



THE CLIMATE COMEDY COHORT PRESENTS:

THE MOST URGENT TOWN HALL THAT HAS EVER HAPPENED



*Audience
Impact
Report*

2024

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TL;DR:

THE **BIG** STORY

Comedy attracts audiences that want to laugh and play—

AND IT'S EVEN TRUE WHEN IT COMES TO A TOPIC AS DAUNTING AND COMPLICATED AS THE CLIMATE CRISIS. THROUGH A SCIENCE-INFORMED PROCESS OF PRODUCING A LIVE COMEDY SHOW IN COLLABORATION WITH CLIMATE EXPERTS, AND THEN RESEARCHING THE IMPACT ON THE AUDIENCE, WE FOUND THAT:



COMEDY TAUGHT PEOPLE **NEW INFORMATION** ABOUT CLIMATE AND CLEAN ENERGY TECHNOLOGY.

COMEDY ALSO INSPIRED AUDIENCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT **CLEAN ENERGY TECH.**

The more you know!



CLEAN ENERGY TECH FACTS AND SCIENCE DID NOT DETRACT FROM THE AUDIENCE'S ENJOYMENT OF THE COMEDY—**THEY THOUGHT THE SHOW WAS REALLY FUNNY AND INFORMATIVE.**

THE SHOW MOTIVATED THE AUDIENCE TO WANT TO **DISCUSS CLIMATE TOPICS WITH OTHER PEOPLE.**



AFTER THE SHOW, THE MAJORITY OF THE AUDIENCE BELIEVED THEY COULD TAKE **MORE ACTION TO ADDRESS OR ALLEVIATE CLIMATE CHANGE.**

A LIVE CLIMATE COMEDY SHOW: THE MOST URGENT TOWN HALL THAT HAS EVER HAPPENED

Launched in 2022, the Climate Comedy Cohort (CCC) is an unprecedented network of comedians who come together to learn, collaborate, and create hilarious new comedy informed by the hottest climate science. Co-created and co-directed by the Center for Media & Social Impact's (CMSI) GoodLaugh initiative and clean energy nonprofit Generation180, the Climate Comedy Cohort brings together diverse comedians from around the country to flip the script on the way we think about climate change. The ultimate aim: to leverage humor as a cultural strategy to change the climate narrative from doom and gloom to "we've got this!"—and shift how people see their role in clean energy.

Why comedy? Public opinion research shows that the majority of Americans are concerned about climate change and believe—at least in part—that it is caused by human behavior, but most know little about meaningful steps they can take. Climate change has an efficacy problem when it comes to public engagement and participation. And yet, there's much more people can do—actions beyond recycling or bringing their own bags to the

grocery store. Comedians like Chris Rock, John Oliver, and Wanda Sykes have used comedy as a way to confront environmental justice and climate issues that may otherwise seem intimidating to tackle in everyday conversation. And we know from research that comedy is uniquely positioned to help translate complex issues and encourage public engagement with dire social problems. Given this reality, an intervention that brings comedians and climate change experts together is meaningful.

The CCC approach believes that comedians can be effective clean energy ambassadors—acting as hilarious agents of change committed to climate action, able to create original comedy that tackles the biggest problem facing the world today. By bringing talented professional comedians together with some of the country's most important experts in climate change science and communication, the Climate Comedy Cohort allows the best of two disparate worlds—comedy creativity and climate science—to collaborate and shape meaningful entertainment content designed to inspire public awareness and engagement.



As a cornerstone of the CCC program, in November 2023, the Comedy Climate Cohort team of strategists and comedians produced a sold-out live comedy variety show hosted at Caveat Comedy Club in New York City.

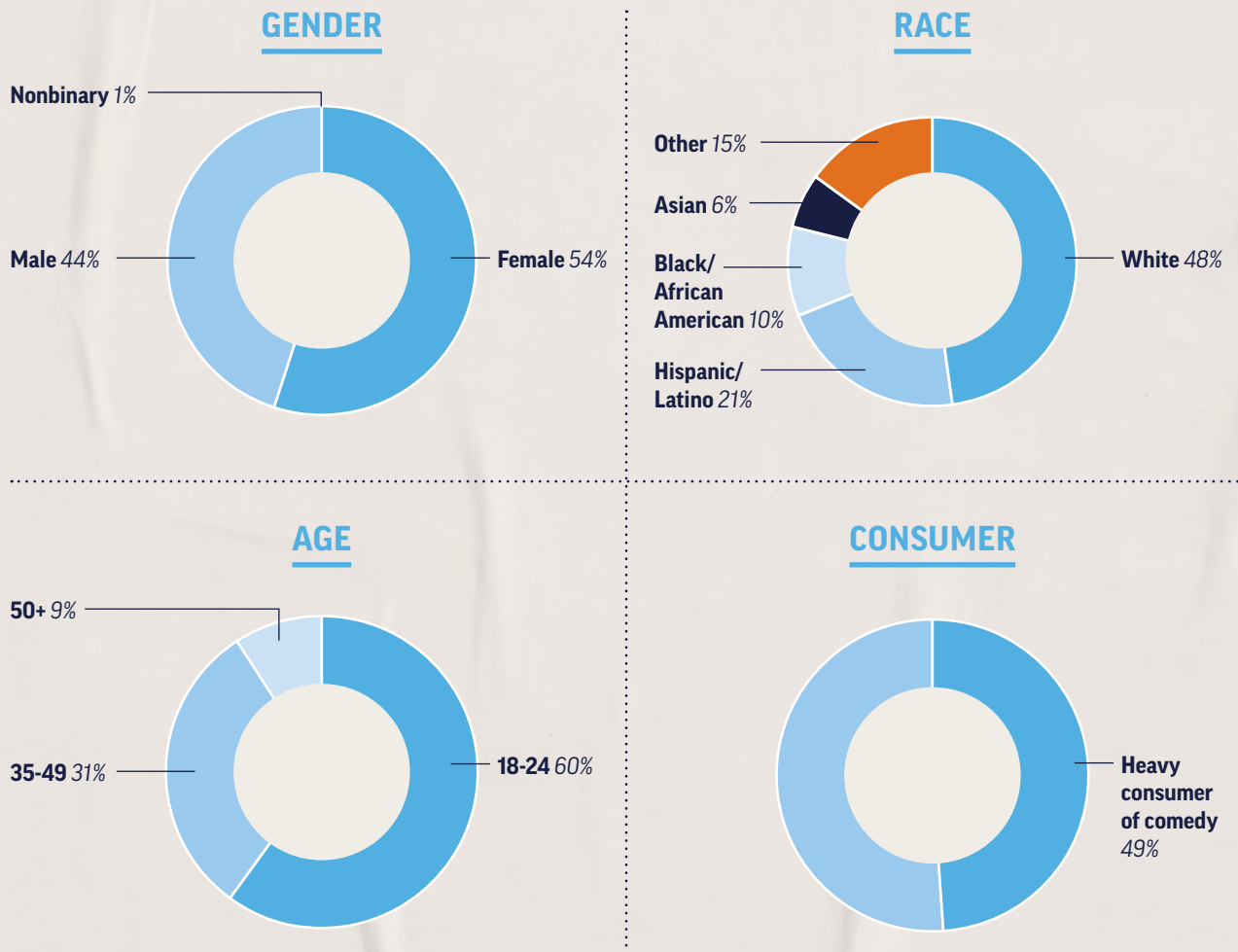
THE MOST URGENT TOWNHALL THAT HAS EVER HAPPENED: A CLIMATE COMEDY SHOW

There's a climate crisis and the town of Greenville, USA is on the case! Watch as Coach Thompson tries his best to wrangle Greenville's chaotic and severely overbooked Town Hall where everyone has something to say. This town hall has everything: concerned citizens! Erotic fanfic readings! Mixtapes! Oh, and did we forget to mention a full standup comedy show too? Starring The Climate Comedy Cohort—a diverse group of comedians featured everywhere from The Colbert Show and BET to Comedy Central—this is the most hilarious way to exercise some civic participation!

THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Following the 90-minute live show, the Center for Media & Social Impact team facilitated an audience survey (quantitative evaluation) and discussion/talk-back session (qualitative assessment and learning). A total of 84 people consented and started the survey, while 82 completed the entire survey.

Slightly more than half of the audience research participants identified as female (54%) and 44% identified as male, with one non-binary participant and one who preferred not to identify their gender. The majority of participants (48%) were white, 21% were Hispanic/Latino, 10% Black or African American, 6% Asian, and the remaining mixed race or other races or ethnicities. In terms of age, 60% were 18-34, 31% were 35-49, and the rest age 50 or older. Nearly half (49%) self-described as heavy consumers of comedy, who watched comedy on TV, online, or in live shows once a week or more.





SURVEY

Approximately 120 audience members were provided with a QR code to scan, access, and complete an online survey using their mobile devices. The survey began with an introduction to the research, its purpose, and information about the principal investigator and how to contact her with any questions. Each participant confirmed their age (over 18) and voluntary intention to participate prior to beginning the survey. Questions focused on reactions to the show, as well as knowledge, perceived importance, self-efficacy, beliefs, social norms, and behavioral intention related to climate change and clean energy topics. The survey was designed using both validated items from research literature and previous/ongoing research conducted by CMSI.



AUDIENCE TALK-BACK SESSION

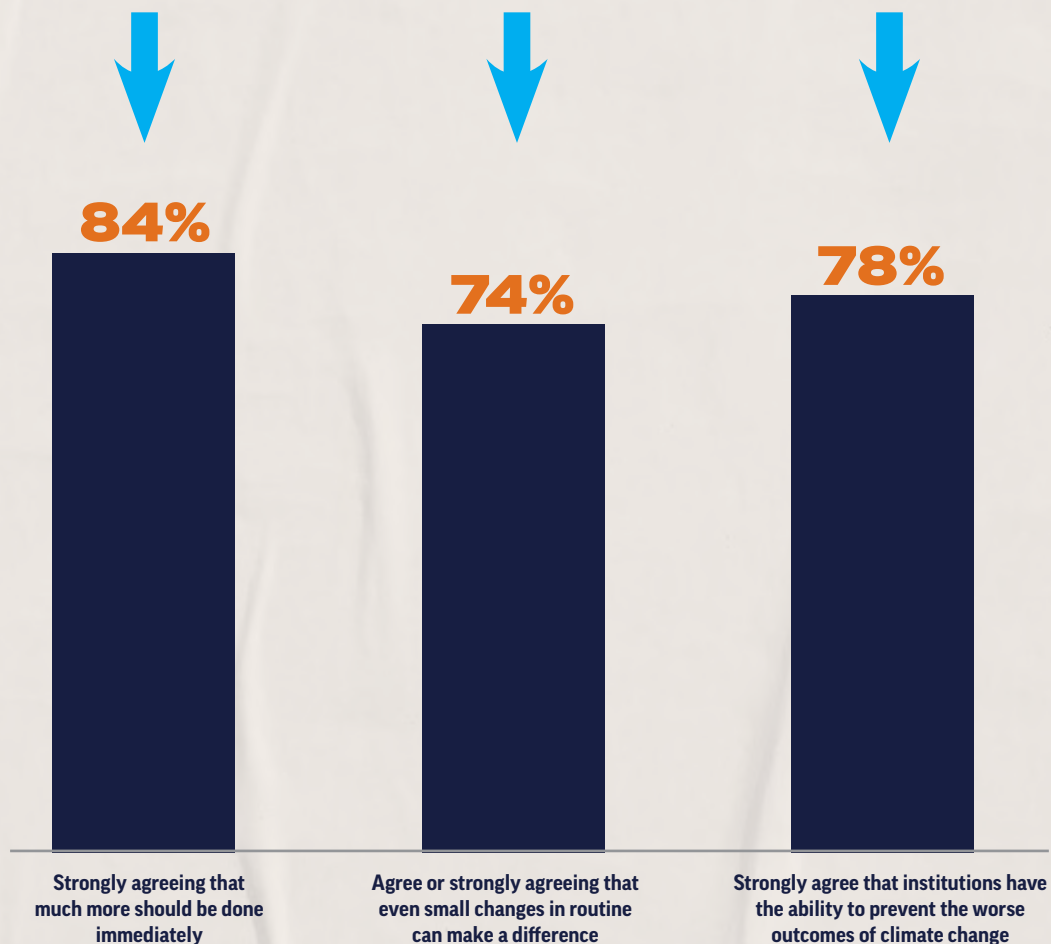
After audience members completed the mobile survey, the full audience was invited to stay and participate in a short, free flowing, live audience talk-back session, led by the CMSI research team lead. Questions were designed to elicit additional nuance from the audience focused on on four overarching items about the live comedy show: 1) whether people liked the show, 2) “aha” moments from the show, 3) what the show made them want to know or learn about, and 4) the entertaining parts of the show.

WHAT WE FOUND

SURVEY FINDINGS

CLIMATE CHANGE WORRY AND BELIEFS

Most participants reported being somewhat aware of several global issues – including hearing about climate issues before this show – with **62%** reporting being “very aware” of climate change and **45%** stating they understand “a lot” about climate change. Nearly all participants (**89%**) stated that climate change was either very or extremely important to them personally. A high level of worry and fear was exhibited by participants; **37%** reported being “very” personally worried about climate change and **46%** reported being “extremely” worried about climate change. Approximately **62%** of the sample stated they believed climate change has already had an impact on their daily lives. At the same time, 72 out of 82 participants agreed they believed they could take some sort of action to address or alleviate climate change, demonstrating hope alongside worry. Participants overwhelmingly agreed with prosocial beliefs about climate change, with **84%** of the sample strongly agreeing that much more should be done immediately, **74%** agreeing or strongly agreeing that even small changes in routine can make a difference, and **78%** strongly agreeing that governments, businesses, and other institutions – by working together – have the ability to prevent the worse outcomes of climate change.





PEER NORMS

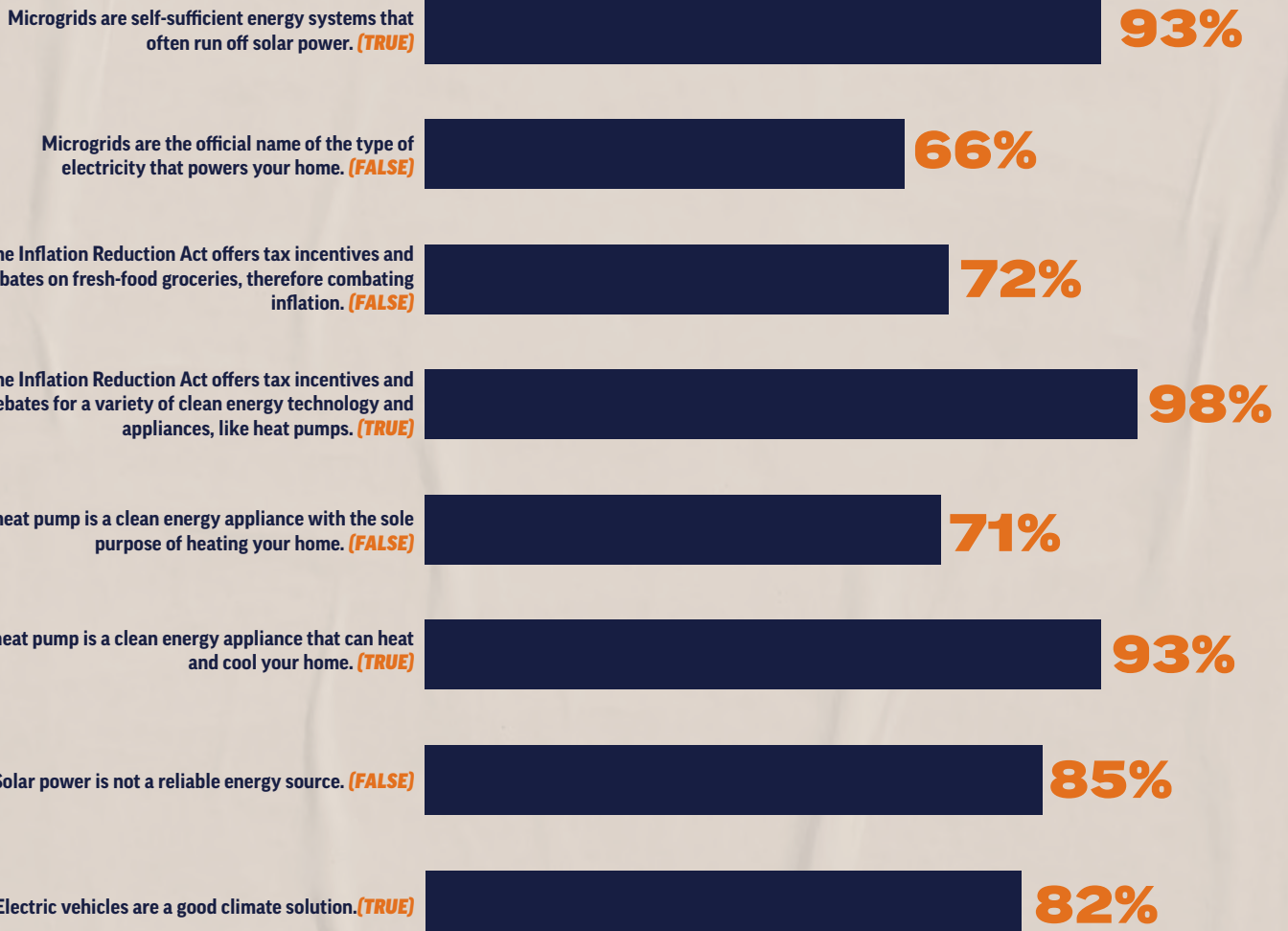
On average, participants believed around half of their friends are currently taking action to address or alleviate climate change. In addition, participants generally agreed with statements about how their network is responding to climate change, that most of their friends and family have increased how much attention they pay to climate change, and that their networks are actively engaging in advocating for clean energy policies.



CLIMATE CHANGE KNOWLEDGE

Participants exhibited a generally high level of knowledge on climate change items. Notably, audiences learned from the climate show: the majority answered correctly on items that appeared in the comedy show as specific themes, such as heat pumps and the Inflation Reduction Act.

TRUE OR FALSE STATEMENTS AND PERCENTAGE OF AUDIENCE WHO CORRECTLY ANSWERED



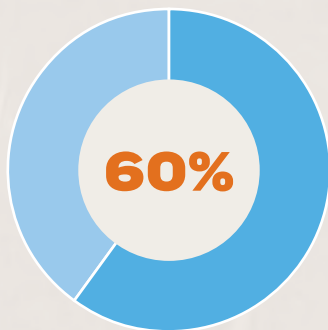
ASSESSMENT OF THE CLIMATE COMEDY SHOW

Despite the fact that the show was comprised of heavily science-based climate change and clean energy technology information, the audience enjoyed the climate comedy show as a piece of legitimate entertainment. When asked to describe the show, **76%** said that the word entertaining described the show “very well” and **96%** of respondents said it was at least somewhat informative. In addition, participants said the show:

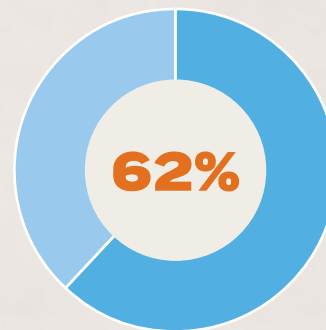


In terms of changes related to the show, some participants named microgrids, the Inflation Reduction Act and heat pumps as new topics they learned about through the show. As a result of the show, **60%** of participants reported being a little more aware of topics than they were before the show; that their knowledge changed a little (**67%**) or a lot (**13%**) as a result of the show, and that they cared a little (**60%**) or a lot more (**16%**) as a result of watching the show. Of the 82 participants, **45%** said the show increased their perceived importance of climate change compared to before the show, **37%** said the show made them worry more about climate change compared to before the show, and **62%** said they believed they could take more action to address or alleviate climate change compared to before the show.

Percentage of participants reported being a little more aware of topics than they were before the show



Percentage of participants that believed they could take more action to address or alleviate climate change compared to before the show



When asked about their intention to take concrete actions as a result of the comedy show, 63 participants said they planned to take a little (**57%**) or a lot (**20%**) more action than they did before the show. Actions included switching to an electric car, getting solar panels, reducing or eliminating meat and dairy, and reducing food waste.

Most participants answered the final open-ended question that asked that asked, “Anything else you would like to share with the research team about tonight’s comedy show?” Responses were typically positive feedback about the show such as, “Very informative and funny,” “Whoever put this line up together did a really great job,” and “It was really funny, thank you for this. We need more climate optimism and humor.” A few provided feedback about what they learned such as, “I learned a couple new thing[s], like what a heat pump is” and a few provided specific feedback on the comedians and specific segments. Suggestions included incorporating the mental health issues associated with climate change and including financially attainable climate solutions, e.g., installing a heat pump is an expensive endeavor.

AUDIENCE TALK-BACK SESSION

HIGHLIGHTS



“AHA MOMENTS”: CLEAN ENERGY TECH

Overall, the majority of “aha moments” were around clean energy technology topics that appeared consistently throughout the show: heat pumps, solar panels, and microgrids. They also wanted more information. When probed about “aha moments,” for instance, one audience member illustrated how some of the points made were challenging for people living in an urban environment like New York City where many people rent apartments and lack the personal agency to make some of the structural changes mentioned in the show:

“I WAS CURIOUS ABOUT BEING A NEW YORKER AND WHAT THINGS WE CAN DO. A LOT OF THE THINGS THAT WERE MENTIONED, LIKE I DON'T HAVE A HOUSE... HAVING A SOLAR PANEL IN MY APARTMENT BUILDING, IT'S NOT SOMETHING I CAN DO.”

“I'D ALWAYS HEARD OF COMPOSTING AS LIKE YOU NEED THIS FANCY MACHINE THAT YOU HAVE TO PAY A LOT OF MONEY FOR TO COMPOST IN YOUR HOME. BUT NOW IT SEEMS LIKE IT'S ACTUALLY MUCH EASIER THAN I INITIALLY HAD THOUGHT ABOUT IT BEFORE.”

What started as a focus group—moderator to participants—became a dialogue between audience members as the session continued as a townhall experience. Another audience member offered a suggestion to this point raised to drop a note to landlords to support such changes. Another person talked about composting in terms of an “aha moment.”



CURIOSITY PROMPTED BY THE CLIMATE COMEDY SHOW

In terms of new learning, one audience member mentioned that the show made them want to learn more about whether solar panels are good or bad. Another audience member said they wanted to learn more about bike lanes as a result of the show. Several audience members mentioned the difference between structural solutions and individual behaviors needed for lasting climate change solutions. One audience member used the opportunity to ask about composting and if you can throw grocery bags in a compost pile. Someone who works in composting for New York City answered the question and proceeded to share unplanned information about climate mitigation efforts in the city.



FEEDBACK ON COMEDY FOR CLIMATE

The audience talked enthusiastically about funny and entertaining segments of the show, and the end of the talk-back session brought some of the comedians back to the stage. An audience member wanted to know more about how the show, how the comedians got involved, and the comedy creation process. One comedian replied about their use of climate change in their act prior to the show:

Another comedian added:

“I HAVE BEEN INTERESTED IN CLIMATE FOR A LONG TIME AND I WAS WORKING IT INTO MY ACT AND WHAT WAS AN INSPIRATIONAL MOMENT FOR ME, WAS I FOUND OUT THAT THERE’S A PROJECT AND A PROGRAM THAT WANTS TO USE THAT. AND SO IT WAS NICE FOR ME TO FIND A GROUP OF OTHER PEOPLE WITH SIMILAR INTERESTS IN A WAY, AN AVENUE THAT MY ACT HAD A WAY TO GO.”

“HOW MUCH [DID] WE TALK ABOUT CLIMATE IN OUR STANDUP ACT? I WILL SAY WHEN I WALKED IN, I WOULD SAY NONE. LIKE I DIDN’T TALK ABOUT IT AT ALL BUT THEN ONE OF THE THINGS WE LEARNED IN OUR CLIMATE COMEDY WORKSHOP WEEK WAS CLIMATE KIND OF TOUCHES EVERYTHING... BUT THEN I REALIZED, WHAT JOKES DO I ALREADY HAVE THAT ALREADY TALK ABOUT THAT KIND OF STUFF THAT’S LIKE TOUCHING IT IN A WAY THAT I DIDN’T NECESSARILY REALIZE. LIKE I HAVE A JOKE ABOUT BEING FROM FLORIDA AND TALKING ABOUT HURRICANES AND HOW I LIVE IN L.A. AND DEAL WITH EARTHQUAKES AND ITS LIKE NATURAL DISASTERS. THAT’S CLIMATE CHANGE.”



WHY IT **MATTERS**

THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS IS DRAMATIC, AND YET, COMEDY CONTINUES TO BE AN UNDEREXAMINED INTERVENTION DESPITE THE FACT THAT HUMOR OFFERS A WAY TO TRANSLATE COMPLICATED TOPICS AND HELP INSPIRE AUDIENCES THROUGH PLAY. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ALSO REMEMBER THAT COMEDY CAN BE A TEACHING TOOL—AND ONE THAT MIGHT BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL WHEN IT COMES TO HELPING PEOPLE LEARN ABOUT CLEAN ENERGY TECHNOLOGY THAT IS AVAILABLE NOW AND WILL EVOLVE IN THE FUTURE. WIDESPREAD ADOPTION OF THESE TECHNOLOGIES CAN HAVE A DRAMATIC IMPACT ON THE CRISIS, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES CAN AND SHOULD INCLUDE ENTERTAINING WAYS TO BRING PEOPLE IN.

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