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climate justice poem

Oh! Oh! Nature mourns, Humanity perishes!
Why? Seasons have changed
Now unpredictable and unreliable!
Hotter, drier and shorter!
Winds and storms harsher and destructive
Mother Earth mourns, the land is barren.
Women, men and children, plants and animals perish!

Capitalist industrial agriculture, what have you done?
Everywhere, Mother Earth crumbles
As toxics and harmful GMO seeds swell her belly.
Heavy machines trample her belly
Their dark plumes polluting the sky,
A new baby, Climate Change, is conceived and born!

Oh! What is all this?
Ecological niches shrink
Biodiversity fast disappears
Greater uncertainty hovers everywhere
Heightened risks for us the food producers
Traditional agriculture knowledge is fast eroding
What and who shall save us?

Climate change knows no peace,
Hungers only for destruction!
Greed for profits feeds him!
Extreme, extreme, extreme weather phenomena are your fruits!
Environmental and humanitarian disasters!
Floods, droughts, landslides, diseases!
Humanity cries: No Food!
Nature cries: Inhabitable! Inhabitable!

Is there a remedy?
Yes but we hear only false solutions!
Free Markets, REDD, Climate Smart agriculture,
Green economy, Agrofuels, Carbon trading, land grabbing, more
industrial farming,
Massive use of herbicides, inorganic fertilizers and
More GMOs!

Oh Lord! All to grow climate change! Why?
Profits! Profits! More profits! Cries Capitalism, his father!

But hope looms in the horizon
Food sovereignty, our hope!
Comes to restore social justice to humanity,
Ecological sustainability to nature
Biodiversity and cultural diversity to all peoples of Mother Earth!
Arise ye peoples, women and men, the landless, peasants,
indigenous farmers, forest and fisherfolks,
Let your hope be heard in all the corners of the earth!

Peasant Agroecology for Climate Justice NOW!
Globalise Struggle! Globalise Hope!

Zimbabwean Peasant Movement

Box 1

Carbon Burning, Oceans Rising

Though the actual meetings took place in Bonn, Germany, Fiji was the official host of COP23. Fiji, a country made up of 330 small islands in the South Pacific Ocean, claimed it did not have the infrastructure to host such a global encounter. While Germany continues to burn coal and other fossil fuels that produce 53% of its electricity, the 870,000 citizens of Fiji face the deadly wrath of climate change. Heavy flooding and rains are becoming an ever-increasing reality.

One major threat to Fiji and all coastal nations are rising sea levels. Sea levels are currently rising 3.4 mm per year – the fastest rate in over 2,000 years! The immediate cause is additional water added to oceans by melting ice caps, and made worse by the expansion of water as it heats up.

But this is all linked to increased GHG emissions from the continued burning of fossil fuels. In July 2017, a gigantic break in Antarctica's Larson 'C' Ice Shelf sent 5,800 square kilometres of ice into the ocean, producing a new iceberg four times the size of London, England. All coastal and island nations, their people and ecosystems, are at great risk as the climate crisis worsens.

Efforts to promote food sovereignty and agroecology as a pathway for reducing emissions help to promote justice for the peoples of low-lying nation states, including Fiji.

**one does not sell
the earth
upon which
the people walk**

Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877

in the spotlight

1

Climate Justice from Below

At the 2015 United Nations (UN) climate summit (also known as COP21) movements from around the world converged on Paris, France to demand that governments come to a binding agreement to reverse the global climate crisis. The movements demanded climate justice - understanding that unless serious action is taken, unpredictable and extreme weather events will continue to threaten the lives of hundreds of millions of people, including and especially peasants, Indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, small-and-medium size farmers, women and youth.

With the signing of the Paris Agreement, governments gave top priority to a host of antidotes they claimed would reduce dangerous greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). Some even claimed they cared about increasing peasants' resilience to the impacts of global warming. These false solutions, including geoengineering, carbon markets, so-called Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)¹, Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and other schemes all further degrade life on Mother Earth. With the focus on green and blue money-making reforms and business-as-usual fossil fuel burning and extraction the corporate sector, backed by international finance was given a green light to grab more and more land, water, seeds, and livelihoods from the people and the Earth. Yet, in Paris and beyond, La Via Campesina (LVC) has worked with our allies to challenge capitalists' false solutions and to put forward food sovereignty as a fundamental, 'true' solution to the multiple crises generated by the corporate food system.

One year after COP21 – and just days after the Paris Agreement officially came into force – La Via Campesina met on the outskirts of Marrakech, Morocco for a movement-led Climate Justice Seminar and Training held parallel to COP22. The goals of the seminar were to deepen and create a shared understanding of the climate crisis and improve our capacities to build and strengthen solutions to capitalism and its crisis. LVC delegates and allies came from Zimbabwe, Ghana, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia, Guatemala, Venezuela, Brazil, Indonesia, India, France, Germany, Canada and the United States.

In dialogue with one another, and based on first-hand experience in popular struggle, training participants developed a framework for realizing climate justice grounded in food sovereignty called climate justice from below. Climate justice from below is a radical commitment to movement building that seeks to strengthen a fundamentally different, life-affirming society with its political economy that is controlled by and for grassroots communities, including peasants, Indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, landless rural workers, informal sector workers, and especially women and youth amongst them.

At the Marrakech seminar participants discussed and developed four themes of struggle to guide their commitment to climate justice from below:

1. False Solutions to the Climate Crisis: governments and corporations at the UN COPs are making decisions that go against the interests of the Earth and her citizens. From the perspective of the capitalists and their supporters, carbon markets, Climate Smart Agriculture and other false solutions are needed because they promote corporate profits. From the perspective of the people, these mechanisms are not solutions at all because they serve only to worsen global warming and further privatize and commodify Mother Earth and human lives. According to Dena Hoff (National Family Farm Coalition, USA), "Climate Smart Agriculture is just another scheme. It is another method for the corporations to gain more control over the food system by subordinating local food chains and extracting wealth from the soil."

2. Capitalism as one of the root causes of the Climate Crisis: Even if all economies based on coal and other fossil fuels' extraction contribute to climate change; the seminar participants agreed that capitalist relations are the main root cause of global economic, social and ecological crises.

1 - For a definition of CSA please check https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?page=NWarticle.en&id_article=483 and https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?page=NWarticle.en&id_article=600

Capitalism is understood as a system of exploitation and dispossession that is based on private ownership over nature and the means of production while imposing a hierarchy of labour power that keeps working people, peasants, and indigenous peoples from uniting against capital. In this hierarchy, working men², mostly white, are close to the top and are given privilege — a wage. Women, especially women of colour and Indigenous women, are at the bottom of this hierarchy, largely excluded from the wage and most exploited and threatened by capitalism. With the deepening crisis of neoliberalism, younger generations are forced into exploitative conditions at the bottom of the hierarchy. However, these groups are not just victims of exploitation but agents of change who are using their power within the commons to build movements for system change from below. Isabelle soc Carrillo (Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala) highlights the centrality of Indigenous women's actions and perspectives to climate justice movements: "The women who have led our struggles have been clear when defining our position against the business deals made with the government because we don't want companies imposing their way of life on us. We will continue our struggles, and will never stop, until the government listens to us. In Guatemala we have our own cosmovision and we are struggling so that one day it will be respected. Mother Earth is not a business, she is not a commodity, and she cannot be priced. ... An understanding must be reached between the land and us, as we are the land. We are one; we are all one with the Earth. The Earth can perhaps survive without us, but we cannot survive without Mother Earth."

3. Convergence of movements to strengthen grassroots global justice:

Delegates to the Marrakech climate seminar agreed that convergence and alliance building was a priority for achieving climate justice from below. Convergence is a process of forming alliances and solidarities across movements. It is often the case that groups working on issues of energy sovereignty, human rights, deconstruction of patriarchy, Indigenous sovereignty, and food sovereignty are separate — doing their 'own things'. This separation makes it difficult for movements to harmonize our views and develop joint actions. Collectively, grassroots coalitions, social movements, peasants and farmers working for climate justice are on the frontlines leading the struggle. By forming alliances, we are taking concrete steps to embolden our struggle. Alliances help us bring successes and therefore more hope to the hearts of people to continue to fight capitalism and defend life on Mother Earth.

4. Stories of struggle for climate justice from below:

delegates to the seminar shared stories about the work they are doing in their own territories to strengthen climate justice from below and resist 'green' agribusiness and Big Energy. For example, we heard delegates from: Brazil fighting mega energy projects and promoting community controlled energy and food systems; Palestine working for farmers to have access to the land, water, and local seeds; Tunisia defending peasant land occupations that build agroecology and autonomous communities; Indonesia defending and reclaiming land in order to implement agroecological projects; India challenging corporate control over seeds and promoting peasant control over food production; Morocco organizing on multiple fronts to regain democratic control over land and establish social justice and; United States confronting environmental racism and colonialism through anti-fossil fuel and pro-food sovereignty direct actions and initiatives. These local solutions are globalized through our networks to create a global movement of movements with women and youth at the forefront.

Outcomes: The insights generated by participants at the Marrakech seminar are especially useful now as more and more people, organizations, and movements — with women and youth at the forefront — rise up against capitalisms' multiple crises. In the context of dramatic evidence that climate change is happening now and everywhere, mobilizing for climate justice from below is ever more urgent. As our movements expand and multiply, we strengthen our capacities to fight successfully against capitalism and for a truly just society that benefits all peoples and Mother Earth.

2 - Men dispossessed by their resources, working men with or without wage.

Box 2

What is Capitalism?

In an open forum during COP22, LVC and ally participants gave short statements defining capitalism. They said that capitalism is ...

- a system that goes against collective property, against the collectivity and socialization of the means of production.
- an economic system based on profit that does not take into account general interest.
- not just an economic system but a political system because governments' policies support accumulation. People are not allowed to decide how to organize production.
- a global system. Capitalists solve their crises by becoming more and more global. They impose exploitation on all people around the world. Capitalist development is not for the nation but for a small group of powerful people.
- individualism and each for their own. In contrast, the people go for solidarity!
- the exploitation of nature. Small farmers do not produce excessive CO2 emissions, capitalist agribusiness does!
- a system where only some members of our community are valued. People are given value based on their location, gender, race, and sexuality. Capitalism creates disposable people.
- a destructive system that forces us to work together to overcome it.



Voices from COP23

Manuel Pereira Araujo,
MOKATIL - East Timor:

1

We believe that the Earth is our body, water our blood and sunlight our energy.

Katia Avilés-Vásquez,
Organization Boricuá for Agroecology - Puerto Rico:

2

In Puerto Rico, after the hurricanes of September 2017, the forces of nature quickly turned into disastrous social problems created by the men in power. Those most affected were women.

In almost every work brigade that was organized to get people resources, the major emergency was getting women to safety because the conditions that were abusive before had become literally life or death. In one instance, in Vieques, we used a big luggage that was brought in with food to help a woman escape violence. Women bear the brunt of the damage when a disaster happens. But then we also have the biggest role in the recovery.

Most of those who are organizing in the work brigades are women. However, the spokespeople and decision makers still tend to be mostly men because the characteristics associated with those who pick up the microphone and stand up are mostly masculine characteristics.

We are taught to refuse the feminine. In talking about a just transition in the Caribbean, it is very important to challenge this notion of what we consider to be strong, what we consider to be leadership, and what we consider to be success.

Mother Earth is feminine. The powerful feminine sent us a hurricane to shake us up and remind us that these men need to stop their addiction to oil and fossil fuels.

Massa Koné,
Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles - Mali:

3

It was important for us to show our resistance by being at COP23. First, I think that out of the many actions we did at COP23, the Ende Gelände ('Here and No Further') direct action against the massive German coal mine was very symbolic. Germany should not have held the COP23 while they have a big open pit mine. It is like they were laughing at us.

Second, I think that the capitalist system is finishing off the Earth. It is going to drown it. Therefore, we need to converge together to come up with concrete proposals to get out from where we are.

What we need to do is to bring together the interests of all the different streams: the peasants, fisherfolk, pastoralists—everyone together. We cannot develop an answer for just one stream, but for all of them. All of them get their answers through concrete solutions that we call agroecology and food sovereignty.

This proposal includes the acknowledgement of common rights, the autonomy of seeds, and autonomy for everyone involved in food production. At some point, as we grow, we will be a large mass going against the system. This mass will amplify our struggle. We will get results one day when a whole mass of people stand up and go against the system.

Fanny Métrat,
Confédération Paysanne - France:

4

The solutions being proposed by governments at COP23 benefit multinationals. Governments never speak about reducing reliance on fossil fuels or reducing consumption and waste. They speak instead about carbon markets.

Carbon markets give corporations who have the most money the ability to pay, in order to continue polluting. Carbon markets are

a false solution because they promote corporate profits.

Governments and corporations ask peasants to accept new genetically modified organisms and all the latest technologies while continuing at the same time to promote big factory farms. It is important to recognize that false solutions are rooted in patriarchy. We see only men at the negotiating tables and in corporate board rooms.

It is the men at COP23 who decide which false solutions they will put in place. In contrast, in La Via Campesina the feminist fight is very strong. We understand the importance of feminist revolution.

And with more and more gender parity in La Via Campesina, we will succeed at being a structure that speaks the voice of feminism with force.

Marthin Hadiwinata,
Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia (Traditional Fisherfolk Union of Indonesia), Indonesia:

5

The United Nations is promoting 'blue carbon' as a solution to climate change. Blue carbon refers to the carbon that is stored in coastal ecosystems, including mangroves. The mangroves can absorb ten times more carbon than a pristine forest. However, the so-called blue carbon schemes are similar to Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD).

The problem is that these schemes exclude people who have relied on the coastal ecosystems for generations as a source of food and medicine. The blue carbon schemes are also leading to the criminalization of fisherfolk.

Under coastal law in Indonesia, people who try to gain access to these 'protected' mangroves can be arrested and charged. Blue carbon further endangers people by privatizing their means of subsistence.

Box 3 Convergence Just Recovery & Just Transition


In the struggle for climate justice, we have so much to learn from one another and even more to do together. Collective action, matured through moments of critical reflection with allied movements and organizations, is creating the conditions for greater and greater convergence. Today, the global struggle for Food Sovereignty has become an integral part of the larger movement for climate justice, just transitions, and just recoveries.

As is described by the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJA) in their COP23 Call to Action:

Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy that recognizes the rights of local ecosystems and nature to maintain their vital natural cycles of life. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms, ecological restoration and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there.

Just Recovery is a visionary framework promoted by environmental justice and labor communities for recovery efforts during moments of climate disasters. A Just Recovery calls for not restoring the same level of failing and extractive fossil fuel and extreme energy infrastructure, but instead follows the leadership of frontline communities in defining what kind of recovery they need, and takes the opportunity for rebuilding post-disaster to transition and secure renewable energies and regenerative economies that can create jobs, protect the environment, and lead to resilient communities.

When the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015, the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance released the “We Are Mother Earth’s Red Line” report, outlining 5 core weaknesses about the global climate agreement:

- 
1. The Agreement relies on voluntary versus mandatory emission cuts that do not meet targets scientists say are necessary to avoid climate catastrophe.
 2. The Agreement advances pollution trading mechanisms that allow polluters to purchase “offsets” and continue extremely dangerous levels of emissions.
 3. The Agreement relies on dirty energies and false promises including hydraulic fracturing (fracking), nuclear power, agro-fuels, carbon capture and sequestration and other technological proposals that pose serious ecological risks.
 4. The operating text of the Agreement omits any mention of human rights or the rights of Indigenous Peoples and women
 5. The Agreement weakens or strips the rights of reparations owed to the Global South by the Global North.

The United Nations own analysis of the pledges made by countries of the world in adopting the Paris Agreement in 2015 assesses that these pledges are likely to still lead to global temperature increases of nearly 3 degrees celsius over the coming century. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) found that even if every country that made an emissions-cutting pledge in the Paris Agreement keeps its promise, the world will still fall 12 to 14 gigatons short each year of keeping temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius over preindustrial levels.

Just Transition solutions, including models of Food Sovereignty, Sustainable Housing and Energy Democracy, are where we are seeing inspiring campaigns that refuse the false choice between economic development and the protection of land, water, the health of Mother Earth, and the health of our communities. Just Transition also recognizes that Nature’s needs are also our own and must be elevated and protected by legal rights, and maintained through life-sustaining systems of exchange and reciprocity.

To learn more visit Grassroots Global Justice Alliance:
<http://ggjalliance.org/>

who we are

In the last years hundreds of organisations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organisations were present in the *International Nyéléni Forum 2007* and feel part of a broader **Food Sovereignty Movement**, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organisations involved: AFSA, Development Fund, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, More and Better Network, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, TNI, VSF-Justicia Alimentaria Global, WhyHunger, World Forum of Fisher People.

now is time for food sovereignty!

Box 4 Geoengineering: new threats to food sovereignty

One of the most dangerous proposals around climate change is called geoengineering: the large-scale manipulation of the global climate by technological means to counteract the symptoms of climate chaos. Behind the geoengineering proposals exists a confluence of interests, among them powerful industries and military forces. For countries and their transnational corporations with high levels of carbon emissions, geoengineering appears as a “technological solution” which would permit them to continue emitting greenhouse gases while doing more business – selling technologies for lowering the temperature or remove and store carbon.

Geoengineering means using technological means¹ to intervene in terrestrial ecosystems, oceans and the atmosphere. In some cases to block or reflect part of the light from the sun which arrives to the Earth and so lower the temperature, in others to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in the sea floor or in the soil. It also includes techniques to manipulate the local and regional climate such as cloud seeding and other proposals to redirect or dissolve hurricanes. All the proposals have serious environmental, social and geopolitical impacts. None of them are directed at changing the causes of climate change – if they work it would be only to manage the symptoms. Climate change will continue to increase, because geoengineering creates captive markets.

One proposal very commonly discussed among geoengineers is to create a huge artificial volcanic-type cloud over the Arctic by injecting sulphates into the stratosphere in order to block the light from the sun. According to scientific studies this could lower the temperature but also unbalance winds and rains in the southern hemisphere, disturbing the monsoon in Asia, producing droughts in Africa and increasing floods in Latin America, threatening water sources and the food supplies of millions of people. There would also be the need to continue injecting sulphates for an unspecified amount of time because if interrupted temperatures would rise rapidly and the impacts would be even harder to deal with than before the process was started. In spite of these enormous risks, the geoengineering program of Harvard University in the United States is already planning experiments in Arizona², in indigenous territories.

Another of the techniques being promoted – especially since the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change – is the so called Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), and Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS). CCS is a technology invented by the oil industry in order to extract oil from extreme

depths. Pressurized Carbon Dioxide is injected in order to push out the oil, with the CO₂ theoretically remaining at the bottom. The oil industry stopped using the technique (originally called Enhanced Oil Recovery) because it was not financially viable. However, if now there are subsidies and payments available for “sequestering” and storing carbon dioxide, they can create a circular business: they can extract more oil, making increased profits – in spite of being one of the principle culprits of climate change.

Even more perverse is the proposal Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS). This involves enormous plantations of trees and crops to capture carbon while they grow, and then burn them to produce bioenergy, while burying the carbon produced by the combustion using CCS systems. To maintain the temperature below 2 degrees by 2100 with BECCS, it would be necessary to plant between 500 million and 6,000 million hectares of industrial monocultures³, the impact of which would be devastating. Currently all the land cultivated in the world is around 1,500 million hectares. Obviously BECCS would compete with the production of food, with indigenous territories, with nature reserves and so on.

Even if BECCS is unviable, there are governments and businesses which promote it in order to “comply” with the Paris Agreement and to obtain carbon credits, with which the dispute for land and water, the threats and violence used to displace peasant farmers and indigenous peoples from their land, will only increase. Geoengineering projects are so full of risk and potential impacts on the environment, indigenous peoples and peasant farmers that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) decreed a moratorium on their use. However, the industries and governments that stand to make profits from climate change continue to promote their use. Given the grave threats to Food Sovereignty, peasant life and cultures, indigenous peoples, the environment and biodiversity, it is crucial that movements and social organisations reject any experiment or proposal of geoengineering and fight for their complete prohibition.

More information on geo-engineering and its impacts: Silvia Ribeiro, Grupo ETC, <http://www.geoengineeringmonitor.org/>
1 - <http://www.etcgroup.org/content/civil-society-briefing-geoengineering>
2 - <http://www.etcgroup.org/content/trump-administration-inflates-geoengineers-balloon>
3 - http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/caught_in_the_net_actionaid.pdf

to read, listen, watch and share

- Peasant Agroecology Feeds the People and Cools the Planet: COP23 Side Event, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVeqJqQ9s5c>
- Updates on Climate Justice from La Via Campesina, <https://viacampesina.org/en/what-are-we-fighting-for/climate-change-and-agrofuels/>
- Climate Change and the International Trade Union Federation, <https://www.ituc-csi.org/climate-change>
- “It Takes Roots” Alliance of Grassroots Activists and Frontline Communities, <http://ggjalliance.org/ittakesroots>
- The Struggle to Stop Coal and Protect the Climate, <https://www.ende-gelaende.org/en/>
- Food Sovereignty: Five Ways to Cool the Planet and Feed its People, <https://www.grain.org/es/article/entries/5102-food-sovereignty-five-steps-to-cool-the-planet-and-feed-its-people>

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