

Ecofeminism Against Capitalism and for the Commons

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Ecofeminism Against Capitalism and for the Commons

This special issue of *Capitalism Nature Socialism* was conceived in a minute of silence, in the cold in a Canadian public square on January 21, 2017. We stood with more than ten million people in the global Women’s March to oppose Trump and the emerging fascist world order: “Let this be our last minute of silence; hereafter let us speak up against all forms of injustice.” According to Judith Leblanc of the Caddo Tribe of Oklahoma, the Women’s March represented “a Standing Rock moment.” At the January 21 Women’s March in Washington, Leblanc said:

I march for my daughter, Jenna, my nieces, Nora, Marie and Victoria. We march today for Mother Earth, because water is life. Standing Rock has shown the world our faith, our prayers. People power is stronger than rubber bullets. Across Indian country generations have suffered from contaminated air, land and water after fossil fuel corporations ran with their profits. That is real carnage, President Trump. President Trump, we heard you’re considering privatizing land, Indian land, for oil. You will not steal our land. We’ve been there before. Today Native women are here, representing many nations, and we are marching in prayer. We are marching with our ancestors in our hearts. It’s a Standing Rock moment! And, President Trump, let me break it down for you. A Standing Rock moment means our power is rooted in love for humanity. Our strength is drawn from our ancestors. Our medicine is stronger than rubber bullets or water cannons. Standing together, people united, we are—who are here today, who are standing with Standing Rock, standing with Flint, Michigan, standing with Oak Flat, standing with immigrants—[we are] united. Today indigenous people—water protectors all across the world—are saying no to pipelines, no to corporate plunder of sacred sites, no to wars for oil. President Trump, the movement that we’re building is driven by faith, by hope, by love and prayers. We will stop the carnage of Mother Earth. Water is sacred. Water is life. Women are life. (quoted in Democracy Now 2017a)

The global Women’s March was organized by four women within the three months following November 8, 2016 when Donald Trump was declared president of the United States of America. On January 27, 2017 Trump decreed a freeze on refugee admissions and a ban on travel to the USA from seven Muslim majority countries. The ban was reversed almost instantly as airports across the US were flooded with protestors within hours. What appeared to some to be spontaneous

mass action was in fact more fundamentally the result of the high degree of organization of people by the very relations of the capitalist global “social factory.”

Two months later, on International Women’s Day, in over 50 countries women announced a strike against housework and labor power production. Just as on May 1, 2006, businesses across the US were forced to go a “day without an immigrant,” the March 8 action forced owners and managers of the global social factory to reckon with a “day without a woman” and to recognize that profits come indispensably from the work of women and Nature. Other worldwide demonstrations in 2017 were mounted by scientists, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and antifascists. The 2017 demonstrations and strike actions were rehearsals for the future and harbingers of global system change.

A huge and growing worldwide movement of social movements against all forms of capitalist domination is building up from below. Women are at the forefront of these uprisings. A few of the highpoints over the recent few years include:

- 2012: Women in New Delhi and across India sparked massive and sustained mobilizations against rape, murder, and misogyny (Banerji 2012).
- 2012–2013: Idle No More movement initiated by a Canadian alliance of Indigenous and settler women sought justice for Indigenous communities including for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Indigenous women in Canada remain three and a half times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women (Native Women’s Association of Canada 2015).¹
- 2014: #BlackLivesMatter was initiated by three African American women standing against all form of racial injustice, including the theft of black lives at the hands of the police.²
- 2014: The heroic Rojava women of northern Syria fought the Islamic State in Kobanê and in the surrounding territories (Acik 2014). The women of northern Syria continue developing radically feminist revolutionary politics against the violent patriarchal logic upon which the capitalist system is based. The new Rojava society is based on feminism, regenerative ecology, and direct participatory democracy.
- 2014: Hundreds of women in Nigeria marched on parliament to demand the return of 200 school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram (Agence France-Presse 2014).
- 2015: Thousands of North and South Korean women peace activists and their international allies successfully crossed the two-mile-wide De-Militarized Zone (DMZ). The women called for an end to the Korean War, reunification of families and women’s shaping of the peace process.³
- 2016: Women in Honduras, building on decades of struggle against extractive industries, joined with allies around the world in order to launch a campaign for justice for Berta Caceres, murdered for opposing a dam project and its destruction of sacred rivers of the Lenca Indigenous people in Honduras.⁴

¹<https://www.nwac.ca/mmiwg/>.

²<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>.

³<https://www.womencrossdmz.org/>.

⁴<http://bertacaceres.org/>.

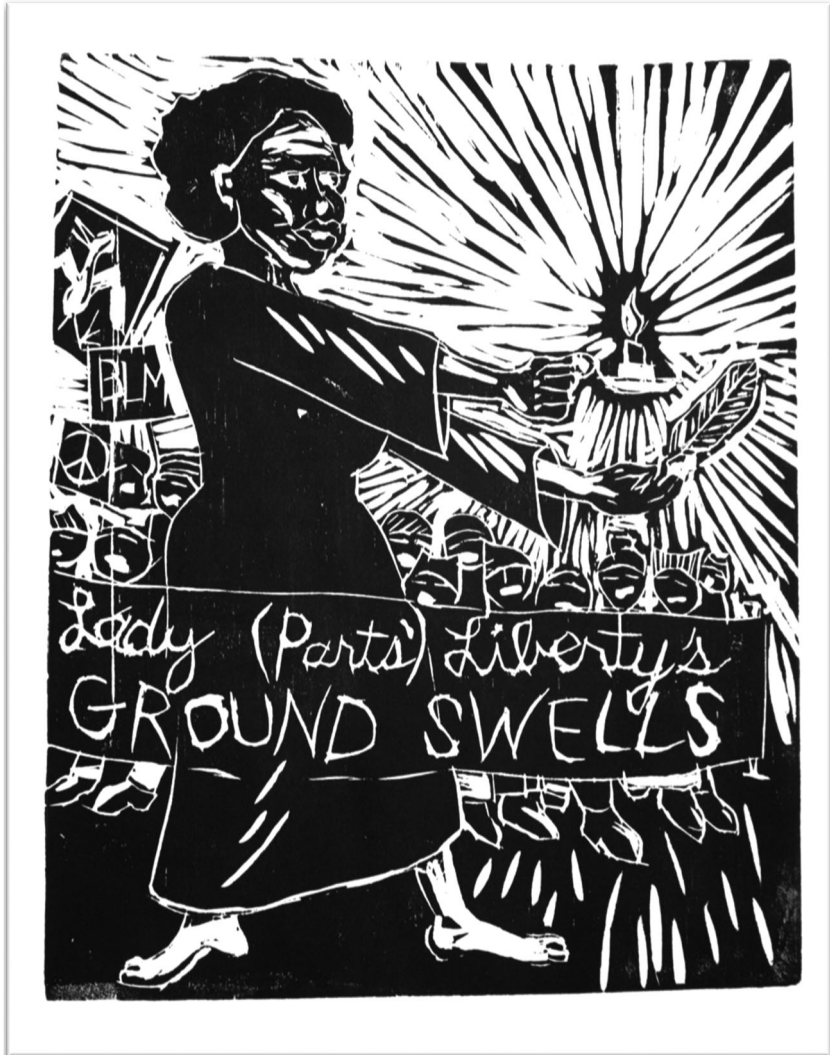


Figure 1. Lady Liberty, woodblock print, L. Brownhill, 2017.

- 2016: #NiUnaMenos (“not another one lost”) movement brought women onto the streets throughout Latin America as well as in Europe to demonstrate against increasing incidence of rape, murder and forced sterilization of women and to demand access to legal abortion.⁵
- 2016: Indigenous women initiated a nine-month occupation at Standing Rock, North Dakota to blockade the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and defend Indigenous people’s sovereignty (Levin 2016).
- 2016: Polish women rose up against their government’s move to undermine women’s rights to abortion (Davies 2016).
- 2017: Russian women challenged their government’s move to decriminalize domestic violence (Walker 2017).
- 2017: Two transgender women, Danica Roem and Andrea Jenkins, were elected to political office in the USA (Eltagouri 2017; Grierson 2017).
- 2017: María de Jesús Patricio (popularly known as “Marichuy”) began campaigning to become president of Mexico. Marichuy is the spokesperson of the Indigenous National Congress, which embraces Indigenous governance philosophies and “communalism” and rejects hierarchy. Marichuy, who has the support of the Zapatista National Liberation Army, remarks that her network’s efforts are not only for Indigenous peoples but for all Mexicans “to join forces to be able to destroy this system that is generally finishing us all off” (Marichuy quoted in Young 2017).
- 2017: At their 7th International Conference the 200 million-strong global smallholder farmer movement, La Vía Campesina, strengthened their Campaign Against Violence Against Women. In Sao Paulo, Brazil women farmers in Vía Campesina’s Landless Workers Movement, MST, occupied an orange farm owned by a convicted rapist. The occupation marked the 2017 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (La Vía Campesina 2017; TeleSur 2017).
- 2017: The #MeToo movement went viral. This movement was initiated in 2007 by Tarana Burke, an African American woman and survivor of sexual violence, as a campaign to speak out against harassers and rapists. In 2017, massive numbers of people of all genders took to social media using #MeToo to call out the men who violated them. These actions removed from positions of power some elected officials and popular film and television stars accused of rape and sexual harassment (Democracy Now 2017b).
- 2017: In December the US government banned one of its agencies from using the words “fetus,” “entitlement,” “evidence-based,” “diversity,” “transgender,” “vulnerable,” and “science-based” (Sampathkumar 2017). At the same time, the #MeToo movement ushered in “feminism” as Merriam-Webster’s word of the year (Flood 2017).
- 2018: The #MeToo movement expanded into #TimesUP as grassroots activists established alliances with super-stars at the US Golden Globes (Democracy Now 2018), the BAFTAs and other award ceremonies.

⁵<http://niunamenos.com.ar/>.

- 2018: Women of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) invited women from all over the world to join an international gathering in Chiapas, Mexico for March 8th International Women's Day (Last Real Indians 2017).

We view the above actions as strikes against the capitalist system. These actions indicate that ecofeminism is on the rise. For us, ecofeminism is based on an understanding that women and Nature are exploited by capitalists. Ecofeminist action stands against this exploitation and affirms the commons. Commons (commoning or “recommoning,” to defend the commons) refers to the new and already existing social relations (“ancient futures”) that defend and build shared control over the means of life, while prioritizing those who are most exploited and undermined by capitalism. We see shared control being built through direct actions to stop capitalist destruction; defend and build community-controlled food and renewable energy production and exchange; and extend command over the shared life-ground on which all people and other beings depend.

Women commoners are showing the way toward a post-fossil-capitalist epoch (see Figure 1). This ecofeminist special issue seeks to highlight some of the ecofeminist solutions, visions, and practices of women commoners and their allies around the world so they can be shared more widely. Let 2018 be the year that people everywhere join such women to end violence by ending global capitalism and affirming the commons.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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