



System Change not Climate Change

an ecosocialist coalition

systemchangenotclimatechange.org

Feminism and ecosocialism

At the heart of an ecosocialist vision must be a profound feminism. This means promoting women's leadership in the movement, and particularly around specific issues that affect women. Here are two central issues.

Food Sovereignty

Representing 200 million peasants and farmers, North and South, Via Campesina recognizes the role of women in opposition to corporate agribusiness and in the fight to control food production. The participation of women is key to the fight against inequality and environmental destruction. This autonomous and grassroots movement, started in 1996, includes 164 organizations in 79 countries. Here are some quotes from Via Campesina documents:

“Women play a crucial role in the Via Campesina work. According to the FAO, women produce 70% of the food on earth but they are marginalized and oppressed by neoliberalism and patriarchy. The movement defends women rights and gender equality at all levels. It struggles against all forms of violence against women.”

“In 2008 Via Campesina organized an ongoing Global Campaign to End Violence Towards Women, denouncing the structural violence that women have to confront each day and that has been systematically silenced, made to appear natural, and rendered invisible by patriarchal capitalist society.”

“Violence and oppression against women existed in pre-capitalist societies, but it is since the onset of capitalism that violence in all its forms – political, economic, physical, and psychological – has intensified. Today, violence against women is found among all social classes, generations, and sexual orientations, affecting both urban women and rural women.”

Via Campesina adopted a Women's Commission model that some of its affiliates already had. Thus women organize leadership development meetings, hold their own assemblies before Via Campesina conferences, and Via Campesina's International Coordinating Committee is composed of a man and woman from each region. More information on Via Campesina: organizational statement, Women of Via Campesina International Manifesto (2013), on violence against women, on femicide, "Women of La Via Campesina: Creating and Occupying our Rightful Spaces" by Nettie Wiebe.

Population control vs. women's rights

A number of mainstream environmental organizations are won over by the argument that the planet is overpopulated and that we should therefore find ways of curtailing women's high fertility rates. Since high fertility is generally found in poorer areas, North and South, this targets the bodies of women who have the least access to reproductive health. Ecosocialists dispute these assumptions. The problem is not overpopulation but inequality. The solution is not to curtail women's reproductive life, but to be a part of the movement for reproductive justice. Women need security in order to exercise the self-determination that human beings need. This security includes decent housing, educational opportunities, good and meaningful work, freedom from domestic violence or laws that restrict their reproductive decisions throughout their lives, affordable healthcare and child care. (See Giovanna Di Chiro's "Sustaining Everyday Life: Bringing Together Environmental, Climate and Reproductive Justice".)

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