to achieve their goals.

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Imani Johnson is a sophomore studying Business Administration and minoring in Environmental Studies. She has always been fascinated by the intersection of business and the environment and seeks ways to redesign the production and consumption of goods via sustainable models. On campus, she is involved in Marshall Outreach Volunteer Entrepreneurs, a mental health podcast called Honesty Hour, and recently founded the podcast Eco Alarm. In her free time she enjoys baking, photography, and upcycling old clothes from her closet.

Project Description: Eco Alarm is a student-run podcast whose mission is to share the stories of environmental change-makers and their success in the USC and greater Los Angeles community. Eco Alarm was created to combat a sense of hopelessness with regards to climate crisis by connecting those who want to make a difference to the companies and organizations that are already taking action. Launching in fall 2021, Eco Alarm will provide its audience with weekly podcast episodes on a diverse range of environmental topics.



Jelina Liu hails from Berkeley, California, and is deeply involved in the climate movement, particularly in student-led efforts to secure colleges' divestment from fossil fuel. She is always looking for ways to combine her passion in grassroots organizing with her love for documentary film and at USC she studies Journalism and NGOs and Social Change with a minor in Documentary. Jelina will be spending her summer in Minnesota at the frontlines of the fight to stop the Line 3 Pipeline.

Project Description: Three pipelines, three different communities, one fight. Jelina's short documentary film will follow community members of the indigenous community in Minnesota as they battle the Line 3 pipeline, the Black community in South Memphis, Tennessee as they battle the Byhalia pipeline, and the white Appalachian community in the mountains of West

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Virginia as they battle the Mountain Valley Pipeline. All three of these contrasting communities are on a deadline as their respective oil companies plan to complete construction within the next year. The film follows their activism while also showing how these communities have all built solidarity and are united by their hope for a clean future.



Jaime Lopez is a third year Ph.D. candidate studying Urban Planning and Development at USC's Sol Price School of Public Policy. He has undergraduate degrees in film production and history from UCLA, a Master's degree in City Planning from UC Berkeley, and was recently a Planning Commissioner in the City of Paramount. His doctorate studies focus on environmental planning/justice, participatory planning, and the use of narratives and storytelling in policy making and public participation. Over the past year he has directed two short documentaries in Southeast LA, showcasing local civic engagement and environmental justice concerns.

Project Description: Jaime's current documentary follows two individuals: one in Paramount, CA and the other in Commerce, CA. The story focuses on their involvement with environmental injustices in their respective communities and how their awareness factored into their motivations to run for local office. The documentary captures these individuals executing their local political campaigns, interacting with community members, friends and family, and sharing their personal stories.



Natasha Nutkiewicz is an Argentinian multi-hyphenate artist and entrepreneur studying Theatre and Cinematic Arts at USC. After her experience immigrating and growing up in Miami, she is determined to promote empathy, equity and justice through her various art forms and productions. She is excited to create films that move the world forward with the USC Arts and Climate Collective.

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Project Description: Natasha’s short film “Our Garden” explores the trauma and hardships that cause eco-paralysis in young activists through the eyes of a couple, Melody and Teo. Their personalities and socio-economic differences lead them to deal with the same crisis in different ways, introducing conflict into their relationship. The film seeks to show the paramount importance of compassion and unity in the service of saving the places and people that we love.



Catelin Shane is an alumna of the High School for the Performing & Visual Arts and Howard University, where she began filmmaking for social justice. In 2016, she served as a community development site coordinator for Alternative Spring Break following Hurricane Harvey, which was awarded President Barack Obama’s highest medal in community service, the Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. As an MFA candidate of the Film & Television Production Division at USC, she dedicates her time to directing and storyboarding films that reflect the beauty in (re)membering who

Black people have always been to one another: with reverence to cultural meaning-making and a curiosity for unexploited freedom.

Project Description: At the onset of the pandemic, Catelin had to return to Houston, TX to continue her studies virtually. While there she stumbled upon a documentary subject whom she felt embodied a sincere investment in the nutritional and environmental health of one of the most systematically forsaken communities in the Southwest. Ivy is an overworked and overwhelmed infection control preventionist who quits her job to promote health and wellness in one of Houston’s most food insecure areas, starting with what she has on hand - her family’s uncultivated farmland. An escalating food swamp, one unprecedented winter, and a grant from Beyoncé later, “Ivy” unearths the storied history of her family and the land as her first spring harvest depends on it.

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Gwenan Walker combines her passions for both the visual arts and marine sciences to produce compelling art that explores climate change particularly as it affects our planet's oceans. As a sophomore at USC, her artistic interests currently lie within painting and 2D animation, although she plans to use her current project to further expand her creative horizons.

Project Description: Gwenan's *The Voyager* is an animated short film set one hundred years into the future, revolving around climate change and its increasingly troubling effects on marine ecosystems, from melting glaciers and rising sea levels to ocean acidification and the effects of rising greenhouse gases. All of this is experienced through Arwilda, a 10-year-old girl living on one of the fringe settlements within a flooded zone, as she navigates daily life caring for her ill mother on the island while trying to learn more about the ocean and where its many mystical creatures went. Through Arwilda, the film will be a message of hope that one person's dreams and passions can create a domino effect of change.