

EQUAL RIGHTS, JUSTICE: **WHY GREEN FEMINISM IS A RAINBOW**

OR, HIGHLIGHTING THE SILENCES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE POLICY



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Commission For Gender Equality
Gender CC - Women For Climate Justice Southern Africa

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Commission for Gender Equality
A society free from gender oppression and inequality



Green Feminism Has To Be **Brown** ...

We begin with the Earth, the biggest victim of gender-based violence. The violence of pollution and carbon emissions is a form of patriarchal violence against the Earth itself. Like all forms of gender-based violence, it is an exercise of power designed to exacerbate vulnerability. Abusers abuse because they can.

Following the Cochabamba Declaration, in Bolivia and Ecuador, Mother Earth is now a juristic person. She has legal rights, amongst which are the right to dignity, and the right to be safe from violence. This reflects both indigenous people's spirituality and a feminist consciousness.

In indigenous cosmologies, humans are part of the ecosystem, not separate from or above it. The soil is a thin layer of minerals and humus and microbes covering the Earth, which sustains all plant life. Plants nourish all human and animal life.

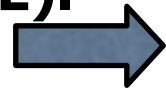
It follows that if we do not protect the soil we do not survive. Patriarchal capitalism can, over the last five hundred years (but especially over the last sixty), be seen as a system which has made a factory out of biospheres. It has depleted the soil of carbon, released this into the air, and as such deliberately undermined the source of our survival on this planet.

**THIS IS A VIOLENT EXERCISE OF
POWER**



OPPRESSORS EXERCISE OPPRESSIVE POWER JUST BECAUSE THEY CAN. IN THIS SENSE , GBV IS NOT A FORM OF HATRED OR ANGER, THOUGH IT MAY SOMETIMES APPEAR SO, AND IS ALWAYS PERSONAL TO THE OPPRESSED. Sarah Schulmann [Ties That Bind](#)

THEREFORE, THE NOTION THAT CARBON IS EMITTED BECAUSE IT IS ECONOMICALLY RATIONAL MAY BE MEANINGLESS (AND EMPIRICALLY FALSE).



- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO VIEW CARBON EMITTERS AS PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE?**
- IS THE LANGUAGE OF RATIONALITY GOING TO HELP US DE-NATURALIZE PATRIARCHAL VIOLENCE ?** Desireé Lewis
- SHOULD WE BE CONSIDERING SHELTERS FOR THE ECOLOGY?**

COULD WE AT LEAST RESIST THE EMOTIONAL AND FINANCIAL ABUSE?



Green Feminism Has Got To Be Blue

IN OUR CAPACITY-BUILDING AND CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOPS, WOMEN IDENTIFY CLIMATE CHANGE WITH OTHER FORMS OF POLLUTION, MOST OFTEN AIR AND WATER POLLUTION. THEY REFUSE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN GLOBAL WARMING AND OTHER FORMS OF UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

THIS IS A GOOD THING.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN, ENDING CARBON EMISSIONS HAS TO GO HAND IN HAND WITH BUILDING CAPACITY AT LOCAL LEVEL, BRINGING WOMEN INTO THE GLOBAL ECONOMY ON EQUAL TERMS, WHILE STRENGTHENING LOCAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

THESE ISSUES CANNOT BE DIVORCED. OTHERWISE CLIMATE CHANGE WORK ITSELF ACTS SO AS TO EMPOWER THE ALREADY POWERFUL, WHILE FURTHER DISADVANTAGING THE OPPRESSED.

**A BETTER QUALITY OF
LIFE IS NOT
NEGOTIABLE**



Green feminism needs to be whiter than white....

CORRUPTION STEALS RESOURCES FROM THE POOR, THE MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE WOMEN

CLEAN ADMINISTRATION OF CLIMATE FUNDING THEN BECOMES A FEMINIST DEMAND. IT WILL BE POINTLESS GETTING GENDER EQUALITY AT A POLICY LEVEL IF THE MONEY DISSAPPEARS BEFORE IT REACHES THE WOMEN. THIS CAN HAPPEN EQUALLY AT LOCAL AS AT NATIONAL LEVELS. GENDER BUDGETING IS ONLY PRACTICABLE WITHIN A CARBON FINANCE SYSTEM THAT ACTUALLY WORKS, IN A TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE MANNER.

A SECONDARY CONCERN IS 'LEGITIMATE' LEAKAGE (A FORM OF ELITE CAPTURE) THAT IS, CARBON REDUCTION ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS WHICH ARE SO COMPLEX AND TENDENTIOUS THAT MORE MONEY IS SPENT ON ADMINISTRATION THEN ON ACTUAL PROJECTS. THE AMOUNT OF CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDED IS UNREALISTIC.



**CORRUPTION IS A FORM
OF ECONOMIC VIOLENCE
WHICH WON'T CUT
CARBON EMISSIONS**



Green Feminism Must Be **Red**

THE ABILITY TO BUILD STRATEGIC COALITIONS HAS MADE A HUGE DIFFERENCE. REACHING OUT TO RADICAL LEFT MOVEMENTS AND TRADE UNIONS HAS ENABLED THE INTRODUCTION OF 'SOFT' ISSUES AND SOME NOTION OF SYSTEM CHANGE INTO THE

CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE. FOR INSTANCE, WE ARE NO LONGER DISCUSSING THE PRINCIPLE OF TRANSITION TO A LOW CARBON ECONOMY BUT RATHER HOW WE ARE GOING TO TRANSIT WHILE ENSURING JOB SECURITY IN HIGH EMISSION SECTORS.

HOWEVER: "[THE ACTIVIST] IS AWARE THAT NOT ONLY IS THE ALLIANCE-COALITION GROUP STRUGGLING TO MAKE SPECIFIC CHANGES IN CERTAIN INSTITUTIONS... BUT IN DOING SO THE GROUP OFTEN ENGAGES IN FIGHTING CULTURAL PARADIGMS – THE ENTIRE BAGGAGE OF BELIEFS, VALUES AND TECHNIQUES SHARED BY THE COMMUNITY"

Gloria Anzaldua 'Bridge, Drawbridge, Sandbar, or Island' in Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances

SO:

- WE HAVE NOT SO FAR SUCCEEDED IN GETTING DISCUSSIONS OF POWER, INEQUALITY AND SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE INTO TECHNOCRATIC LANGUAGES.**
- A COALITION THAT ENCOMPASSES EVERYONE FROM FAITH BASED MOVEMENTS, TO CIVICS, TO THE RADICAL LEFT, REQUIRES ENORMOUS AMOUNTS OF (MOSTLY UNRECOGNIZED) EMOTIONAL WORK. IS IT SUSTAINABLE?**
- DRAINS ENERGIES FROM OUR OWN EMOTIONAL WORK ON IDENTITY FORMATION AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION**

Green Feminism Needs To Think Black

THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA IS ABOUT PROCESS. THE MODERN TERM WOULD BE 'SELF-EMPOWERMENT'. THINKING TRANSFORMATION FROM THE TOP IS GOING TO SOLVE EVERYTHING IS DISEMPOWERING. A BLACK FEMINIST APPROACH TO SYSTEM CHANGE WOULD ARGUE THAT THE STATE IS NOT GOING TO DO FOR YOU WHAT YOU CANNOT DO FOR YOURSELF. YOUR LIBERATION IS IN YOUR OWN TWO HANDS!

VIOLENCE IS SIMULTANEOUSLY A PROCESS OF NEGATING IDENTITY-FORMATION. THEREFORE, FEMINIST CAPACITY BUILDING BECOMES, NOT JUST ABOUT TOP-DOWN TRANSFER OF CONTENT. IT IS ABOUT STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ABILITY TO EXPRESS A POSITION, PLAN, NEGOTIATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION, AND RESOLVE CONFLICT.

WOMEN NEED TO EXPERIENCE THEMSELVES, AND BE SEEN, AS ACTIVE CHANGE AGENTS – NOT JUST AS PEOPLE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE TO ADAPT, BUT AS PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE ABILITY TO EFFECT SYSTEM CHANGE TOWARDS A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY .

**CUTTING CARBON EMISSIONS
WILL INVOLVE ENDING THE
VIOLENCE AND ENABLING A
REAL TRANSFER OF POWER**



THANK YOU !!!



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