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## Manifesto: Climate Change

### **Preamble: Things are Heating Up**

Societal and capitalistic norms have often reduced climate change to an issue of the future rather than an issue of the present. In reality, climate change is already here, and it is already impacting society more than we could possibly think. It is not just scientific data. It is not just a matter of environmental issues. Climate change impacts every aspect of life on Earth, from the environment to the economy, human health, food security, and global stability. The longer we wait to act, the larger the consequences will be. Issues like food insecurity disproportionately impact women, people of lower socioeconomic status, people of color, and transgender individuals. Climate change is rooted in capitalist systems which have prioritized profit over social welfare. Capitalism will never be the answer to preventing climate change. It is this system in itself that has expedited pollution and waste, the burning of fossil fuels, corporate power, fast fashion, and greed. Wealthier (often capitalist) nations are the main contributors to climate change and pollution, yet low and middle-income nations (LMICs) face the largest burden that comes from environmental issues like floods, droughts, and food insecurity. Tackling climate change requires a systemic change that challenges capitalistic norms, like consumerism. We must hold those in power accountable and prioritize sustainability. *Radical* feminist principles can limit climate change by critiquing the typical systems in power that lead to horrible and disastrous outcomes.

## **Thesis 1: We must stop obeying an unlivable system.**

In the article “What is abolitionism?” from Shado Magazine, abolition is detailed as an active rejection of oppressive systems. It described the importance of prioritizing collective wellbeing and accountability. Abolition is in and of itself, an act of refusal to act complicit in oppressive environments. Tina Campt, professor of humanities at Princeton University, referred to abolition as “a rejection of the status quo as liveable” (Bafo, 1). We must stop pretending that climate change can be addressed through a system that has traditionally harmed the environment. We must recognize that we cannot keep living in a system that is continuously taking our planet out from under us. We must prioritize the well-being of everyone, even those in LMICs that are receiving the burden of climate change. Too often, individuals in capitalist systems view climate change as a passive issue that does not directly impact them. The first step to meaningful change is acknowledging that this is a problem. We can’t keep accepting it as ‘normal.’ In the article titled “How neoliberalism colonized feminism,” it is described that more mainstream feminist ideals (neoliberalism feminism) “recognize gender inequality... while simultaneously denying that socioeconomic and cultural structures shape our lives” (Rottenburg, 3). Similarly, mainstream climate change movements in the United States acknowledge the issues of environmental degradation while denying capitalism’s hand in the matter. We need to recognize that capitalist policies are not the answer to climate change - they are the problem. Capitalism encourages overproduction and contributes to climate inequality for low income communities, especially those in the Global South.

**Thesis 2: Stop feeding into the disaster: Capitalism is ruining the environment, and we’re all acting complicit.**

Rather than fighting within the capitalist system to make small advances in stopping climate change, we must start to resist the root cause - the system itself. We have to stop feeding into norms of capitalism like consumerism, fast fashion, and the fast food industry. We must fight against capitalism to protect the environment. This can be demonstrated through the journal “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy.” While authors Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill do not explicitly focus on climate change, they do bring up important points about how settler colonialism changed individuals’ relationship with the environment. Settler colonialism was primarily led by principles of capitalism, power, and greed. This has historically led to the exploitation of indigenous land, creating environmental degradation and climate change. The article reads that, “These simultaneous processes of taking over the land (by killing and erasing the peoples with previous relationships to that land) and importing forced labor (to work the land as chattel slaves to yield high profit margins for the landowners) produced the wealth upon which the U.S. nation’s world power is founded,” (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, 12). This again emphasizes that the degradation of land was driven by wealth and capitalism. How can we keep supporting a system that is only furthering the issue at hand?

### **Thesis 3: Climate Change is Furthering Global Divisions.**

As previously discussed, capitalist nations create the bulk of issues relating to climate change, while LMICs face the largest consequences. Many LMICs are located in regions that are exposed to floods, hurricanes, droughts, rising sea levels, and desertification. They typically have less infrastructure and tools to respond to these disasters than do capitalist/wealthier nations. They also lack the newer technology to adapt to climate change, such as drought-resistant crops or clean energy sources to combat environmental issues. Since climate change is negatively

impacting agriculture in LMICs, many people are being led into hunger and malnutrition.

Capitalist countries have failed in their 'promises' to deliver climate financing plans to LMICs.

Thus, yet again, we must not look at climate change through the lens of capitalism. We must look at it as what it is - a global issue. Mutual aid is a great way to resist oppressive systems and create our own change. In the video describing mutual aid, Dean Spade references that mutual aid doesn't discriminate between say poor people who are sober or not sober. It recognizes that everyone needs and deserves help. Charity is about control, hierarchy, and isolation. Mutual aid is about solidarity, liberation, and participation. "Stop believing in authority and start believing in each other" (Spade, 7:07). We can create mutual aid programs ourselves that help LMICs through climate change issues. Examples could be natural disaster relief initiatives, cooperative farming, or programs to bring in crops.

**Thesis 4: Food insecurity is disproportionately impacting women, people of color, transgender individuals, and those of lower socioeconomic status.**

Climate change disrupts nearly every part of the global food system, such as when and how food is grown, the food chain between animals, and how food can be accessed. This leads to mass levels of food insecurity across the globe. Certain demographics are more at risk for food insecurity than others, such as women, people of color, transgender individuals, and those of lower socioeconomic status. Women are more likely to experience food insecurity than men, especially in LMICs due to unequal access to land and education. Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities are also more likely to face food insecurity in the United States due to systemic racism and settler colonialism. Overall, low-income households struggle to afford nutritious and consistent meals. Although I previously mentioned that we should stop feeding into capitalist norms like fast food, this is often all that low-income families in the US can afford. Yet again, we

cannot depend on capitalist systems to fix these disparities. I would again like to propose mutual aid programs so that we can have a hand in meaningful change. In this case, programs such as leaving boxes of nutritious food in low-income communities could be good. There can be gardening initiatives so that more people have access to organic food that is better for the environment.

#### **Thesis 5: ‘Radical’ indigenous feminist ideals can fight against climate change.**

Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill emphasized the importance of Indigenous sovereignty and the protection of ancestral lands, which are crucial for environmental sustainability. By advocating for decolonization and challenging heteropatriarchal structures, Indigenous feminists address the root causes of environmental exploitation. Indigenous feminists have often been ahead of mainstream feminists in their opposition to capitalist ideas which harm the environment. Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill describe their goal to “actively seek alliances in which differences are respected and issues of land and tribal belonging are not erased in order to create solidarity, but rather, relationships to settler colonialism are acknowledged as issues that are critical to social justice and political work that must be addressed” (19). Thus, we must not see issues of land and environmental degradation as separate from valuable social and political work that needs to be done.

#### **Call to Action: Make Earth Cool Again**

To conclude, we must break up the oppressive systems that created the issue of climate change rather than trusting that it will fix itself. We cannot rely on capitalist policies to alter the course of environmental degradation. We, ourselves, have the power to make a change. As mutual aid suggests, we don’t have to wait for those in power to make a change. We can make small acts of difference on our own. Individual action *does* matter, it does not need to be

confined to power structures that always leave someone out. Work through mutual aid projects that help those who are being disproportionately impacted by climate change.

### **Bibliography**

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