



contents

Editorial 2

Climate Eco-cide and democratic eco-socialism in South Africa 2

International News 6

This City has a radical plan to get rid of bosses 6

Long live the Women's Committee 9

Cyclone Idai: Why is the media not linking it to climate change? 12

Grassroots organisation, Schools for Climate Action, calls for elected officials to act on climate change 14

National News 15

Do Red and Green Mix? 15

South Africa Will Not Survive the Climate Crisis! 17

A climate justice critique of South African political parties: What are the commitments of the ANC, DA and EFF to a deep just transition 19

Climate Justice News 25

Drought and domestic violence: fallout from a changing climate. 25

End climate denialism in the media 27

High Court refuses mining company's leave to appeal in the Mabola case 28

We're going to school for a future we don't have anymore. 29

Creating change, or are we? 30

The Food Sovereignty Campaign 31

The formation of the University of Free State Food Sovereignty Campaign 31

Growing a food commons; The roll-out of agroecology gardens at Wits Food Gardens 31

The Rise of Urban Farming in Johannesburg and the Wits Farmers' Market 32

The Worker Cooperative Campaign 36

Call to Cooperatives: Join the Solidarity Economy Movements Website 36

Activist Resources to Advance the Solidarity Economy from Below 37

Democratic Marxism Seminars available for viewing on Youtube 37

Book: Democratic Marxism Vol.4: Racism After Apartheid 37

Book: Peer to Peer: A Commons Manifesto 38

Contact Us 39



Editorial

Climate Eco-cide and Democratic Eco-Socialism in South Africa

by Vishwas Satgar

The end of the human race is a very real prospect in the context of climate change and ultimately a heating world. Global warming at increases of 3, 4 or 5-degree Celsius means planet earth will no longer be habitable for human and most non-human life. There is scientific evidence that this has happened to other planets like Venus but was caused through natural processes. Our end is not inevitable and neither can it be prevented by false solutions. As a scientific process, climate change is the result of the sun's rays (energy flows) being trapped in the Earth's atmosphere by greenhouse gases (such as carbon and methane). This is creating a heating planet. This article engages with this challenge from a climate justice perspective.

The making of climate eco-cide

There is a history to why Earth is heating. For the past 150 years, capitalist societies have been at the forefront of extracting, burning and emitting carbon through coal, oil and gas. Over the past fifty years there has been a "golden spike" and what climate scientists call the "hockey curve feature of carbon emissions". This means that there has been a consistent and intensive increase in carbon emissions. The scientific consensus is simple: human beings are a geological force shaping the planetary conditions that sustain life. We are causing climate change. This is now known as the age of the Anthropocene.

While we can accept at a general level such a scientific conclusion, it is misleading in terms of the actual political economy of carbon emissions and carbon capitalism. For the past 150 years of emissions the industrialised countries of the global north carry a climate debt as the main contributors

to carbon emissions. In addition, about seven oil companies (Shell, BP, Exxon, Saudi Aramco etc.) have also profited from extracting and supplying fossil fuels. Various countries are also part of extracting and burning oil, gas and coal. These carbon corporations and states constitute carbon capital which is a key contributor to climate change.

The US has the largest per capita carbon footprint on the earth. Today, through fracking and support from Obama and Trump, the US is the leading fossil fuel producer in the world. The US imperial state is preventing the world from addressing the climate crisis in any meaningful way. This has been happening for more than two decades, under every US President, and this has meant the UN-led process to secure a climate deal has never been successful. The Paris Climate Agreement (2015) is a failed solution, with a weak pledge and review mechanism, married to green capitalist solutions that have not worked and will not work.

The capitalist Anthropocene reveals that rich industrialised countries, carbon capital (including in the global south like South Africa), the US imperial state and the lack of a climate justice agenda within the UN multi-lateral system are the vanguard destroying the conditions that sustain life of human and non-human nature. Climate eco-cide, the destruction of all of us through climate change, is being led by these forces.

South Africa's carbon capitalism

South Africa is one of the most unequal



countries in the world according to any measure. Ironically, this is a conclusion of the World Bank in its recent 2018 report. The Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) have made these observations since 2014. Their research has shown that the top 10% gets two thirds of South Africa's income. Half of all South Africans are chronically poor, living in households with a per capita income of R1,149 or less per month.

With South Africa's drought, our first major climate shock, these inequalities have been made worse through high food prices, for instance. In addition, new climate inequalities have been created through the privatisation of water. The working class, unemployed and poor have borne the brunt of the drought. Alongside racialised and gendered super exploitation, high unemployment and increasing poverty, South Africa is a carbon intensive economy, based largely on coal. It is the 14th highest emitter of carbon emissions in the world, and despite energy inequality has a per capita carbon footprint higher than China, India or Brazil.

Carbon capitalism was the bedrock of apartheid and has been part of ANC hegemony, and then dominance, in the post-apartheid period. With the climate crisis, South Africa is a carbon criminal state, contributing to the greenhouse effect and the extinction of the human species and other life forms. It is an 'eco-cidal' capitalism, destroying the conditions that sustain life.

Limits of historical socialist alternatives: a Marxist ecology critique

South Africa has had a diverse socialist imagination which has included Sovietised socialism (even Trotsky's minimum program), revolutionary nationalism and social democracy. The ANC Alliance is shaped by all three versions of 20th century socialism. These socialisms have not come to the

fore in South Africa in the post-apartheid period. But they lurk in the national liberation imagination. They have been theorised in a manner that grounds them in particular assumptions about nature and historical experience of these socialisms.

From a Marxist Ecology perspective these socialisms have the following problems:

1. A blindness to the fact that Marx was an original systems thinker, who connected human social relations with nature. Marx understood that the labour process mediated the relationship with nature. Further, the human-nature relationship underpinned a "metabolic relationship" with nature as a whole. This means that the more capitalism undermined natural cycles and eco-systems, the more the antagonism with nature deepened.
2. An absence of thinking about value creation as grounded in both nature and labour. While labour was "priced in", all these socialisms externalised the costs of nature in the production process. So pollution, climate change, species extinction, eco-system destruction, for example, are not taken into account in how production is organised. Nature must be conquered.
3. These socialisms are all productivist. They copied capitalism's obsession with growth. This meant that accumulation and wealth creation were based on the assumption of endless resources. There were no ecological constraints.
4. All these socialisms are obsessed with technology as progress. But technology is not neutral. It is embedded in class relations. For corporations, science and research are about profit making. So unleashing the "forces of production" will not necessarily meet the needs of society and, worse, will have destructive consequences for nature. Genetic engineering



of seeds is a good example of this.

Beyond Fatalism – the struggle for a democratic eco-socialist South Africa

South Africa's historical socialist alternatives are limited and inappropriate for the struggle to address ecological crises and, particularly, the dangerous contradiction of climate crisis. Moreover, the dominant carbon capitalism is the real challenge. Many believe that carbon capitalism is too big a problem to solve and hence either accept the end of the human race or a catastrophic future. We are at the “end of times”. This is a fatalism that legitimises that madness and irrationality of carbon capitalism. It undermines any kind of mass working class-led response and is also blind to the science. Such resignation is deeply reactionary.

We have a rapidly heating world, with 12 years left to prevent catastrophic climate change and an overshoot of 1.5°C. According to the UN's IPCC Global warming of 1.5°C report, massive reductions need to be implemented, much before 2030. At least 40% of reductions must happen at 2010 levels before 2030. By 2050, net zero emissions must be reached. In this context we have to be clear about the dynamics, logic and character of contemporary carbon capitalism.

Carbon capitalism produces class, racialised and gendered inequality. But it also produces climate inequality and “eco-cidal” destruction of human and non-human life forms. Carbon capitalism is anti-life. In this context, democratic eco-socialism is central to the demand: “System Change, Not Climate Change”. It recognises that “democracy” (rights, freedoms, procedures and institutional forms) is about a people's history of struggle against capitalism and oppression; “ecology”, or the human relationship with nature, is essential for our survival and “socialism” is necessary to achieve the end of

exploitation, racism and gender oppression and ensure the rational organisation of society to meet human needs.

Democratic eco-socialism – challenges and tasks for deep just transitions

There are no stages in this struggle to secure human and non-human life. We need to break with the anti-life and climate eco-cide logic of carbon capitalism now. The first challenge in this regard is to overcome old modes of politics and thinking. This means “reformist pragmatism” or “revolutionary maximalism” is not what the historical moment demands.

We are in an uncharted moment in human history which requires a response that brings to the fore what is necessary to sustain life as part of the deep just transition (an idea articulated by trade unions). We need a transformative politics that constitutes power from below, transforms the state into a climate emergency state, builds new systems to sustain life and advances just transitions in every living space so workers and the poor don't bear the brunt of climate change. The second challenge is to recognise there are two fronts of the climate justice struggle: (i) decarbonisation across society: from extraction, production, consumption, finance, living spaces and the state; and (ii) the pro-active emergency responses to climate shocks: when communities are devastated by fires, flooding, droughts, heat waves and sea level rise.

These challenges affirm the organic and immediate tasks facing democratic eco-socialists today. Democratic eco-socialists have three crucial tasks as part of the deep just transition.

- First, building a transformative climate justice movement – a red-green alliance that can lead society. This means environmentalists



have to become socialists and socialists have to become environmentalists to ensure fundamental transformation of capitalism. A new post-carbon bloc of counter-hegemonic red-green alliances led by the working class has to crystalise. This is already happening.

- Second, a programmatic approach to democratic systemic reform including decarbonisation; democratic planning; food, seed and water sovereignty; socially owned renewable energy; climate jobs; zero waste; mass clean energy public transport; solidarity economies; a substantive basic income grant that has to be scaled up now as part of deep just transitions. The Climate Justice Charter process underway is crucial in this regard.
- Third, democratic eco-socialists have to advance a vision and conception of the climate emergency state that is deeply democratic and which builds the relevant capacities to decarbonise and have functional and responsive emergency services and constructs through democratic planning of new systems to sustain life.

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International News

This city has a radical plan to get rid of bosses

By Robert Raymond, crossposted from Huffington Post

As the baby boomers retire, Berkeley, California, wants them to sell their businesses to their workers.

BERKELEY, California — In a 4,000-square-foot industrial space tucked away in a West Berkeley neighborhood, a team of glass blowers is hard at work. In one corner, a young man named Sam is repairing a piece of laboratory glassware used for cannabis distillation, the bright orange flames from his lathe dancing just inches from his face. In another, a woman named Laurel is concentrating on fusing powdered glass “frits.”

They both work for Adams & Chittenden Scientific Glass, a company based in the San Francisco Bay Area. But later this month, Sam and Laurel won’t be employees anymore; they’ll be co-owners of the company, along with eight of their fellow workers.

The company, which produces and repairs highly specialized glass instruments, was launched in 1993. It’s obvious in talking to the two founders, George Chittenden and Tom Adams, in their ramshackle office overlooking the main workshop how passionate they are about their unusual craft. But they’ve both reached retirement age and are ready to step away.

“George is 65 and I’m 71, so I’m sort of heading towards retirement one way or another,” Adams joked from his seat behind a desk littered with papers and custom-made glass components. “And so for a while, we’d been thinking, ‘Well, what are we going to do?’ We could close the doors and walk away or sell to somebody — but that just wouldn’t feel right.”

“Because the work we do is so idiosyncratic, finding a competent, knowledgeable buyer seemed highly improbable,” Chittenden explained. He and Adams didn’t want to put their workers through what happened to them in the early 1990s when they worked for another glass-blowing company that was sold off to someone unfamiliar with the business. They both quit because of poor managerial decisions, which they put down to the new owner’s inexperience.

So Adams and Chittenden are taking an alternative approach to business succession: They’re selling the firm to their workers.

“The idea of converting into a co-op really made sense,” said Chittenden. As a cooperative, the business will be owned and managed by the workers, with each member given a share of the profits and a vote on how the company is run.

Millions of baby boomers like Adams and Chittenden will retire over the next 30 years in what has been dubbed a “silver tsunami.” Yet the vast majority of the estimated 2.34 million boomer-owned businesses don’t have succession plans.

Without such plans, many of these businesses face closure or sale to corporations in distant cities, which could have major repercussions for local economies. Berkeley is just one of many U.S. cities now facing potentially dramatic shifts in their small-business landscapes. But Berkeley has a plan.

The city’s Office of Economic Development has partnered with local organizations to explore options for dealing with the approaching silver tsunami. It has set up a city-funded program, believed to be



one of the first of its kind in the U.S., which aims to retain and support small businesses that are at risk of closure — or, in some cases, of being gobbled up by asset-stripping private equity firms. It will do this by converting them to employee-owned businesses, otherwise known as worker cooperatives.

“Small businesses comprise 97% of all of the employers in the city of Berkeley,” Jordan Klein, the city’s economic development manager, told HuffPost. “And they account for about 40% of the jobs within the city — so obviously they’re critical to our local economy.”

Berkeley, along with larger cities like Austin, Texas, and New York, is part of a broader municipal movement that views employee ownership as not just a strategy to retain at-risk businesses, but also a way to address rising income and wealth inequality.

California has the fourth highest level of income inequality in the U.S., and the Bay Area specifically is experiencing a housing affordability crisis that makes it increasingly difficult for low- to medium-wage earners to live in the cities where they work.

The business cooperative model helps tackle some of the root causes of these crises by giving workers a say in decisions that affect their lives, said Peter Gowan, a policy associate at the Next System Project, who has just authored a report on worker ownership.

A worker co-op “says that ... we’re not going to have someone who makes money just by owning things, that the people who work at this business are also going to get the wealth generated through profits,” said Gowan.

Because these co-ops are managed democratically, the worker-owners can vote on strategic decisions

such as whether to provide themselves with a living wage, for example. A 2017 report released by the National Center for Employee Ownership found that worker-owners make on average 33% more than their employee counterparts in the same industry.

And 2016 research that studied international data found that worker co-ops tend to match or outperform traditional business structures: They survive at least as long, they are often more productive, they may weather recessions better, and they provide workers with profit-sharing opportunities unavailable at traditional companies.

“There is a real potential for a worker co-op model to ensure the survival of a business,” Gowan said. “But it’s more than just survival. It’s a transition to a model that allows workers to choose who governs over them for half of their waking lives. It’s a really effective model for addressing this crisis of extractive capitalism.”

For businesses like Adams & Chittenden Scientific Glass that don’t really see any other viable options, co-ops have a strong appeal.

“When we first started thinking about the future, it was totally unclear,” Adams recalled. Then he came across the idea of converting to a co-op while listening to the radio. “It was a local segment that talked about the whole process of retiring baby boomers selling businesses to their workers. It struck me as like, ‘Huh, that’s kind of interesting.’”

The company has been helped through the conversion process by Project Equity, a small nonprofit based in nearby Oakland that promotes employee-owned businesses

As one of the local organizations partnering with Berkeley on its cooperative development program,



Project Equity has been identifying firms that fall within the silver tsunami risk profile. It found more than 1,000 businesses, which together employ 30% of workers and generate around 60% of the revenue earned by the city's businesses.

"There's a big disconnection right now between the people who are making decisions and those who are affected by their decisions," Project Equity's co-founder Alison Lingane told HuffPost. "It's not just the workers who are affected — it's the whole community. And the wealth and income gaps that result from this are in many ways the defining issues of our time."

Project Equity has now started the process of contacting businesses and explaining how they could become co-ops. If a company is interested, Project Equity will conduct a feasibility study to determine whether co-op conversion is a viable option. The business has to be profitable — the goal of this program is not necessarily to save firms that are failing even before their aging owners retire — and, of course, the workers must actually be interested in taking on the business.

These studies can take months and each one comes with a price tag of roughly \$5,000. So far it's all subsidized by the city. This is significant, said Lingane, because "Berkeley is the first city in California that we're aware of where the city itself has actually put money into this strategy."

The idea of converting boomers' businesses to co-ops is gaining support on the federal level as well. In 2018, the Main Street Employee Ownership Act, which makes it easier for employee-owned businesses to get loans, was enacted with bipartisan support. The law is designed to level the playing field for worker cooperatives, which, because of their ownership structure, tend to find it harder to

secure financing than traditional firms.

"What we've had for a very long time is a model where small and medium-sized businesses are built up by owners," Gowan told HuffPost. "And then one of these big equity firms — vulture capitalists, I like to call them — sweeps in and strips out the parts that are most profitable and they lay off all the rest of the workers. We see this all around the country."

Gowan is hopeful that the mass retirement of the baby boomers will spur an alternative vision to take root.

Adams & Chittenden Scientific Glass is on the cusp of completing the final legal steps toward conversion. They made the announcement at their annual pig roast in March, an event that they've put on for the last two decades and that draws hundreds of community members into their workshop for live music, demonstrations and, of course, a pig with a custom-blown glass apple in its mouth.

"Everybody here is here because they dig glass," Chittenden said. "So they're committed. And if they're productive and run the business well, they'll be better paid and they're going to have control of their situations."

Chittenden is all too aware of the economic inequality in his community. "It's so problematic here in the Bay Area," he said looking over the workshop floor. "That's one of the things that, just on a kind of soul level, this transition feels really good about — the employees are becoming owners of their business. And if these guys can make a good living doing this stuff, I'd be really proud of that, really proud."

Article source: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/berkeley-business-cooperatives-baby-boomers-retire_n_5cc8b8d2e4b0d123954be5df



Long live the Women's Committee

By Cinzia Arruzza, Paula Varela, cross posted from Jacobin

MadyGraf is an occupied and self-managed printing factory in Buenos Aires. The factory was formerly the property of RR Donnelley, a US corporation with headquarters in Chicago. Workers and their families occupied the factory in 2014, when — after announcing the dismissal of 123 workers of a workforce of 400 — the management decided to shut down in response to the workers' resistance. Following the occupation, ex-Donnelley workers formed a cooperative (MadyGraf), which is currently affiliated with the printing workers union (Federación Gráfica Bonaerense, FGB). Today the factory is facing an uncertain future, due to the austerity policies implemented by Macri's government, which have thrown the economy into recession, and to the skyrocketing inflation, which is making energy and raw material costs prohibitive for the cooperative.

A Pillar of the Struggle

One of the pillars of the occupation is the MadyGraf women's committee, which was originally formed in 2011, when the management threatened to dismiss around twenty workers. At the time the entire factory workforce was male, and the women's committee was formed by the workers' partners, wives, and sisters, who came together in order to support them in their struggle against the management.

While initially the women's committee was simply meant to be a support group, it rapidly evolved into something else. It became a place where women could come together and discuss not only the factory's situation, but also their own lives and needs as working-class women. The dynamic further changed in 2014, when the workers occupied and took over the factory, with the women's participation. One of the greatest changes occurring at that moment was



that a number of women — wives, partners, and relatives — entered the factory's workforce. Many of the committee's women had been housewives until then, while others had been employed as nurses, domestic workers, and teachers.

As Veronica, a member of the women's committee, recounts this moment:

We started organizing with our husbands to defend their jobs. The workers' resistance was so strong that the company decided to shut down. We occupied the factory together with our children: we would have our meals together in the factory, we had a lot of support from the community, we had a fund, we received gifts for our children. We also started reaching out to the other wives, because there were workers who did not want their wives to participate in the struggle. At some point there was the need to employ more workers to manage the occupied factory: it is at this moment that several wives, mothers, and sisters started working in the factory as well.

A Space of Radicalization

The decision-making body of the cooperative is the workers' assembly. It was the workers' assembly that decided to reduce production on March 8, 2017 and 2018, in order to allow the women workers and some men to take part in the feminist strike and marches against gender violence and for the right



to abortion.

The women's committee was key in putting forward this proposal, as well as other proposals that were approved by the assembly: the institution of a "woman's day" (a day of leave during menstruation), wage equality among men and women as well as six month paid maternity leave and a sick day for children. The assembly also challenged a strict division of roles within production: workers are allowed to change their task, and the division between "female" and "male" jobs has been abolished. As a consequence a number of women started working as machine operators. Monica recalls how she "learned to operate the machines by observing how they were used and asking many questions. At some point I was asked if I wanted to try to operate the machine and I said I did". She is now a regular machine operator.

Even before the formation of the women's committee in 2011, the ex-Donnelley workers had to go through a process of discussion and revision of a number of sexist prejudices. One of the workers, Tamara, is a woman who transitioned before the factory shut down. As she explained to her co-workers, she used to come to work dressed as a man, because she was afraid she would lose her job otherwise. But the beginning of the struggle around the factory gave her the courage to transition. When she made the decision, she spoke with her co-workers and told them about the enormous difficulties she was having in her family. This was the beginning of a deep discussion, which forced the factory's workers to think about sexism and the way they had naturalized it. As a result, Tamara's co-workers started fighting for her rights too: the right to dress as she wanted or to use a women's bathroom. This was a prelude to the formation of the women's committee.

The women's committee rapidly became a space of radicalization and politicization, encompassing the fight around the factory, but also participation in the feminist mobilizations against femicides and for free abortion. Within this process, the committee's women came to develop awareness of their double oppression, as women and as workers.

One of the leaders of the committee remembers how this process entirely reshaped her sense of herself and of the world in which she lives:

When we organized as women's committee we started with the support to our men, however we began discussing other issues too. At the beginning I had no idea that women had rights. I was against abortion, but I was against because I didn't know that this is women's decision. In the women's committee in 2011 we started discussing abortion, domestic abuse, gender violence, sexism. The word "sexism" was not part of my vocabulary, but when we started discussing it I realized how sexism operates within society. I always say that the women's committee changed my life as a woman. There were also conflicts within the factory around our participation in the feminist movement, but I kept saying: "I'm part of the green tide" [green is the symbol of the movement for free and legal abortion in Argentina]. When we became aware of our oppression as women, although as members of the working class, our first task was to discuss with the others, including our partners. We presented our own program in the factory assemblies. We explained that our struggle as women also concerned our men, and little by little they started being more open. We also explained that our oppression as working women is not the same as that of other women. It was a long and deep debate, because we wanted to involve them in the "green tide," we wanted them to take to the streets with us, because these issues concern our bodies, our lives: we die of illegal abortion.



The Movement Continues

Once women started entering production, the women's committee had to face the problem of childcare. Before the occupation, when they were demonstrating outside the factory, they would organize childcare duties among themselves. But once they occupied the factory and entered production, it became clear that this was not going to be a solution. Ultimately, the committee persuaded the assembly to create a free childcare facility in the factory, in order to allow mothers not only to be active in production, but also to participate in political activities.

There were other obstacles to overcome as well. When the cooperative demanded affiliation with the union (Federación Gráfica Bonaerense), the union at first resisted, as the union leadership was against the occupation of the factory. Once affiliation was accepted the union leadership proposed as a condition that only male workers could be affiliated and be allowed to participate in meetings. The argument was that women had entered the workforce only after the occupation, as cooperative workers, and had not worked for a boss.

In spite of these challenges, for the women participating in the women's committee, this has been a life-changing experience. Lucrecia, another member of the committee, remembers when she first decided to join the struggle:

I was a housewife. I knew of the existence of the women's committee, my partner had told me about it, but I didn't have a desire to get involved in it. When the management's attack started in 2014 I decided to get involved in the struggle. I met the comrades of the women's committee when I participated in an assembly of the families, at the beginning of the occupation. What struck me is that, while we were very worried and sad about the situation, the women of the committee were strong and combative. I and

other wives decided then to join the committee.

While speaking of the way this experience changed her life, one of Lucrecia's co-workers says through tears:

I'm a mother, this changed my life as a woman and I hope it will change it for our children. I cannot express the way in which I have changed thanks to this experience, I don't find the words for it. It is a lot of work to go to marches and demonstrations, but I don't care, I'm doing this for my children and to change this shitty society.

Maria adds:

It gives us enormous strength that women can organize together, can strike and leave their workplace to fight for our lives. The women's committee is a pillar in the factory. We are equal to our men comrades in the struggle. It gives me enormous strength to feel that I have so many women comrades supporting me in, and men too. Our struggle is not just for ourselves, it is for our class, for all workers. We are in a very hard moment, but we keep going so that our children can have a home and food. And we are happy to receive solidarity, but it is not enough: we want to change this society. We don't want people to suffer the way we are suffering, and we know that there are people who are suffering even more than us. This is why we want to change everything. We are also now organizing a workers' club, where there will be sport, painting, milonga, and other activities, so that our families and the families of other workers can come here to MadyGraf to socialize.

Over the course of the year, the committee's women have participated in the country's massive feminist mobilizations and become aware of the enormous potential of this movement. Maria is also aware of its difficulties: "From the viewpoint of working women we have a big problem: the union bureaucracy,



which refused to support our struggle for our lives, for example on March 8. Working women have this obstacle. Many women do leave their workplace to participate in the strike and the march. But if we consider that workers are the majority of the population, can you imagine our power if our unions were truly supportive of our struggle?" She then continues: "We had eight years of Cristina Kirchner government: women were initially galvanized because it was a woman's government. But nothing changed during her government. We have been occupying this factory for four years: this means that our factory was shut down under her government. Eight years of a woman's government were not sufficient to realize the right to abortion, to fill the gender wage gap. Yes, her government made it possible for our demands as women to be visible, but Cristina's strategy was not the liberation of women." [2]

On February 20, MadyGraf workers were repressed by the police during a demonstration in front of the Congress. They were distributing free notebooks, produced as part of their campaign denouncing the corruption of the Ministry of Education — which, in a government's call for bids, unlawfully favored the monopolistic printing industry to the detriment of cooperatives and public schools. This action was a way to show to the community what a cooperative can do in support of public education. MadyGraf has also delivered more than three million notebooks free of charge to different schools in poor areas of the province. However, the hardships they are facing are not discouraging MadyGraf workers, who are promoting a donation campaign in support of their experiment in workers' control.

Article Source: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/04/argentina-worker-run-factory-feminism>

Cyclone Idai: Why is the media not linking it to climate change?

Trump, Rich Industrialised Countries and Carbon Corporations Must Pay a Climate Debt for Damage Caused

Press Statement issued by COPAC and SAFSC, 22 March 2019

On the 14th of March, a cyclone with winds of up to 177km/h hit Southern Africa, devastating large parts of Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. Even in the early stages of the aftermath, it has been hailed as a humanitarian disaster. According to the UN's weather agency, it is possible that cyclone Idai has the potential to be the worst weather related disaster to ever hit the Southern Hemisphere. This is a climate disaster engendering climate injustice. In Zimbabwe, close to 100 people have been confirmed dead, and over 200 are missing. Over 600 houses were destroyed, and around 20 000 were damaged. Zimbabwe is experiencing landslides and roads are completely destroyed leaving people stranded. In Malawi, approximately 56 people have been killed, and close to 600 missing. Due to flooding and other damage, around 11 000 households are displaced, with around 920 000 people being affected in total. Reports coming out of Mozambique are saying that over 500 000 people have been impacted. The death toll in Mozambique is around 200, but is continuing to rise as more than 350 000 people are at risk, with estimations saying that the death toll could triple.

With this level of devastation, it is important to ask why this climate shock has occurred. The reality is cyclone Idai is an example of extreme weather brought on by climate change. According to the UN IPCC 1.5C degree report, human activities have been responsible for approximately 1C degree increase in temperature globally since before the industrial revolution. If we continue to increase



greenhouse gas emissions at the same levels, we are likely to reach a 1.5C degree increase within the next 20 years or sooner. Research has shown that extreme climate and weather conditions were observed around the 0.5C degree increase mark. The report states that “trends in intensity and frequency of some climate and weather extremes have been detected...” (IPCC 2018), and this increase in frequency and intensity will only continue to worsen as temperatures continue to rise. Moreover, scientific research has confirmed a link between cyclone Idai and heating oceans linked to climate change. Climate change is extremely serious in the African context, with high levels of inequality, poverty, limited resources, environmental destruction led by transnational corporations and indebtedness to rich countries. Africa did not cause the climate crisis and most Africans have very low per capita emissions compared to Americans or South Africans, for instance. Yet Africa is going to experience some of the worst extremes of climate change and increasing temperatures. The IPCC 1.5 degree Report tells us that Sub-Saharan Africa, has already been experiencing more frequent and intense climate extremes, and an overshoot of 1.5C degree increase will mean devastating consequences for the region. The temperature increases that the region will face are projected to be at least twice higher than the global average. We stand with the people of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi that have been devastated by cyclone Idai. Many measures could have been taken such as early warning systems, media mainstreaming climate news so extreme weather is monitored and anticipated, disaster management systems put in place, for instance, to prevent a loss of life. This has not happened because of climate denialism amongst political leaders, the media and states in the region. On Monday 18 March 2019 we engaged key institutions in the media family such as the Sunday Times, Press Council and the South African National

Editors Forum (SANEF) to #EndClimateDenialism in the media. We await a formal response from SANEF regarding our demands to ensure the media #EndClimateDenialism. We have initiated and welcome a debate on the role of the media in mainstreaming and reporting the worsening climate crisis so we can educate the public and advance climate justice alternatives, now, as part of the deep just transition to sustain life. Failure by the media to take climate science seriously imperils our society even more. Climate change is being driven by petro states, such as Trump’s USA leading the fracking boom, and carbon corporations. Rich industrial countries also owe the world a climate debt for 150 years of using coal, oil and gas for industrialisation. From the standpoint of climate justice, we demand petro states, carbon corporations and rich industrial countries contribute reparations to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi for the climate debt owed, so these countries can rebuild as part of the deep just transition. Finally, South Africa is the 14th highest carbon emitter in the world. Our coal addiction is a big part of the problem. Energy imports from Mozambique were also disrupted due to the carnage of cyclone.

Idai and this contributed to Eskom’s recent rolling black outs. We demand a deep just transition now beyond fossil fuels like coal, to socially owned renewable energy, a food, seed and water sovereignty system, a universal basic income grant and climate jobs, as a minimum, to ensure we mitigate climate shocks, meet the needs of workers and poor communities. Through our climate justice charter process we will advance these alternatives for South Africa. More information is available at www.safsc.org.za and www.copac.org.za

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Grassroots organisation, Schools for Climate Action, calls for elected officials to act on Climate Change

Tanya Turneaure

Even before the Sonoma County California fires tore through our hills and communities in the fall of 2017, a colleague at the school where I teach invited a group of concerned parents, teachers, and students to his home to discuss what we could do to combat climate change. In the spring of 2017, we gathered to watch films and to discuss data and strategy. By mid summer 2017, we reached out to board members of our local Sebastopol Union School District (SUSD). We handed them a template climate resolution, and that fall--no doubt spurred on by the fires--SUSD became one of the first public school districts in the United States to pass a resolution addressing climate change. And over the next months, we got a climate resolution passed at the Sonoma County Office of Education, and we and other activists replicated our work in several additional local school districts.

Fundamentally, our organisation names climate change as a generational justice issue, as the youngest of us stand to face the most severe consequences of a changing climate. We ask public school districts--as some of the only public institutions solely devoted to the welfare of children--to pass resolutions that recognize climate change as a generational justice issue and ask the U.S.

Congress to act on climate change. At the same time, we coach young people on how to approach elected officials and advocate for their interests. Many of the Schools for Climate Action (SCA) climate resolutions have passed as a direct result of emails, letters, phone calls, meetings, and public statements by our youth members.

As our network has grown, students, teachers, parents, and concerned citizens have worked to pass further climate resolutions across the United States. To date, twenty-eight school district resolutions have passed, and additional districts, as well as some umbrella organizations, are currently considering resolutions. Many districts have embedded green initiatives into their resolutions, including projects such as school gardens and solar panels that both reduce the schools' carbon footprints and educate the students on sustainable practices. Furthermore, in the spring of 2018, a few SCA members travelled to Washington D.C. to deliver copies of climate resolutions to Congress, and we plan to send a larger contingent in 2019 to hand deliver resolutions to every member of Congress. It is our hope that Congress people will follow the lead of the multitudes of local elected officials who have the support of their constituencies.

Since the time of SCA's inception, we have experienced devastating fires elsewhere in California, and climate change has continued to affect humans and habitats all over the globe in myriad and unprecedented ways. We hope that other activist-citizens around the world replicate or adapt the SCA model in their own locales, strengthening our collective political will to act on climate change. Please visit our Schools for Climate Action website for more information: <https://schoolsforclimateaction.weebly.com/>



National News

Do Red and Green Mix?

By Vishwas Satgar

Michael Löwy's essay on ecosocialism has stimulated an interesting array of critiques from feminists, democrats, eco-capitalists, and more in this exchange. This is an exciting debate and, I would argue, a necessary one to ensure the twenty-first-century return of "socialism" is not grounded in abstract certainties, dogmatic formulas, and intellectual vanguardism. From the African context, particularly South Africa, after two decades of disastrous post-apartheid financialization and unleashing of unbridled markets, we are facing realities that even the World Bank is confounded by in its recent 2018 report. The World Bank suggests that, by any metric, we are one of the most unequal countries in the world. Yet the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) has made these observations since 2014. Their research has shown that the top 10% gets two thirds of South Africa's income, while half of all South Africans are chronically poor, living in households with a per capita income of R1,149 or less per month.

Beside such hideous inequalities, South Africa has a structurally contracting economy and a carbon intensity per capita surpassing that of China, India, and Brazil. Its democracy has been dramatically weakened by the power that credit rating agencies wield, the grip of monetarist policy that merely privileges globalized interests and systemic levels of corruption, which most political elites have surrendered to, as part of the normalcy of a "market democracy." Our current drought is the worst in the history of the country and is certainly our first climate shock. Pre-existing inequalities are supplemented by new climate inequalities such as increases in food prices, water privatization, etc. South Africa is a

poster nation for a 3-4 degree increase in planetary temperature. Of course, it is not alone alongside other OECD countries, including the US, which has eclipsed Saudi Arabia and Russia in fossil fuel extraction, due to the fracking boom and Trump's carbon capitalism.

South Africa and its carbon democracy do not have a future with more of the same marketized approach, even in a lightly renovated form, as suggested by economists such as Dani Rodrik. So we are sitting with a National Development Plan (neoliberal, financialized, and marketized), which is meant to guide our development till 2030. This plan includes more exports of primary commodities like minerals and agriculture, reproducing our coal driven minerals-energy complex and a globalized food system while 14 million go hungry every day. Carbon emission scenarios are based on science that is already outdated due to the latest IPCC report, and renewable energy is locked into a ceiling of 20,000 megawatts by 2030 to ensure that the World Bank can recover its loan finance (plus interest) for some of the biggest coal-fired power stations in the world.

South Africa's National Development Plan is not about democratic planning as envisaged by Löwy. Instead, it is a technocratic ideological device that even fails at class compromise. It speaks to global markets and institutions that merely want to see a disciplined subject, a "good governed" African state that marches in tune with the strictures of the IMF, World Bank, WTO, and the global power structure that manages a globalized capitalism and is not willing to learn lessons from history. Karl Polanyi's historical sequence, highlighted in *The Great Transformation*, of marketized capitalism in the late nineteenth century which led to the collapse of the international system and World War I, then again, unleashed with the return to the gold standard and



which ultimately led to World War II, does not inform the economics departments or institutions in Europe or the US. After the crash circa 2007-2009, we are returning to more of the same, more dis-embedded markets!

In this context, capitalism has clearly not learned lessons from its past, including the hollowing out of democracy it has engendered, and its current failures. A democracy that privileges the sovereignty of capital over the state and society is not a democracy. It is a market democracy based on the tyranny of the modern corporation. The demos reduced to a political market with limited ideological choices is not a democracy. In this context, is the US taking us into World War III as it tries to reassert its dominance after the recent and ongoing crisis? A naturalized hegemony of capitalism is as dangerous as an unreflective socialism.

Capitalism carries the burden of its horrors, limits, and failures. So does socialism. It does not help the debate to be one-sided on these issues. For socialism, there are two issues in this rich history which ecosocialists cannot run away from and which has been foregrounded in this exchange. Democracy as rule by, with, and for the demos is absolutely necessary. Moreover, markets as embedded, regulated, values-based, and socialized institutions are also absolutely necessary. Radical democracy and markets will have to find a place alongside democratic planning in variegated contexts and through the struggles that are emerging in different societies to prevent the ecocidal extinction of all of us. These institutions cannot be blueprinted, designed, or prescribed, but will emerge as struggles develop to advance democratic systemic reforms to achieve democratic ecosocialisms (plural) in the twenty-first century. Food sovereignty, solidarity economy, climate jobs, socially owned renewable energy, zero waste, and water commoning are just some of the

democratic systemic reforms envisaged by current movements at the frontlines of climate justice. They embody radical democracy, socialized markets, and democratic planning as crucial aspects of the logic of these democratic systemic reforms. Moreover, anti-racism and women's emancipation are central to the imaginary of these decolonizing and transformative alternatives. Many of these democratic systemic reforms feature in a volume I recently edited titled *Climate Crisis: [Democratic Ecosocialism in South Africa and the World](#)*.

Finally, socialism was diverse in the twentieth century - social democracy, Sovietized socialism (and its copies), and revolutionary nationalism (Nyere's African socialism, Nehruvian socialism in India, etc.). In the Global South in reflecting on our legacies of socialism, we also have to take stock of the paths not taken, which also feed into the constitution of the democratic ecosocialist imagination in the twenty-first century. In this regard, various examples stand out, such as Minqi Li's critique of China's socioecological limits and the transformations required. Another example is Gandhi's critique of Western modernity, commitment to village-based democracy and stewardship of the commons, and his bioethic of living slowly and minimally which did not triumph against Nehru's productivist and nationalist socialism. Add to this the historical critique by indigenous communities of forced modernization (including productivist socialisms), its dangers, and the need for the validation of indigenous ecologies. Democratic ecosocialism is not merely an intellectual debate; it is central to the practice, struggles, and visions of movements struggling to overcome the eco-fascist logic of carbon capitalism. Moreover, in the twenty-first century, the horizons and imaginary of democratic ecosocialism certainly do not belong exclusively to Marxist ecologists, including myself.



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South Africa will not survive the climate crisis!

*Vishwas Satgar, Ferrial Adam and
Itumeleng Mogatusi*

South Africa's state is a climate crisis failed state. This might seem like a harsh indictment but when placed in the context of contemporary climate science, increasing climate shocks and concerns about links between climate change and eco-system collapse on a planetary scale this characterisation is accurate. The South African state is not bringing the public into its confidence about the current climate crisis and displaying climate emergency leadership. A few weeks ago the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the scientific body, advising the UN and world governments on the current climate science issued their latest scientific study on a 1.5°C increase in planetary temperature. The report confirmed that the parameters of the earth's climate system have changed with a 1°C increase in temperature since pre the industrial revolution. Extreme weather events or climate shocks are registering with more frequency which includes droughts, hurricanes, flooding and heat waves. The report also confirmed, in its comparison with a 2°C increase, that social systems and eco-systems (such as oceans, fisheries, forests) stand a better chance of surviving at 1.5°C than at 2°C. Translated into everyday language if we allow the earth's temperature to increase to 2°C this is a dangerous threshold with major risks and tipping points which could make human life on planet earth extremely uncertain. The simple truth is that we are safer at a 1.5°C threshold but have to act fast and now to ensure we do not overshoot this threshold. We have 12 years to radically alter the world's greenhouse gas emissions trajectory to prevent catastrophic

climate change and remain within a 1.5°C limit.

The human species and other life forms are at a dangerous cross-roads. Generational justice also demands we act now to give the human species a chance of surviving. To prevent a 1.5°C overshoot in planetary temperature South Africa has to play its part. As a coal addicted society, with the 14th highest carbon emissions in the world, a per capita carbon footprint higher than China, India or Brazil, South Africa shoulders a major responsibility to lead by example. This means, and consistent with the IPCC report, South Africa needs to treat the climate crisis as a national emergency that can enable us to address inequalities through building new adaptation systems (water, socially owned renewable energy, food, clean energy public transport, health, production, consumption and financial systems) to sustain life. Climate crisis proofing South Africa amounts to ensuring every human being is enabled through rights, policies and democratic planning to adapt to the most dangerous challenge. The National Development Plan has to be scrapped and replaced by a Climate Emergency Plan, developed in a bottom up manner, to advance the deep just transition now.

As climate justice activists and concerned citizens, coordinated by the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC) and the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC), we sent an open letter to President Ramaphosa, the Speaker of Parliament and the Secretary of Parliament on the 23rd of October. This open letter is supported by over 60 civil society organisations including trade union federations, FEDUSA and SAFTU. Besides highlighting the challenge of adaptation we also demanded immediate action on mitigation to bring down South Africa's carbon emissions to contribute to the global effort of preventing a 1.5°C overshoot. Failing to do this renders the South African state



criminal, unjust and confirms its status as climate crisis failed state.

We believe the following action has to be taken to bring down our carbon emissions:

- Adjusting South Africa's peak, plateau and decline scenarios, which are out of step with the current science on a 1.5°C increase;
- Adjusting the Integrated Resource Plan by removing the ceiling on renewable energy to enable an accelerated shift to socially owned renewable energy;
- Amending the Climate Bill to ensure people driven sustainable development planning is enabled;
- Going beyond government's 'death spiral' of ESKOM approach to restructuring ESKOM to protect the interests of workers while prioritising an end to the climate driven 'death spiral of society' through advancing the deep just transition;
- Immediately ending all new investment in coal mining and fracking;

South Africa's drought is one of the worst in the history of the country and it is treated like a 'natural disaster' rather than a climate shock from which we can learn to prepare for the next drought. In economic terms South Africa's GDP reflected the impact of the drought. South Africa's maize crop production and livestock production collapsed during the drought. But this does not tell us about the suffering of workers and the poor. Low income households have been squeezed by increases in food prices, privatisation of water and even the Day Zero approach of the City of Cape Town. South Africa's drought has created new climate inequalities. With South Africa already declared a poster-child of inequality, ironically, by the World Bank in its recent 2018 report, imagine what more droughts, floods, sea-level rise and heatwaves will

do. A state with a ballooning debt to GDP ratio, failing parastatals many of which are on the brink of bankruptcy, will not be able to manage a mega drought that wipes out its food crops or destroys major infrastructure through flooding. Waiting to address climate change makes it more costly and more complex to deal with.

South Africa has the opportunity to rebuild state institutions and strengthen its democracy post the Zuma disaster. In this context the imperatives of the climate crisis need to inform what we do so we construct a climate emergency state with the competencies, functions and practices to sustain life. Hence our open letter to President Ramaphosa calls for an emergency sitting of parliament to discuss the UN-IPCC report and its implications for South Africa's climate change policy. Up till now we have not received an acknowledgement or response from his office, the office of the Speaker of Parliament or the Secretary of Parliament. While we acknowledge the State President is busy mobilising foreign investors, we do not believe foreign investment and deep globalisation have addressed our developmental challenges for more than 20 years. Foreign investment is not a development strategy, particularly in the context of the climate crisis, when it is about Chinese investors wanting coal fired power stations or corporations wanting to invest in off-shore gas and oil extraction. This is contrary the challenge of preventing the extinction of the human race and other life forms. South Africa needs to break now with fossil fuels. Globally, governments are taking action on climate change. The Spanish Government has just taken decisive action to stop coal mining and has agreed to invest in mining communities as part of the transition. The German government has also set up a commission with unions and mining affected communities to reach consensus on ending the use of coal and devising transition strategies for coal mining



communities. The New Zealand government has banned off-shore drilling for oil and gas. Uruguay has a public sector led process to ensure most of its needs are met through renewables. South Africa needs to learn from these experiences to build a climate emergency state. In this context our parliament is the most important democratic platform to deliberate on the issues raised by the IPCC 1.5C report and its implications. It serves a pedagogical function for the nation, engenders a national discourse to find solutions and serves to lay the basis for rallying the country in a united manner, in the spirit of radical non-racialism, to address the climate crisis and inaugurate a deep just transition.

However, it would seem South Africa's President, Speaker and Secretary to Parliament do not believe convening an emergency sitting of parliament is in the national interest or in the interest of future generations. We, however, beg to differ and reiterate our call to the President to convene an emergency sitting of parliament to deliberate on the science of the climate crisis and our collective response. Moreover, in coming months we are calling for mass and non-violent civil resistance through convening peoples parliaments; targeting banks and financing houses that invest in fossil fuels; challenging the media to raise awareness about the climate crisis and climate justice solutions and mobilising pressure for the Human Rights Commission, the Public Protector and other democratic institutions to recognise the seriousness of the climate crisis and its implications for our rights regime; mobilising a counter narrative during the elections for political parties to understand they don't stand for climate justice in South Africa, but yet want our votes; we will also mob relevant politicians with social media; go to jail if necessary to stop fossil fuel extraction and finally we are mobilising public input into a climate justice charter process for South Africa. This charter will be adopted at a People's Assembly in

2019. The time to act is now to prevent catastrophic climate change.

A Climate Justice Critique of South African Political Parties: What are the commitments of the ANC, DA and EFF to a Deep Just Transition to Sustain Life?

Issued by COPAC and SAFSC

1. Introduction

South Africa goes to its 6th national elections on May 8th, 2019, with 48 contesting parties. This is in a context in which inequality is worsening, costs of living are going up and unemployment is a major challenge. This election is also happening while South Africa's worst drought in recorded history is still ravaging various villages and towns. All our political parties have failed to recognize the drought as a climate shock. All seemed surprised by cyclone Idai, another climate shock, and its devastation. The science on climate change from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is clear that as planet earth is heated through more greenhouse gas emissions (from burning coal, oil and gas) we will have more extreme weather shocks such as droughts, heatwaves, floods, cyclones and more. We are currently at 1.2 degree Celsius hotter since before the industrial revolution and are fast heading to a 1.5C overshoot unless over the next 12 years we cut emissions by 45% to 2010 levels and to net zero by 2050. We have 12 years to prevent catastrophic climate change.

This climate justice critique is based on a reading of party manifestos. It applies to all political parties while making specific critiques of the ANC, DA and EFF, the larger parties in South Africa's current political system.



General Climate Justice Critique of Political Parties

2.1 The climate crisis is a systemic crisis of carbon driven global capitalism. It has its origins in 150 years of fossil fuel extraction and use by rich industrialised countries. Industrialising countries like China, Brazil, India and Russia control substantial amounts of fossil fuel reserves today. South Africa's coal addiction also makes it a carbon criminal state. Its use of coal intensifies climate change and its impacts through extreme weather events, including on the continent. More climate change brings climate inequalities and injustices through escalating food and water costs as well as job losses. Many farm workers have been retrenched in the context of South Africa's drought. None of the parties understand climate change as a dangerous contradiction driven by carbon capitalism and the need for South Africa to be a climate justice state in relation with its people, on the continent and the world stage.

2.2 The climate crisis is a complex and interconnected crisis. Given that carbon is not just extracted but is also used as a major energy source across economies. Moreover, carbon energy use differs from sectors. In South Africa at least 9% of emissions come from globalised agriculture. Carbon is also used in various industrial processes such as construction. An energy transition to socially owned renewables is just one part of the challenge. Decarbonising the economy is a broader challenge. Moreover, as climate shocks continue we need new adaptive systems that sustain life. We have to recognize the interconnections of cause and multiple effects. Cyclone Idai and its effects could have been mitigated if there were proper disaster management systems, media reporting, dam management, food sovereignty systems, health systems, functioning across the country for example. Instead, river flooding started before Idai hit landfall in central Mozambique, dam walls

failed, there was inadequate communication to warn people and disaster management systems have been overwhelmed. Cholera, hunger, lack of access to health care and water stress are claiming lives besides the direct impact of the cyclone. South Africa's drought, another example of a climate shock, has also had several effects on society, economy and ecological relations. None of the political parties understand or would like to voice the complexity of the climate crisis.

2.3 We have a crisis of climate leadership amongst all South Africa's political parties and none are committed to ensuring South Africa, the region and the continent is on a climate emergency footing. Being on a climate emergency footing means advancing a deep just transition/s to ensure regulated, purposive, ambitions and planned reductions in carbon emissions to prevent a 1.5C overshoot and the necessary adaptive systems are in place that transform energy, production, consumption, finance and public systems through democratic systemic reforms to ensure workers, the poor and the vulnerable do not pay the price of the transition and climate shocks. Such a deep just transition is led by the working class and mass social forces, rooted in a red-green alliance seeking climate justice.

2.4 None of South Africa's parties understand the climate crisis as part of larger ecological crisis. More extraction, pollution, chemical based agriculture, waste, deforestation and over consumption are undermining natural cycles of the earth system and accelerating species extinction. Several planetary bio-physical limits (fresh water, land use, ocean acidification, bio-geochemical flows, for example) are being breached and capitalism's eco-cidal logic is creating a toxic and unlivable world. We need to reconnect with the web of life, recognise we share the planet with other life forms that have rights and



have to rethink everything from the standpoint of eco-centric ethics and the deep just transition. None of the political parties are making these arguments to confront the eco-cidal logic of capitalism.

Climate Justice Critique of the African National Congress (ANC)

3.1 The ANC as the ruling party in South Africa has locked South Africa into the pledge and review mechanism of the United Nations. The ANC government turned its back on a climate justice approach to the historical debt owed by rich industrialised countries, to ambitious regulated reductions in carbon emissions and is certainly not positioning South Africa as a climate justice state on the continent. Moreover, its response to the drought, as a major climate shock, has been dismal. A national disaster was declared in early 2018 after the food system collapsed, many communities were ravaged by the drought and after the national department of water affairs was looted, with various water delivery projects compromised. The drought continues in South Africa and there is no leadership from the ANC state to learn lessons and prepare for the next round of climate shocks. The drought and the climate crisis are not mentioned in the manifesto. There is no explicit theme in the manifesto dealing with the climate crisis.

3.2 The ANC manifesto vaunts its successes and is very self congratulatory. It reads as though South Africa owes the ANC a debt for the great job it has done based on a set of quantitative indicators showing grand successes and improvements. These magnitudes of success hide more than they reveal. South Africa has an economy in deep crisis; inequalities, unemployment and hunger have increased. The ANC takes no responsibility for this disaster and crisis of social reproduction it has led South Africa into for 25 years. Climate shocks will only deepen the suffering of the majority. Yet, the

ANC manifesto makes no effort to bring to the fore the existential threat of the climate crisis.

3.3 The ANC proclaims a commitment to industrialisation (including for localised renewable energy technology production), the '4th industrial revolution', township economies, land reform, public transport, National Health Insurance etc. in a context in which state capture has fundamentally compromised the ability of the state to lead even modest reforms. The Arms deal, Nkandla, 'Ace-Gate' and BOSASA are only the tip of the rotten rubbish heap. According to the auditor general reports, 2017-2018, irregular expenditure in government was R72 billion. The majority of state entities audited had adverse findings. The country knows, through the Zondo Commission, how ANC factions have been engaged in state capture regarding Eskom (South Africa's monopoly energy parastatal). The ANC cannot be trusted with leading industrialisation of renewables, laying the basis for a transition to a renewable energy system, for resolving the challenges of Eskom and fixing our water systems. More state failure rather than the makings of a climate emergency state should be expected.

3.4 The ANC manifesto calls for gas and oil extraction in our oceans. It also understands renewables as a compliment to coal. All of this is linked to the investment game plan of raising investment levels to R1.3 trillion over the next 4 years. The ANC manifesto still envisages a deeply globalised economy, driven by the interests of transnational capital. Within that it is creating space for black industrial capital, agrarian capital, cooperatives and worker ownership in the economy through employee stock option schemes. De-racialising capitalism is at the heart of its multi-class project; a little bit more trickle down with a slightly broader base. Ironically globalisation has never and will never be a development strategy



let alone a basis to transform South Africa to deal with accelerating climate change. The ANC has an impoverished imagination with no new thinking; its manifesto merely reveals more of the same.

Climate Justice Critique of the Democratic Alliance (DA)

4.1 The DA failed to prepare Cape Town for its drought, despite science based warnings, academic warnings and more. Its day-zero approach placed a squeeze on poor households and passed on the pressure of managing the drought to working class, middle class and poor households. It did not challenge water ownership and control by white agricultural interests. It forced the use of desalination plants as an emergency measure and at great cost to tax payers. Moreover, high water levies raised billions for the DA led Metro while working class and poor households are faced with punitive tariffs that undermine their water needs. Day zero was about climate injustice and creating new climate inequalities. As a neoliberal party, the DA has expressed a 'green neoliberal' response to the drought which always privileges the wealthy. Hence it has encouraged thousands of boreholes in Cape Town and smaller towns, which is only affordable by the wealthy and which threatens the long run viability of aquifers in these areas.

4.2 The DA has a manifesto that deals explicitly with climate change and the need for a resilience plan. Several problems stand out. First, the DA views the Paris Climate Agreement as a viable instrument for dealing with emission reductions. It's voluntary approach to reducing emissions and building a registry is really just about green wash. South Africa needs more than this to meet its reduction targets given the current science and urgency. Second, it supports fracking, nuclear and off shore gas extraction. Like the ANC it still has a shallow conception of how to get to a zero

carbon economy. Third, it has a private sector led approach to renewable energy. Essentially Eskom must make way for independent power producers that supply the national grid and local governments. There is no real concern for workers in Eskom or for the working conditions of workers in the renewables industry. Renewable energy capital, not workers, communities, households or public institutions, is the key driver of the energy transition in their manifesto. Fourth, the DA advocates carbon capture and storage as a solution for South Africa's emission problems. This is an untried technology and a techno-fix that distracts from the need for a deep just transition to a zero carbon energy system.

4.3 The DA approach to water reflects the interest of white, agro-industrial capital, in the main. It recognises the impacts of the drought on farmers and hence champions more dams, infrastructure and policy support for these farmers. The DA does not question the fact that 62% of South Africa's water resources are controlled by these farmers. Moreover, this kind of mono-industrial agriculture failed South Africa in the drought; it collapsed. South Africa needs a new food system based on localisation (not exports) small scale farmers, agro-ecology and seed, water and food sovereignty.

Climate Justice Critique of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)

5.1 The EFF is a racist political party, Afro-chauvinist, with a strong authoritarian populist streak. Some would prefer to describe it as 'Black Neo-fascist'. It is generally not clear what it stands for; it has contradictory policies and practices. One day it is for the constitution and another day against; one day against corruption and another day it's leaders are implicated in corruption (VBS 'bank heist', tender hijacking in Metros, for example); one day for state ownership and another for stakeholder capitalism. Its manifesto has a section on 'Environment and



Climate', while the document still supports a carbon, mainly coal based and mining driven economy. It's commitment to addressing the climate crisis, let alone the larger planetary ecological crisis, is incoherent to say the least and its explicit target to reduce emissions by 10% in 2024 is certainly not ambitious enough. It betrays a lack of understanding of the urgency of the climate crisis and scientific necessity to cut emissions even more drastically. This is a party without any progressive values. In general, it represents a nativist resource nationalism, which is exclusionary, opportunistic and its general orientation is against a climate justice politics that stands for all the workers, poor and vulnerable in our society – black and white.

5.2 The energy section is one that is probably the least progressive section of the manifesto. It has no original thinking on the energy transition challenge as part of the larger deep just transition. The EFF is state centric in its energy approach and supports the use of mixed energy sources, including so-called safe coal, nuclear energy, as well as, renewables. The plan outlined in the manifesto is that an EFF government will have a state owned company take over all Eskom owned coal mines and assist Eskom in establishing a renewable energy division, with the energy base still anchored on coal and nuclear. It will also end preferential pricing to big energy uses. The EFF's energy approach completely avoids and neglects the dangers of coal and nuclear, and shows a lack of understanding of the urgency to completely break from fossil fuels and false energy solutions to ensure a rapid transition to a zero carbon energy system based on socially owned renewables.

5.3 The EFF is committed to a resource nationalism based on reproducing South Africa's toxic minerals-energy complex through a statist capitalism which has immense potential to be even more corrupt than what we are experiencing. Understanding

the climate crisis in its interconnections requiring systemic alternatives to drive the deep just transition is absent. The EFF endorses the One Million Climate Jobs Campaign, while still committed to an energy program centered on coal and nuclear energy, merely, discrediting and making a mockery of the campaign. The EFF commits to the 'Green Revolution', as part of its understanding of agricultural transformation. The 'Green Revolution' is about productivist, corporate led agriculture. Such agriculture collapsed during South Africa's drought and on a global scale contributes about 40% to global emissions. This is not a systemic alternative to address the challenges of building a new food system in South Africa. On water issues, the EFF merely has a narrow 'service delivery approach'. Yes, safe, clean water must be delivered to the people. But from the standpoint of the deep just transition our water resources are being compromised by more mining, including coal mining, which the EFF supports. An example of contradictory EFF practice is their support for the Xolobeni community's rejection of mining. This is rather hypocritical given the EFF's support for more mining. Corruption has affected water infrastructure delivery and the EFF is no shining example of fighting corruption. South Africa needs more than a shopping list approach to its water crisis. It needs a people driven water sovereignty approach to planning, managing and sharing our water commons.

Towards a Climate Justice Charter for South Africa

South Africa has a crisis of political leadership regarding the climate crisis.

It is in this context we invite all living in South Africa to contribute to the Climate Justice Charter for South Africa to ensure we hasten the deep just transition to ensure the workers, the poor and vulnerable do not pay the price of climate change.



We also have an inter-generational obligation to act, now, to ensure present and future generations have a future. It is not too late to act to prevent the extinction of human and non-human life forms.

Key themes for the charter to be elaborated in grassroots dialogues relate to systemic alternatives that would bring down carbon emissions and ensure we sustain life as climate shocks hit. These themes include:

- Principles for the Charter
- Our conception of the just transition for South Africa taking into account class, race, gender and ecological relations
- Systemic alternatives related to land use, water, rights of nature, energy, food, production, consumption, waste, transport, housing, finance;
- The role of the climate emergency state and our international relations as a climate justice society;
- Communication, education and awareness raising to mobilise society
- The role and form of people's power from below

Send your input to: Jane Cherry

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Climate Justice News

Drought and domestic violence: fallout from a changing climate

By Kevin Bloom

“Boreholes are drying up. Birds are eating mammals. Wild animals are coming to our farms to eat.”

This, then, was the face of climate change in South Africa, an upending of nature that was redolent of January’s [massive fish die-off](#) in Australia, or the Antarctic temperatures that had [killed students](#) in February in the US Midwest. For Adam Mubanda of Giyani in Limpopo, a leading member of the Inyanda National Land Movement, the word for it was “pathetic”: by which his expression suggested that he meant tragic and pitiful, as opposed to absurd or ridiculous, although he didn’t deny the latter.

“As a movement, we do try to sensitise our people to climate change,” Mubanda went on. “It’s very unfortunate that people are so colonised in their minds that they believe that issues of climate are only known to God.”

The occasion was a roundtable of drought-affected communities from across South Africa, convened in Johannesburg on Sunday 17 March by the [Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre](#) (Copac). In the background, as mentioned by Copac’s Vishwas Satgar, was the cyclone that had just two days before made landfall in Mozambique, claiming at the [latest count](#) 48 lives in Mozambique’s Sofala province and 39 lives in Zimbabwe, with the death toll rising through the afternoon and [850,000 people](#) in danger as the storm began to move west.

As it turned out, while we were sitting in the room, Zimbabwe’s state-owned Herald newspaper was putting together an [editorial](#) calling on its own government sponsors to “wake up” to Cyclone Idai’s message: Climate change was real; the country had

better prepare.

Given that everyone present was already on the frontline, it was not news at this event that the governments of southern Africa had been asleep to the extreme weather events that were now pummeling the continent with increasing frequency and more devastating effect. As Satgar pointed out, when it came to the drought, the South African government had only [declared a crisis](#) in 2018, after rural food systems had collapsed.

And here was what that meant to Nosintu Kwepile of the Nqamakwe Farmers Alliance, Amatole district, Eastern Cape:

“The taps have been closed for eight months. The rivers are dry. We wanted to see through research how drought & climate change are affecting people. We found out that it is actually the cause of domestic violence.”

“To give one example, and I’ve witnessed this, there was a woman who was a farmer; she had her garden, the husband wasn’t working, he’s an alcoholic. They were dependent on this garden. Now, because of drought, she stopped. This family of five had income grants from two children, only R800 a month. Now because there is not enough food at home, this guy is beating up this woman.”

There was another incident that Kwepile wanted to share; something else, she said, that was making her emotional.

“The children now have been given the duty, before they go to school, to go fetch water for the livestock. Not for them to wash, not for them to eat pap. But for the sheep to drink. Because the people have given up on cattle, the cattle have run away from us, they have been looking for grass and all that, some of them are dead. “It’s now only sheep that are able to pick up on the small grass. So the children have this duty of fetching water for those sheep. And this



guy actually beat up his two boys, because they didn't bring water. He also took away their food. It happened there, I know the household, it's in our communities."

Like the government's indifference, it would have come as no surprise to these delegates that the link between violence and a heating world was an established scientific fact. In 2014, a [report](#) in the Journal of Environmental Economics and Management had shown that "temperature has a strong positive effect on criminal behaviour," with climate change projected to cause an additional 22,000 murders, 180,000 cases of rape and 1.2 million aggravated assaults in the United States between 2010 and 2099. What was less well known was that hurricanes Harvey and Michael, monster storms that hit the US in 2017 and 2018, were accompanied by a surge in "intimate partner violence".

At the round table in Johannesburg on Sunday, it was a theme that came up time and again. For Aaron Ranayeke, the burden carried by rural women of "ensuring that people eat at a household level, but also at a community level" was, outrageously, placing these same women in harm's way. Ranayeke was talking specifically about the thirst-lands around Keiskammahoek in the Eastern Cape, where, he said, women's rights were screaming to be included in the climate justice debate.

But as Ranayeke knew, when it came to the role of women and the hard edges of climate change, there was nothing exceptional about South Africa's rural areas. As we were about to hear, in the informal settlements of Cape Town, where "day zero" had been a lived reality for years, just keeping a household running had become an exercise in impossible choice.

"Women telling me stories of, 'I must wash my washing today, but I must rinse it tomorrow,'" said Faeza Meyer of the Cape Flats-based African

Worker Commons Collective. "I must make choices of whether I'm going to bath my children tonight, or I'm going to cook. That's how difficult. Truthfully so, it's the women that struggle." Meyer also wanted us to know that when the country's educated and well-intentioned came to these areas with their theories and their plans, they were often coming with their preconceptions - and worse, she suggested, sometimes they were coming to do nothing more than look. "The communities in informal settlements may not know the meaning of 'climate change,'" she said, "but they know that something in the city is wrong. There's too much heat, there's too much rain. Because we are the ones that suffer. When there's floods, we can't get out of the community. When there's fires, hundreds of our people are without shelter. "The stories, you know? A woman telling me a story of, 'I heard my son's head burst inside a shack.' What comes out is, 'If only we had water, we would have been able to save him.' Recently there was a fire in one of the informal settlements, and the fire-trucks came but they ran out of water. The community had to stand and watch their things burn. They tried to connect to the hydrants, but there was nothing." And nothing, Daily Maverick learnt, is what many people in the room would have had if they didn't have their activism. The pull of despair was bubbling just below the surface. But later that afternoon they were going to work on a Climate Justice Charter. They were going to continue taking the fight to the government, and to what they were calling the "carbon capital bloc".

Then, on Monday 18 March, they were going to march on the South African National Editors Forum and the Press Council. The media weren't listening, they said, because we didn't yet have the ears to hear.

Article source: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-03-19-drought-and-domestic-violence-fallout-from-a-changing-climate/>



End Climate Denialism in the Media: March to SANEF, Press Council and Times Media

Angela Kgoadi, Grade 11 student who attended the March



On 18 March 2019, a peaceful protest about climate change denialism was held outside Sunday Times Media Group, in the South African National Editors Forum, and outside Press Council, respectively. This movement was organized by COPAC, along with representatives from drought stricken communities to hand over a set of demands to media institutions in order to make sure that South Africans know about the links between extreme weather conditions and the worsening of climate change. This should potentially end climate change denialism.

Protestors were chased away by the police at the first place in which the protest was held but they managed to voice their demands just outside the building. These demands, however, were successfully presented to the other two institutions. During this, different stories from these representatives were told. The stories that stood out the most were the ones from the people of the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. These people live in places where dams and rivers are completely dry and tap water is not available. Pensioners in the Western Cape are forced to travel long

distances to buy privatized water (which costs a lot of money) from cities in order to take their daily medication. Children in the Eastern Cape receive beatings from their parents because they could not manage to fetch water from nearby rivers and dams since they dried out. The situations are very bad.

I personally think that doing something to end media climate change denialism is great, since the media is not letting the public know about the effects of climate change in different communities, and a protest is a good way to make sure that this is heard by as many people as possible. The protest was an interesting experience as I learnt about the lifestyles of people in different parts of the country. I also learnt about how the government and the media is handling their situations. I think that more young people should take part in such protests since they are the biggest group that uses social media. This will raise more awareness across the country and it will put more pressure on the media to cover climate justice struggles.



Droughts and climate change mostly affects the poor people of our country. The amount of rainfall in South Africa is way below the world average. However, even if it rains, it rains very heavily or it rains for a long period of time nonstop and floods occur. These floods destroy houses, farms and animal habitats. The lack of water leads to water bills being too high



and to the rising of food costs. Our capitalist society prioritizes profit and business expenditure more than the wellbeing of the people of our country.

Climate change and droughts are ruining our country severely and climate change denialism will never solve the problem. It is about time we take a stand and find a way to sustain our country through this time, so that we can survive this and lead happy lives. This should begin with the end of climate change denialism, the media should assist in informing citizens on the climate crisis and finding a way to confront this problem.

High Court refuses mining company's leave to appeal in the Mabola case

In another victory for the civil society coalition defending a Mpumalanga strategic water source area, the North Gauteng High Court today refused mining company Atha Africa leave to appeal the court's decision to set aside permissions for a new coal mine inside a declared protected environment.

[In November 2018, the High Court set aside the 2016 decisions of former Mineral Resources Minister Zwane and the late Environmental Affairs Minister Molewa to permit a new coal mine to be developed in the Mabola Protected Environment near Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga.](#)

The Mabola Protected Environment was declared under the Protected Areas Act in 2014 by the Mpumalanga provincial government as part of the declaration of more than 70 000 hectares of protected area in the Mpumalanga grasslands. This followed years of extensive research and planning by a number of government agencies, including the Department of Environmental Affairs, the South African National Biodiversity Institute and the Mpumalanga Tourism & Parks Agency.

In 2016, without public consultation and without notice to the coalition, the two Ministers gave their permission for a large, 15-year coal mine to be built inside the Mabola Protected Environment.

In November 2018, [the Court set aside](#) the permission and referred the decision back to the two Ministers for reconsideration on the basis that the Ministers did not take their decisions in an open and transparent manner or in a manner that promoted public participation, and that the decisions were therefore procedurally unfair. The High Court also ordered the Ministers and MEC to pay the coalition's legal costs on an attorney and client (punitive) scale. Today, the court heard Atha Africa's application for leave to appeal the November decision to a full bench of the High Court or the Supreme Court of Appeal. The High Court refused Atha's application. The court also ordered Atha Africa to pay the legal costs of the coalition of civil society organisations who successfully opposed the application for leave to appeal. The Ministers of Mineral Resources and Environmental Affairs, as well as the Mpumalanga MEC, had also applied for leave to appeal the court's decision, but withdrew their application yesterday. The court ordered that the State pay the coalition's wasted legal costs in preparing to oppose that application.

The coalition who brought the court application to set aside permissions for the proposed coal mine comprises the [Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of South Africa](#), [groundWork](#), [Earthlife Africa Johannesburg](#), [BirdLife South Africa](#), the [Endangered Wildlife Trust](#), the [Federation for a Sustainable Environment](#), the [Association for Water and Rural Development \(AWARD\)](#) and the [Bench Marks Foundation](#). The Coalition is represented by the [Centre for Environmental Rights](#).



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We're going to school for a future we don't have anymore

Zazi Dana, youth activist, journalist, Grade 11 student at Sacred Heart College

Edited by Tanyaradza Kaseke



Eighteen of the nineteen warmest years on record have happened since 2001. Our global temperature has increased by almost 2°C since 1800 and scientists have estimated our global temperature will rise by another 3-5°C by 2100.

In a future that will impact us and our generation's future grandchildren, the voice of today's youth is incredibly valuable as we fight for our future instead of profiting from our planet's present and milking the earth dry, contributing further to our planet's demise. But what is the point of learning when the educated won't listen to us?

Climate change's devastating effects have reared their ugly heads in southern Africa as cyclone Idai has devastated several southern African nations, leaving a total of 700 dead in countries as close to South Africa as Zimbabwe. The resultant floods have left hundreds of thousands homeless and waiting for relief aid. When such devastating events happen so close to us, to our homes, where is the agency to push for change in those who were lucky enough to not be affected?

Massive corporations have no incentive to stop polluting the planet because they continue to profit from harming it so the consumers get blamed for using plastic straws when that is only a small fraction of the problem. The global march against climate change, held on 15th of March as part of the 'Fridays For Future' initiative, sends a very important message from today's youth. The education we're all fortunate enough to receive will be pointless in our near future if action is not taken to stop climate change and reverse its effects. Corporate greed, the apathy from the older generation and from our peers who preferred not to participate in the march for selfish reasons, are what is slowly killing us because our message then falls on deaf ears.

Though the turnout of the march in Sacred Heart College, Johannesburg was less than favourable, those participating did it with a passion for the cause and with vigor. "Wake up to reality because life isn't a fairytale. We have a responsibility to protect, we must protect the things we use and what we need", one student commented. In a future where climate change isn't acknowledged one student envisioned "It'll be very, very dreary, there will be a lot of intense storms and extreme climate. It's not going to be pleasant unless we step up now."



Creating Change, Or Are We?

Annarosa Mae Payne and Cassidi Summer Payne

Sacred Heart College students organized a climate change march on 15 March 2019 inspired by Ruby Sampson, a seventeen-year-old girl from Wynberg Girls' High School in Cape Town. She conducted a Climate Change March which was inspired by Greta Thunberg. We interviewed Ruby and she gave us great insight into climate change as a whole. We asked her how she had succeeded in getting 2000 people to march in Cape Town. 'I went to 20 different schools in Cape Town and, because I'm extremely persuasive, I managed to get 2000 people to join the march.'

We also asked Ruby if she thinks South Africa is capable of creating opportunities that will impact climate change. 'I think that as South Africans, we have all the opportunities right in front of us because we have the resources such as tons of space for wind turbines. The fact that we are also surrounded by ocean gives us opportunities for water turbines.'

Sacred Heart College took part in the Climate Change March #fridaysforfuture with 30 learners participating enthusiastically. Sebastian Boshoff and Tamara Barnwell organized the march for the School. They felt that it was important to march because climate change affects countries worldwide, yet South Africa doesn't seem to be too bothered about its effects.

However, it all starts with us as individuals. Do we recycle? Do we burn waste unnecessarily?

Maya Brooks, a participant in the march said, 'People who don't think climate change is a reality are just scared and running away from the truth.' We agree with her on this because people are afraid to come up with solutions to a problem as

big as this one. What people don't realize is that the number of people participating in the march affects the message we are trying to get across to the government.

To this end, there will be another global march on 24 May, and hopefully our message will get across and our voices will be heard.



Photograph by: Lukas van Garderen



The Food Sovereignty Campaign

The formation of the University of Free State Food Sovereignty Campaign

Tshiamo Malatji, UFS student

In 2017, as many as eight out of ten students at the University of the Free State indicated that, at least sometimes, they ran out of food and were not able to buy. This is shockingly revealed in a Food Insecurity Report commissioned by the university's Student Affairs. Although the cause was not thoroughly investigated by the university, its food systems narrate exclusion and unsustainability.

Food cafeterias and fast-food outlets are beyond the affordability range of most students and the university's feeding scheme is capicated to only help a few students. Launched in 2011, the No Student Hungry programme operates as a food bank for students. It estimates that it would cost R68 450 000 to feed 10 000 students for 185 days per year, according to the programme's 2017 report. Between 2011 and 2017, the programme has been able to assist 864 students -- about 123 students a year.

The solution to an exclusive market-based food system should not be an ostensibly exclusive food scheme, especially when the university can pursue an alternative -- food sovereignty. At present, multiple student associations have joined together to form the UFS Food Sovereignty Campaign.

This is a grassroots student movement that aims to eradicate hunger at the university through sustainable, culturally-relevant and student-centred agriculture projects. These projects include food gardens, which maintain biodiversity, agroecology and the sustainable, safe and just use of resources (land, water and seed). Ultimately, the campaign aims to create a food sovereign system at the university where students can independently produce and distribute food.

A workshop was held on the 12th of April 2019 to explain the concept of food sovereignty to students and staff of the University of the Free State, in line with the university's Integrated Transformation Plan objective to create a sustainable food system. The workshop explained how to merge ecological principles and agriculture to serve the needs of students and the environment.

On the 24th of May 2019, the campaign will participate in a Zero Hunger Festival, releasing a written declaration for food sovereignty. From there, the campaign intends to lobby a dedicated planting area at the university for a pilot food garden, followed by an extensive agroecology plan for an alternative food system.

Growing a food commons: The roll-out of agroecology gardens at Wits University

Courtney Morgan

Food and water are crucial to sustain life. In a world where both food and water are privatised and are provided by industries which put profit over people, it is imperative that at the grass roots level we are organising and teaching each other





how to survive. The climate crisis, in conjunction with the crisis of capitalism is making access to water and food more and more scarce but there are alternatives. Agroecology, as an alternative is being practiced at Wits University through the roll-out of food gardens on campus, with the purpose of creating a pathway for food sovereignty at the university. If we are to succeed in entrenching food sovereignty, there is much to learn.

On the 26th to the 28th of February, COPAC hosted agroecologist John Nzira at Wits University at International House to establish a food garden. John ran a practical workshop, which included theory sessions where he taught us fruitful lessons on agroecology and water harvesting. The workshop also had practical sessions where participants got their hands dirty and worked the ground to prepare the soil, dig compost pits and plant various vegetables. Over the 3 days, participants were able to establish two vegetable gardens with basil, spinach, cabbage, onions etc planted, one herb garden and managed to plant a number of fruit and nut trees and dig two compost pits. The workshop was not only successful because the seedlings were planted, but participants went away with a wealth of knowledge.



On the 11th March, till the 13th March, COPAC hosted Nazeer Sondag and Susanna Coleman from the Philippi Horticulture Area in Cape Town for another workshop. This workshop established a food garden at Sunnyside residence, and also included theory sessions. With Nazeer's guidance, the participants took climatic conditions and the topography into account and designed the garden in accordance with the lessons that Nazeer gave. At that workshop, we learnt about various natural pesticides, how certain pests are repelled by insects, as well as an extensive composting tutorial. In addition to various well known vegetables being planted in the garden, there was also a number of indigenous plants planted as well as trees and a large pile compost was started, which will hopefully be used for the future gardens.

On the 10th of April, we had an exciting visit from the leadership of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Germany, and other German delegates who came to Wits to inaugurate the gardens. After a short introduction by vice chancellor Adam Habib and presentation by COPAC director, Vishwas Satgar, the delegates made their way to the gardens where we held a tree planting ceremony and planted 2 fig trees at the International House gardens.

In total, there will be a roll out of 21 gardens across Wits University called Rosa's gardens, in memory of Rosa Luxemburg, a Polish/German Marxist who was murdered 100 years ago for her ideologies. The training will be used in establishing future gardens on campus to advance a food commons, and can also be used by participants to build their own pavement or backyard gardens.

The Rise of Urban Farming in Johannesburg

Fatima Moosa

Small farms and gardens have begun popping up all



around the Johannesburg inner-city. The contrasts between the bustling urban environment and the greenery of these farms could not be more different. From Bertrams to Braamfontein, these farms might seem like the newest trend but they serve very important purposes.

At Wits University, the Co-operative and Policy Centre (COPAC) and the Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach Centre (WCCO) have started a farmer's market. This brings together urban and small-scale farmers to sell their products and inform more people about urban farming.

Urban Farming Movement

[Urban farming movement](#) is at its essence about “the growing of food in the city or on its periphery, on a relatively small scale; and sometimes extends to rearing goats, rabbits, chickens and ducks, and keeping bees.”

Growing fresh produce or rearing animals in the city brings with it a lot of questions about space management. Urban farming projects stretches the imagination about where and how the farming takes place. From small plots in parks to universities and even people's backyards, these farms are everywhere.

Projects in Johannesburg

One such project is the Wits Food Sovereignty Centre. Started at the University of Witwatersrand, the project forms part of a bigger push at the university to fight food insecurity and introduce food sovereignty. Part of the project is a food garden, food bank, and student communal kitchen. The whole purpose of the project is to create a sustainable pathway to the city of developing urban and small-scale farming and indigenous methods of growing.

In 2018 The Daily Vox spoke to Courtney Morgan, an intern at COPAC. She said: “We want to create

a market where different urban food gardeners can come together. One of the issues with small scale farming is that people don't trust it – they see a woman selling her vegetables – they think that's dirty as compared to the supermarket ones but the one on the side of the street is healthier. We want to show that small scale farming is viable in the city.”

Wits Farmers Market

The market kicked off in 2019. The Daily Vox attended the second edition of the market which took place on April 26.

On a grassy embankment across from the Centre, the farmers had their five stalls set up. The farmers at the market come from many different areas around Johannesburg. Another farmer was supposed to be at the market but reportedly couldn't because of car troubles. Slowly students began trickling into the area to buy produce from the farmers. There was a varying range of produce from lettuce, herbs, spring onion, and chillies.

As the time for lunch approached, a long snaking line of students gathered at the centre. These students are part of the reason why this project was started at Wits. Many students at the university and universities around the country do not have the resources for food. This means that many students are forced to study on empty stomachs. If they do have access to food, it is often unhealthy, fast food outlets they turn to.

Belinda Ratyana and Robert Mutero work together at Belz Greenz and Herbz at the National School of Arts in Braamfontein. Their produce is grown through hydroponic methods and it only takes one month to grow.

Ratyana says coming to the market is important. “Students staying in the residences can't go [to



shop] because their schedules are busy. So at least when we bring things to them it helps them. A lot of street kids and those far from home need to eat healthy so we are helping communities that can't afford," Ratyana said.

Food Sovereignty and Food Security

One of the other people in the market was food grower Sandy Perry. She based in the inner city in Observatory. She started a home garden in 2014-2015 to enhance her sons' homeschooling experience. However, taking that further into communities, Perry said people need to be able to have security and sovereignty in producing foods, knowing that there are no chemicals in food and eating food seasonally to get the full benefit of nature.

"Being food secure means that you are able to feed yourself. That could mean going to a store to feed yourself because you have an income and you actually have the means to feed your family. We are attached to this centre because there are many students in this university who are food insecure. This means they do not have access to food because they do not have the resources to get food," she said.

For Perry, food sovereignty means having some kind of ownership over the source of food: "That extends to being able to grow your own seedlings and controlling the seeds because multinational companies that grow seeds control this and you have to keep buying it from them (instead of being able to save your own)."

However, the issue of food sovereignty extends far beyond university students. In 2017, The Daily Vox spoke to Professor Sheryl Hendriks, director of the Institute for Food, Nutrition and Well-being at the University of Pretoria. According to Hendriks, one-

fifth of South Africa's population are food insecure, generally low-income and many rely on social grants with rural provinces such as the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal among the most affected. This is what the urban farmers hope to tackle.

Support for Farmers

Most of the farmers at the market were unequivocal about the need for more support for urban and small-scale farmers.

In response to what government can do Perry said they should provide access to land and infrastructure support, ensure land tenure so that people are not evicted. Perry said if there is no support for farmers, they won't be able to maintain consistent crops. "With the climate changes they will be unable to sustain themselves," said Perry.

Mam Vi says she uses the City of Johannesburg's land for her farm but can't wait until she owns her own land. "Growing your food to feed the nation is important. There are people who want to eat natural food and we accommodate them," said Mam Vi. She believes that President Cyril Ramaphosa will be able to give her the land she needs for farming.

"I believe in Ramaphosa. He assisted this country to unbundle the corruption we were under. I believe that very soon after the election the land will be released. I applied with the Land Reform and they contacted me two weeks ago to tell me I am 429." said Mam Vi.

Urban Farming Around the World

Urban farming is not just happening in Johannesburg, and South Africa. There are many projects such as these in [Kampala, Uganda](#), and [Tokyo, Japan](#). These projects are all about turning urban spaces into farms. The benefits of the project is [boosting local economies](#) and providing greater food security.



With the effects of climate change, food insecurity and more radical weather changes will become more pronounced. Changes will need to be made. Urban farming is one of the ways communities are using to combat this.

Full article originally appeared at <https://www.thedailyvox.co.za/the-rise-of-urban-farming-in-johannesburg/>





The Worker Cooperative Campaign

Call to Cooperatives: Join the Solidarity Economy Movements Website



The Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre has launched a Solidarity Economy Movements website to serve as a marketing platform for co-operatives in South Africa. The website is a useful tool for all cooperatives as they can register and create a profile of their cooperative, describe their activities and market their products and services online at no charge.

The aim of this website is to promote the Solidarity Economy by providing citizens who want to support cooperatives with a portal that allows them to search for cooperatives near them.

Based on the idea of the Solidarity Economy the aim is to transform production, consumption, savings and ways of living to sustain life and advance transformative values in their practices.

We invite all cooperatives to register on the website by following these simple steps:

1. Type the following address into your internet browser: www.sem.org.za
2. Click on the block in the top right corner '+ add your coop'

3. You will then be asked to register so type in your email address and choose a password
4. Fill out all your coop details and press 'submit'

Share this link with co-operatives you know so that we can strengthen this platform for building the solidarity economy in South Africa.



Activist Resources to Advance the Solidarity Economy from Below

Democratic Marxism Seminars available for viewing on Youtube

The 4th Industrial Revolution:

A Promise Blind to Social Consequences, Power and Ecological Impact

Professor Birgit Mahnkopf gave a 2 day seminar and public lecture on the shortcomings of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

1. Day 1- <https://youtu.be/asg-T23Y5xl>
2. Day 2- https://youtu.be/VfvO_53UZgU
3. Public Lecture- <https://youtu.be/2bLWFtx1DT8>

100 Years of Rosa Luxemburg's Marxism-Imperialism, Democracy, and Lessons for the South African Left

Gunnett Kaaf and Patrick Bond, sat on a panel with Vishwas Satgar to discuss the work of Rosa Luxemburg, a Marxist theorist who was murdered in January 1919. The panel explored her work, as well as attempted to interpret her work for South Africa. Youtube video available at: https://youtu.be/_S_i-CTvx8I

Beyond the Past and Present: The Hard Search for a Solidarity Economy Pathway in Keiskammahoek
Mazibuko Jara gave a public seminar on the place of food sovereignty, seed sovereignty and the solidarity economy as responses to the current reality. He uses the case study of Keiskammahoek to bring to light their experiences of building agrarian and food system alternatives.

Youtube video available at: <https://youtu.be/>

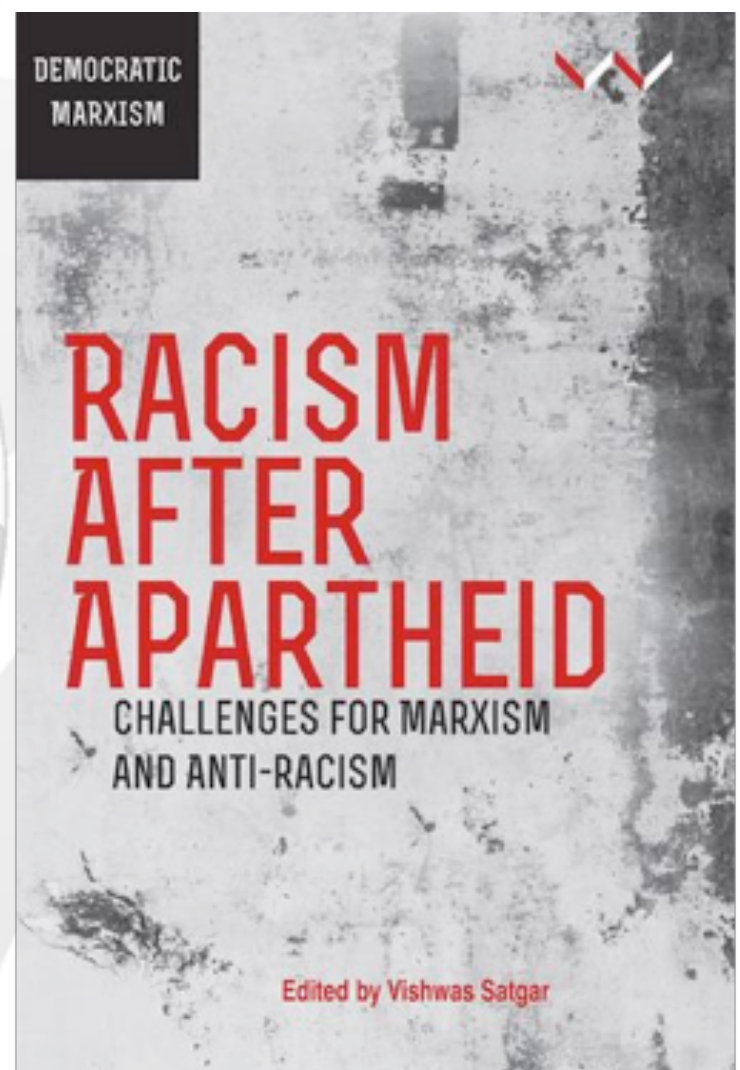
[tnEXZRdXj_Y](https://youtu.be/tnEXZRdXj_Y)

The Value of Nothing: The Struggle for Food and Water in a Neoliberal Climate

Nazeer Sondag and Susanna Coleman travelled from Cape Town to help us establish a food garden, and to talk to us about the struggles that the Philippi Horticultural Area, the bread basket of Cape Town is facing.

Youtube video available at: <https://youtu.be/3RKhyK3Pkzo>

Book: Democratic Marxism Vol. 4: Racism After Apartheid



Racism after Apartheid, volume four of the Democratic Marxism series, brings together

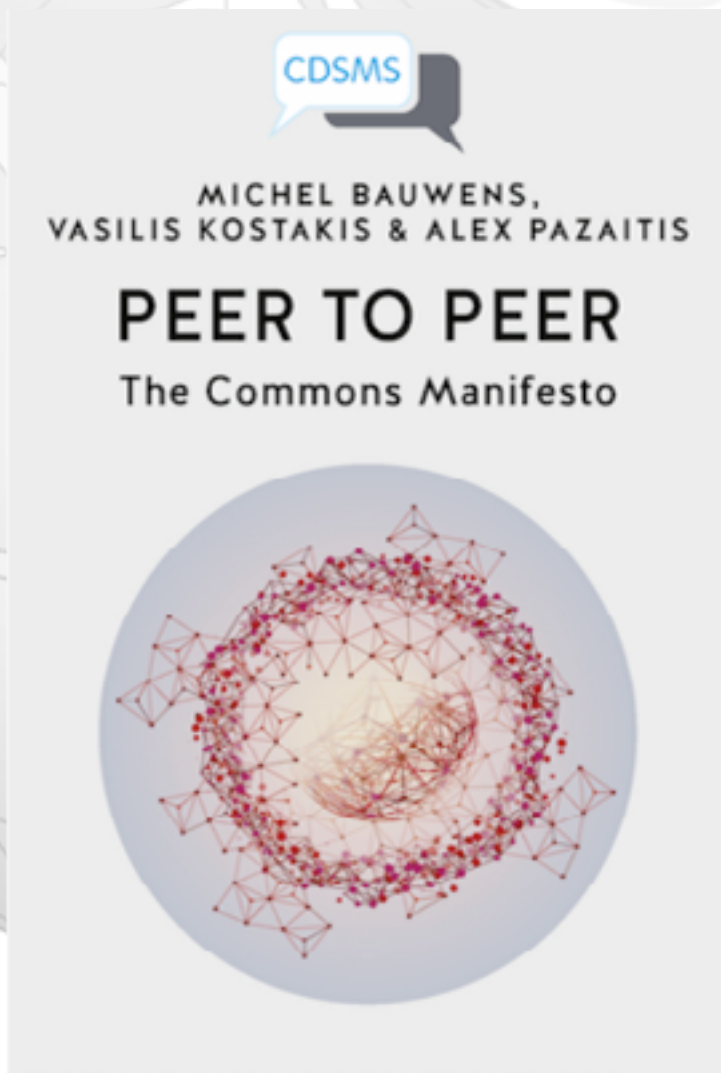


leading scholars and activists from around the world studying and challenging racism. In eleven thematically rich and conceptually informed chapters, the contributors interrogate the complex nexus of questions surrounding race and relations of oppression as they are played out in the global South and global North. Their work challenges Marxism and anti-racism to take these lived realities seriously and consistently struggle to build human solidarities.

In the spirit of democratisation of knowledge, the book is freely available at:

<http://oapen.org/search?identifier=100436>

Book: Peer to Peer: A Commons Manifesto



plants of Manchester as the blueprint for the new capitalist society has there been a more profound transformation of the fundamentals of our social life. As capitalism faces a series of structural crises, a new social, political and economic dynamic is emerging: peer to peer.

What is peer to peer? Why is it essential for building a commons-centric future? How could this happen? These are the questions this book tries to answer. Peer to peer is a type of social relations in human networks, as well as a technological infrastructure that makes the generalization and scaling up of such relations possible. Thus, peer to peer enables a new mode of production and creates the potential for a transition to a commons-oriented economy.

This book is freely available at: <https://www.uwestminsterpress.co.uk/site/books/10.16997/book33/>

Not since Marx identified the manufacturing



contact us

We invite organisations and activists to make contributions to the Newsletter by writing stories, contributing photographs or cultural contributions, such as poetry, art, songs etc.

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All back issues of the Solidarity Economy News are available on our website.

