

**Interconnected Injustices: How Colonialism Impedes Environmental and Reproductive
Justice through an Ecofeminist Lens**

Ella Storey and Emily Wilford

Student Research Days

April 4, 2025

Introduction¹

Climate justice and reproductive justice are intersecting social justice movements whose goals align in challenging systemic exploitation. Climate justice seeks to end the domination and exploitation of natural resources, while reproductive justice seeks to end the domination and exploitation of human reproductive resources. Reproductive justice is founded on three tenets: “(1) the right *not* to have a child; (2) the right to *have* a child; and (3) the right to *parent* children in safe and healthy environments” (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 9). Within capitalist, patriarchal societies, denial of these basic human rights is normalized, and the systemic forces that exploit reproductive bodies for profit and power are the same forces that drive environmental degradation.

This paper will explore the nexus of climate justice and reproductive justice through an ecofeminist lens², grounding the analysis in the logic of domination. The logic outlines a relationship of domination that attempts to explain how climate injustice and contemporary reproductive injustice are rooted in oppressive systems established and perpetuated by colonialism. By focusing on how philosophy shapes material realities, the connection between the dominant systems of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism prohibiting true justice is clear. We will discuss how climate injustice is perpetuated by continuous neo-colonial exploitation of the Global South to sustain the consumption habits of the Global North, how the Global South is disproportionately affected by subsequent climate change, and the fallout for reproductive health and services in those areas. In order to achieve true justice for nature and women, we need to

¹ The first iteration of the paper was presented as a group seminar topic for the GSWS 3101- Fall 2024 class.

² Ecofeminist theory is not nuanced in terms of understanding gender as a spectrum of identity. The theory is grounded in describing power imbalances between men and women based on binary characteristics. The word “woman” in this paper refers to cis-gender women. However, the authors agree that anyone along a gender spectrum can be a pregnant person and that anyone who identifies as a woman takes on social biases against women and subsequent inequalities.

address dominant colonial systems and how they impact the lived realities of women in the Global South.

Ecofeminist Framing & The Logic of Domination

Using the lens of material ecofeminist theory, we will examine the shared struggles between climate justice movements and reproductive justice movements. Their interconnected struggles come from their shared source of domination; patriarchal and capitalist institutions that govern a globalised world.

Material ecofeminist theory is concerned with how patriarchal and capitalist institutions rely on systemic domination and exploitation of women and nature (Sydee, 2001). It is not an unflawed theory or the only way to examine global power relations, but it highlights key interconnections between climate justice and reproductive justice. As the continued exploitation of natural resources contributes to climate disasters in the Global South, the quality of reproductive health for women dramatically declines. This is viewed as “permissible” on a global scale due to patriarchal and capitalist institutions employing what ecofeminists identify as the logic of domination. The logic of domination explains how society not taking concrete steps to address climate change justifies the subordination of women and nature. In order to understand this logic, we need to understand the roots of ecofeminist theory within history.

Building on Francoise d'Eaubonne's 1974 call “for a feminist revolution to ensure ecological survival” (Sydee, 2001, p. 282), in the 1990s, Karen J. Warren identified ecofeminism as “the position that there are important connections - historical, experiential, symbolic, theoretical - between the domination of women and the domination of nature (Williston, 2023, p. 130). In 2017, Elizabeth Peredo Beltran further expanded on the definition of ecofeminism as

follows: “[A] critical theory, a philosophy, and an interpretation of the world that seeks to transform it. It brings together two emerging currents of political theory and practice into one approach that aims to explain and transform the current system of domination and violence by focusing on the critique of patriarchy and the overexploitation of nature and their impacts on society, bodies and nature, all as part of the same phenomenon” (Dyett, 2019, p. 207). As this theory has grown, its roots remain the same; its two major ideas are that humanity constructs the world through dualisms which determine hierarchical value thinking, and that these dualisms work together with the logic of domination to justify exploitation or mistreatment (Williston, 2023). Dualisms are ways we conceptualize perceived opposites in a way that places a higher value to one concept/person/group/item than the other.

The dualism ecofeminists are most concerned with is the relationship between men and women/nature, which stems from Rene Decartes’ dualism, developed in 1641. Decartes separated the realms of the mind and the body according to binary gender (Dyett, 2019); men were associated with mind, reason, human and active traits; while women were associated with body, emotion, nature and passive traits (Sydee, 2001). The patriarchal structure of society gives men higher status, therefore, men and the qualities they possess (logic and reason) supersede women and the qualities they possess (emotion and nature). Dualisms are a matter of perception, some people believe them and some do not, but when they are thought of as true, they can alter material reality. The governance of a place and what services are available to residents relies directly on the worldview of those in power. When dualisms are thought of as true, the result is, for example, underfunding women’s healthcare or continued expansion of fossil fuel use. Ecofeminists do not agree with dualistic conclusions. However, in order to explain global power imbalances between men, women and nature, those conclusions are organized into an argument.

The argument is called the logic of domination and aims to explain, justify and maintain relationships of domination between men, women and nature.

Brian Williston (2023) writes about the argumentation of the logic of domination in two parts. He first uses the logic to explain power dynamics between humans and nature. The logic of domination is used to discredit nature from having moral value so humans can justify their destructive actions. The argument is as follows:

A (1) Humans do, and plants and rocks do not, have the capacity to consciously and radically change the community in which they live.

A (2) Whatever has the capacity to consciously and radically change the community in which it lives is morally superior to whatever lacks this capacity.

A (3) Thus, humans are morally superior to plants and rocks.

A (4) For any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y, then X is morally justified in subordinating Y.

A (5) Thus, humans are morally justified in subordinating plants and rocks. (131)

Williston then uses the logic of domination to explain power dynamics between men and women.

The logic takes value conclusions drawn from Cartesian dualism to connect the domination of nature and the domination of women in the second argument:

B (1) Women are identified with nature and the realm of the physical; men are identified with the “human” and the realm of the mental.

B (2) Whatever is identified with nature and the realm of the physical is inferior to (“below”) whatever is identified with the “human” and the realm of the mental; or, conversely, the latter is superior to (“above”) the former.

B (3) Thus, women are inferior to (“below”) men; or, conversely, men are superior to (“above”) women.

B (4) For any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y, then X is morally justified in subordinating Y.

B (5) Thus, men are morally justified in subordinating women. (131)

The ecofeminist logic of domination connects issues of environmentalism and feminism based on their shared source of oppression, anthropocentric and patriarchal domination. The logic works as a conceptual framework which affects how people conceive of themselves and others (Willison, 2023). The conclusions drawn above are not simply thought of as true (like dualisms), but have been “proved” true by the argument. These conclusions influence policy decisions and international relations, as evidenced by current eliminations of diversity, equity and inclusion practices, dismantling environmental protection authorities, and a lack of funding for research into women’s health. In climate justice and reproductive justice discourse, the logic of domination proves how shared oppression has a shared source, which must be addressed as such in order to create meaningful change.

Climate Change & The Global North

The economic base of the Global North functions due to a relationship of domination over nature and countries that are deemed lesser. The Global North requires continuous neo-colonial exploitation of the Global South which perpetuates climate change and the disparity of its effects.

As defined by theorist Jason Hickel, the Global North, is a Western ideological group comprising the United States, Canada, Europe, Israel, Australia, New Zealand and Japan (Chen,

2022). The countries of the Global North were, and some still are, massive colonial powers that dominate the exploitation of Earth's natural resources. The Global North's neoliberal interest in unending growth through exploitation (Dyett, 2019) is demonstrated by relaxed environmental protection policies, unsustainable mining of critical minerals, mass deforestation and freshwater exploitation within the Global South. This continued neo-colonial exploitation of resources results in high per capita emissions within the Global North, which are causing climate change (Del Álamo Marchena, 2021). If destructive exploitation, based on the justification of domination continues, then successful climate action and subsequent climate justice will also continue to be thwarted.

Within the structure of the logic of domination, nature is seen as having lesser value than humans because nature does not possess morality, consciousness or rationality (Williston, 2023), therefore, Western colonial countries believe they are justified in subordinating the land, labour and economic vulnerability of countries they deem lesser. Environmentally exploitative consumable goods from the Global South support affluent, consumerist lifestyles in the Global North. However, this lifestyle is also responsible for the climate crisis. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identified in 2007, and continues to identify today, that human (anthropogenic) greenhouse gas emissions are the biggest contributors to current global warming conditions (Del Álamo Marchena, 2021). Specifically, high per capita emissions from the world's wealthiest countries. In 2022, the CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions report for the Global Carbon Project calculated per capita emissions by country. With the exception of Australia, the per capita data concluded overwhelmingly that the countries of the Global North had higher rates of emissions than countries of the Global South (Ritchie, 2023). Luxembourg and 6 sub-saharan countries further exemplify this inequality. In 2022, the highest average per

capita carbon footprint was found in Luxembourg, more than 30tCO₂. The lowest average per capita carbon footprint was found in Madagascar, Malawi, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Ethiopia and Rwanda, with less than 0.2tCO₂ emitted per person. The Luxembourg average was 150 times the average of 6 sub-saharan countries (Chen, 2022, p. 483). Countries within the Global South are some of the lowest greenhouse gas emitters, and yet, they are the most affected by climate change. This is due to a sustained neo-colonial relationship, based on domination, between the Global North and the Global South.

The relationship of domination is maintained by exerting their control over extraction, processing, production and trade to ensure a favourable and profitable outcome for the Global North. These favourable and profitable outcomes guarantee a standard of living in developed nations that is made possible through resource extraction in less developed nations, who are financially reliant on a sustained relationship of domination (Barry, 1998). This in effect, is neo-colonialism, a term coined in 1965 by Kwame Nkruma, as the continued influence Western countries have on previous colonies through economic, cultural, and military power (Dyett, 2019). Countries that have experienced past, or current colonial control, are limited in their ability to decide what goods they produce, what goods are consumed, what labour conditions are like for production and with what resources goods are made (Chen, 2022).

The patriarchal and capitalist societies of the Global North depend on conceptual frameworks, like the logic of domination, in order to maintain hegemony over the Global South. Hegemonic control looks like the Global North continuing to environmentally exploit the Global South in order to maintain a lifestyle of colonial affluence, which exacerbates climate change effects. It is a violation of climate justice as the countries who are most responsible for climate change, the Global North, do not feel its effects or precarity as closely. The countries most at risk

for negative impacts of increased climate change are, ironically, within the Global South. In order to protect vulnerable populations, equitable and global climate change mitigation programs must engage with the ongoing neo-colonial relationship between the Global North and Global South.

Climate Change & Reproductive Injustice in the Global South

Climate justice is intimately connected with reproductive justice as climate change affects the social determinants of health for women in climate precarious regions. Going back to the logic of domination, women are justly subordinated by men because they are “inferior” to men (Williston, 2023). The subordination of women in the Global South manifests as reproductive health concerns that are not taken seriously by the international community, as the Global North is failing to adequately address climate change.

Climate change specifically refers to significant and lasting changes in temperature and precipitation patterns, primarily driven by human activity (Abbass et al., 2022). Rising temperatures and irregular precipitation trends create increasingly harsh living conditions, particularly for communities in the Global South that remain least equipped to cope with climate change (Sultana, 2022). The Global North achieved dominance by exploiting the South, stunting their economic development and fostering dependency on capitalist systems established during colonization (Akanwa & Joe-Ikechebelu, 2020; Sultana, 2022). The persistent profit-driven exploitation of the Global South’s environmental resources has not only limited their economic power and created dependency on the Global North but also led to massive emissions of harmful greenhouse gases that fuel global warming and cause widespread environmental harm, including heat waves, rising sea levels, and more intense natural disasters (Abbass et al., 2022; Ebi et al.,

2021). These hazardous climate events harm countries in the Global South more due to the ongoing exploitation of resources needed to protect their communities, leaving them less able to adapt to worsening environmental conditions (Sultana, 2022; Women Deliver, 2021). Beyond persistent economic oppression limiting their ability to adapt and recover, regions in the Global South face additional vulnerabilities due to geographic factors, such as living in coastal areas prone to extreme weather events—events fueled by the actions of the Global North (Almulhim et al., 2024; Sultana, 2022). This is a clear demonstration of climate injustice and its roots in colonial capitalism.

Furthermore, reproductive injustice also has its roots in colonial capitalism as women in colonized regions of the Global South are disproportionately affected by increasing health risks, health inequities, and economic precarity. During colonization, patriarchy and capitalism became dominant forces within global social structures, embedding ideologies that deem certain bodies and environments expendable (Akanwa & Joe-Ikechebelu, 2020; Sultana, 2022). Patriarchal institutions are informed by value conclusions drawn from the logic of domination in order to justify how colonial powers exploit, control, and commodify bodies and ecosystems for profit. This further entrenches intersecting systemic inequalities that manifest today as the disproportionate harm faced by women in the Global South during climate change (Sultana, 2022). As climate degradation intensifies, it undermines the three core principles of reproductive justice (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Women Deliver, 2021). Amid environmental devastation, families must raise children in hazardous conditions while also compromising both the right to have a child—due to adverse health outcomes that limit fertility—and the right not to have a child, as natural disasters disrupt access to safe abortion and contraceptive services. Thus,

systemic colonial oppression, entrenched misogyny, and the patriarchal desire to dominate both women and the Earth form the basis of reproductive and climate injustices.

Agricultural communities in the Global South are disproportionately impacted by climate change, which undermines the economic independence and reproductive autonomy of women, who make up the majority of farmers in these regions. Shifting temperature and precipitation patterns are central to the climate crisis and profoundly impact communities in the Global South (Ngcamu, 2023). Severe and prolonged heat waves lead to droughts that devastate crops, while fluctuating rainfall patterns and rising sea levels overflow agricultural land, reducing soil fertility (Abbass et al., 2022; Almulhim et al., 2024). These changing weather patterns reveal the unequal burden climate change places on farming regions in the Global South. Agricultural communities in Ghana, for instance, lack irrigated farmland, which makes crop production almost entirely dependent on rainfall (Almulhim et al., 2024); therefore, inconsistent precipitation caused by global warming decimates their ability to grow food. This concern is largely absent in the Global North, highlighting the unequal impact of climate change in rural regions that depend on agricultural products for income and sustenance (Glazebrook et al., 2020). A lack of rainfall and higher temperatures substantially reduce crop yields, resulting in food shortages, malnutrition, and economic hardship (Glazebrook et al., 2020; Ngcamu, 2023). According to Glazebrook et al. (2020), 3.1 billion individuals live in rural regions of the world, of which an estimated 2.5 billion rely on agricultural livelihoods. Women represent the majority of farmers in low-income, agrarian-dependent countries (Glazebrook et al., 2020), with many who "consider agriculture their only security to sustain their poverty-stricken livelihoods, families, and communities" (Ngcamu, 2023, p. 981). This economic instability—driven by rising temperatures linked to the Global North's excessive greenhouse gas emissions—hinders women's

ability to feed and financially support their families (Dyett & Thomas, 2019; Ngcamu, 2023), effectively restricting their reproductive choices. Women in the Global North also experience poverty and food insecurity but are far less reliant on farming as a primary source of income and nourishment (Glazebrook et al., 2020). As a result, the climate crisis specifically restricts the reproductive autonomy of women in the Global South by devastating the agricultural livelihoods on which they depend. Heightened food instability undermines the right to have children by limiting access to nutrient-rich crops necessary to sustain a healthy pregnancy, while reduced incomes further limit one's ability to provide a decent quality of life, thereby violating the reproductive right to raise children in safe, stable environments (Ross & Solinger, 2017). In this way, women face interconnected injustices, as worsening environmental conditions restrict reproductive choices in agrarian-dependent economies of the Global South.

Beyond restricting reproductive freedom through the devastation of agricultural livelihoods, climate change increasingly compromises the ability to have a child due to the negative maternal health outcomes associated with extreme heat and chronic dehydration. Global warming is the most prominent manifestation of the climate crisis, increasing the prevalence of chronic dehydration and heat-related illness (Abbass et al., 2022; Women Deliver, 2021). Scorching temperatures put everyone at risk of heat stroke, illness or death; however, pregnant people face heightened and distinct threats to their health due to inherent physiological challenges (Sorensen et al., 2018; WHO, 2014). According to Kuehn et al. (2017), dehydration during pregnancy can reduce blood flow to the uterus, increasing the likelihood of preterm deliveries and stillbirths; this restricts the fundamental reproductive right to safely carry and birth a healthy child (Ross & Solinger, 2017). These maternal health outcomes are especially concerning for pregnant individuals during droughts or following destructive climate

events—situations that are becoming more frequent in regions of the Global South highlighting the compounding effects for pregnant women in these areas (Almulhim et al., 2024). Similarly, climate-induced food shortages increase malnutrition, significantly affecting pregnant women with higher caloric needs (Sorensen et al., 2018). Nutritional deficits during pregnancy heighten the threat of anemia, eclampsia, and low birth weight, serious complications that increase the chances of maternal mortality (Sorensen et al., 2018; Women Deliver, 2021). Further, women face added challenges in extreme heat due to the gestating body's natural adaptations, including a higher metabolism, elevated thermal output, and a reduced ability to regulate body temperature (Kuehn et al., 2017; Sorensen et al., 2018). Women in the Global South contribute minimally to the rising temperatures associated with poor health outcomes, and pregnant individuals have no control over their increased susceptibility to heat-related illness and dehydration. However, women in these communities bear the consequences of the climate crisis, as global warming amplifies both maternal and fetal health risks, threatening the right to a healthy pregnancy and safe birth. Here, reproductive and climate injustices intersect, highlighting the unjust and disproportionate impact of climate change on the reproductive autonomy of women living in regions most severely affected by rising global temperatures.

Global warming also accelerates the spread of vector-borne diseases, increasing pregnant individuals' exposure to the reproductive health risks these illnesses pose. A 2021 evidence review underscores the heightened vulnerability of pregnant women in regions affected by climate change, where rising temperatures have expanded the range and lifespan of virus-carrying mosquitoes (Women Deliver, 2021; WHO, 2014). The growing mosquito population increases the transmission of deadly diseases such as malaria, dengue, and Zika virus, with pregnant individuals at greater risk due to physiological changes that make them more

susceptible to mosquito bites, exposing both the mother and fetus to a wide range of harmful symptoms (Rijken et al., 2012; WHO, 2014). These physical changes include elevated body temperatures and increased exhalation, making pregnant individuals more detectable to mosquitoes; further, women in the Global South often rely on bed nets for protection, but more frequent urination during pregnancy forces them to leave the netting, increasing their exposure to the infectious illnesses (Rijken et al., 2012; WHO, 2014). Recognizing diverse living conditions, like bednet use, is crucial, highlighting the need for an intersectional global perspective that advocates for culturally competent climate solutions (Women Deliver, 2021). Avoiding exposure to mosquito-borne illnesses like malaria is critical, as women have reduced immune responses during pregnancy, increasing the likelihood of severe infections and life-threatening complications like renal failure, anemia, and postpartum hemorrhage (Rijken et al., 2012). Maternal Zika virus infections can severely impact fetal health, including disrupted brain development, leading to microcephaly and potentially life-long disability (Petersen et al., 2016). These impacts are particularly debilitating for women in regions with inadequate or inaccessible healthcare, where a lack of resources makes treating a deadly infection or disabled newborn even more challenging (Women Deliver, 2021). However, spontaneous abortion and fetal death are the most severe consequences of these vector-borne illnesses, clearly exhibiting the reproductive injustices women face due to climate change (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Sorensen et al., 2018). Pregnant women in the Global North face health challenges but are largely protected from vector-borne illnesses due to accessible healthcare and decreased exposure in climates that are less hospitable for mosquitos (WHO, 2014). This comparison highlights that women in the Global South—particularly pregnant women—face great climate-related risks, often suffering the most extreme maternal and fetal health consequences. These devastating health outcomes

stress the need for intersectional environmental policies that address the specific vulnerabilities of pregnant women, especially in the Global South, where growing mosquito populations aggravate health risks and limit reproductive freedom.

Beyond infringing upon economic security and increased risk for health related illness, climate-related disasters also devastate the built environment and disrupt medical supply chains. This severely limits access to critical healthcare after extreme environmental events in the Global South. According to Ross and Solinger (2017), access to resources is a vital component of reproductive justice, stressing that "access to comprehensive health care, including reproductive health care, is a human right" (p. 117). This concern is especially salient for women and gestating people in regions that experience climate-related disasters like wildfires, tornados, or hurricanes, which can restrict access to resources by destroying healthcare facilities (Ebi et al., 2021; Women Deliver, 2021). Climate-driven destruction of the built environment disproportionately affects countries with weak infrastructure and inadequate emergency response systems, typically found in the Global South's low-income, economically dependent regions—regions historically exploited by the Global North (Ebi et al., 2021; Sultana, 2022). As a result, these countries are less equipped to respond to the consequences of natural disasters, an injustice amplified for women unable to access reproductive health care (Sultana, 2022; Women Deliver, 2021). For instance, following the major flooding in Bangladesh in 2004, many women faced challenges accessing contraceptives due to disruptions in medical supply lines (Women Deliver, 2021). Similarly, survivors of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico (2017) and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (2013) experienced significant barriers to receiving prenatal care (Women Deliver, 2021). In both cases, pregnant women struggled to find clean water, sanitary conditions, and accessible healthcare clinics, making it difficult to ensure safe childbirth and maternal health

(Women Deliver, 2021). Dangerous and deadly tropical storms, like Hurricane Maria, can be directly linked to human activity, particularly the emissions of the Global North, which have significantly contributed to warming the Earth and triggering these disasters. (Abbass et al., 2022; Ebi et al., 2021). Further, persistent exploitation by the North has left countries in the Global South less able to mitigate disaster-related harm, while patriarchal attitudes place less importance on women's reproductive health needs in the aftermath of climate events—inequalities that compound to deny women access to essential health care (Women Deliver, 2021). Examining these issues reveals a clear connection between reproductive inequalities and the climate crisis: that is, environmental changes increase natural disasters, which in turn disproportionately impact women's health and well-being by limiting access to reproductive health care. Being unable to access contraceptives, STI treatment, or quality prenatal care in the aftermath of climate disasters directly restricts a person's right to control their reproductive lives, a core aspect of reproductive justice (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Women Deliver, 2021). Beyond undermining autonomy, restricted access to reproductive services also poses serious health risks for women, who may experience infertility due to untreated STIs or turn to unsafe, often deadly, abortion methods out of desperation (Women Deliver, 2021). These healthcare barriers also worsen the challenges faced by climate refugees, who are at greater risk of harm due to displacement.

Climate Refugees & Reproductive Health

In recent years, climate change has become one of the main causes of displacement and is “set to be the primary driver of migration in the future” (Del Álamo Marchena, 2021, p. 6). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified five drivers of displacement, all

of which increase as global temperatures worsen (Del Álamo Marchena, 2021). As previously explored, increased intensification of natural disasters, increased health, water and food security issues, rising sea levels and geopolitical tension due to competition for resources, are all drivers of displacement as they make a region uninhabitable for human life. Citizens of the Global South who migrate due to environmental degradation caused by climate change are identified as climate refugees (Del Álamo Marchena, 2021). The United Nations decision making body, the Conference of the Parties (COP), gathers annually to discuss multilateral responses to climate change and assess international progress towards climate change goals (Cambridge Institute, 2025). Significantly, both COP23 and COP26 gatherings acknowledged the lack of international legal protections for climate change refugees. Due to the dangers of migration, as well as the dangers of living through climate disasters, there is an urgent request for international protection of people who are forced to migrate (due to climate change) and an increased commitment to climate mitigation, adaptation and “loss and damage” recovery post disaster (Del Álamo Marchena, 2021). In 2019, it was estimated that there will be more than 140 million new climate refugees in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America by 2050 (Nugent). The severity of forced migration caused by climate change will only continue to rise, and so will the consequences for reproductive health.

Climate change violates a woman’s right to have a child, her right to not have a child and her right to raise a child in healthy and safe environments. The reproductive rights of women living in precarious climate zones are constantly at risk as they must weigh the consequences of deciding to stay, where it may be unsafe, unstable or economically unfeasible, or to migrate. A woman’s right to have a child, not have a child and to raise said child in a healthy environment are also violated during the process of forced refugee migration. A study in 2023 highlighted

common reproductive injustices among migrant women from Latin America on the journey to the United States. During the journey, no information about sexual or reproductive rights was provided. Access to menstrual products was limited, sexual acts were performed as favours in exchange for increased protection or comfort, and sexual violence (without access to support or health services afterwards) was common (Letona, 2023). Alarming, it is reported that 80% of migrating women at the southern border of the United States experience sexual assault (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 236). There is limited access to contraceptives or abortion care, therefore sexual assault leading to unwanted pregnancies is also common. Inadequate access to nutrition and clean water, as well as health services, increases the risk of miscarriages among pregnant migrants. Pregnant migrants have no access to prenatal or abortion care, and they are at higher risk of injury due to the physical activity and mental stress of the journey (Letona, 2023). In 2013, Infante et al concluded that most women are aware of the risks as part of the migration process and that they have no control over, or choices within, the process (Pérez-Sánchez, 2024). Having control and choice over reproductive health is an essential right to bodily autonomy. Without choice, there is no justice.

Completing a migration journey does not guarantee a woman access to reproductive justice. Once a migrating woman reaches her destination, the tenets of reproductive justice are violated again as she faces barriers in her host country. Studies regarding post-migration health outcomes recognize that while every immigration experience is unique, there are overarching commonalities that can be applied to groups of migrant women, regardless of country of origin, journey, or host country. In 2021 and 2024, three separate studies conducted in the United States and Eastern Mediterranean found that most migrating women face similar barriers accessing sexual and reproductive health services post-migration. Compounding discriminatory factors,

such as gender, social/economic status, ethnicity, language, culture, employment and migrant status, reduce the likelihood that women will seek out and receive adequate sexual and reproductive healthcare (Alarcão, 2021; Egli-Gany, 2021; Pérez-Sánchez, 2024). Predominantly, the barriers to accessing healthcare are a lack of information (about health services available in the host country), language & cultural differences, economic status, administrative barriers and discrimination. Many women do not know what services are available to them, cannot speak to their practitioner in a common language, are unfamiliar with the Western medical system and are lacking documentation required to receive medical care (Pérez-Sánchez, 2024). A woman cannot safely decide to have a child, not to have a child, or raise a child in a healthy environment if she cannot navigate a new and unfamiliar healthcare system without adequate support. By not interacting with health services due to aforementioned barriers, migrant women are at a higher risk for STIs, unwanted pregnancies, low birth weights or preterm births, and higher risk of postnatal depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Alarcão, 2021). There is no guarantee that post-migration, a woman will have better access to, or feel equipped to access, sufficient health services. This in itself is another example of the logic of domination, this time being used by institutions to impede reproductive justice. Countries of the Global North engage with the logic of domination of women within their nations, as well as migrant women, through healthcare systems that diminish quality of care or concern from female patients. For example, one study concluded that social and structural determinants (such as racism and xenophobia, lack of education, language differences, etc) must be addressed at a policy level in order to mitigate health risks (Alarcão, 2021, p. 1210). In order for policy to be effective there must be an understanding of why intersectional injustices arise. Injustices are maintained by systems of governance and policy, which are informed by beliefs that stem from ecofeminist dualistic

conclusions; planetary health and women's health are not a concern because they are both entities that are justly subordinated. True climate justice and reproductive justice recognizes this joint domination, and how the consequences of this domination result in global climate inaction. In order to maintain a hegemonic colonial control in the pursuit of unending growth for profit, the Global North avoids addressing the critical reality of women in the Global South. As climate change progresses, their reproductive health suffers. Whether a woman decides to stay in a climate precarious zone or migrate due to climate change, her reproductive health suffers.

Conclusion

Climate change is an issue of intersectionality. The planet Earth provides humanity with everything we need to live, but under systems of colonialism and capitalism, essential resources and Earth services are owned, commodified, and exploited. Therefore, all aspects of our lives are controlled by those systems, including reproductive health services. Patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy—systems of dominance rooted in colonial ideology—continue to shape economic, social and environmental dynamics between the Global North and Global South.

By analyzing the interconnections between climate justice and reproductive justice from an ecofeminist lens, we see how the Global North continues to engage in neo-colonial practices, which have devastating and widespread negative effects. Colonial belief systems organize human traits into narrowly defined 'masculine' and 'feminine' domains, reinforcing the domination of both women and nature (Ross & Solinger, 2017). This ideology provides insight into power relations between the Global North and Global South. Through neo-colonial practices which result in overconsumption and high greenhouse gas emissions, the Global North contributes far more to the climate crisis. The institution of an exploitative and environmentally destructive

economic system (Dyett & Thomas, 2019; Sultana, 2022) allows the Global North to maintain their exploitation of the Global South's most vulnerable populations and ecosystems for profit and power. Despite contributing far less to the climate crisis, people in the Global South bear its consequences and are less able to protect their communities from its effects (Sultana, 2022; Women Deliver, 2021). The disparity in how these regions contribute to and experience environmental change is an undeniable climate injustice rooted in colonialism.

Moreover, the persistence of these global power structures results in a profound intersection of oppressive forces, disproportionately impacting women and pregnant individuals in the Global South (Colangelo, 2024; Women Deliver, 2021). The patriarchal domination of women, colonial domination of the Global South, and capitalist domination of the natural world compound to oppress the reproductive rights of women; in this way, the climate crisis acts as a social determinant of reproductive health and autonomy (Colangelo, 2024). Rising global temperatures increase the frequency of food shortages, water insecurity, extreme weather events, and vector-borne illnesses, effects which exacerbate existing gendered economic and social inequalities and intensify the reproductive health risks for women (Colangelo, 2024; Women Deliver, 2021). These drivers of displacement also force women to become, perhaps unwilling, climate refugees where their reproductive health risks continue to manifest in different ways, such as sexual assault, absent or inadequate access to healthcare, and cultural barriers in host countries. The climate crisis undermines the core principles of reproductive justice, impacting women in the Global South more intensely by limiting their ability to make autonomous decisions about whether or when to have children and completely violating the right to raise children in safe environmental conditions (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Women Deliver, 2021).

Ameliorating the compounding reproductive and climate injustices women in the Global South face requires policies that address the root cause of systemic inequalities. In her work, *Bridging Silos: Environmental and Reproductive Justice in the Climate Crisis* (2024), author S. Colangelo attempts to connect climate justice and reproductive justice from a legal perspective. As she points out, policies that treat these issues in isolation are ineffective. Like a bandaid on a bullet wound, environmental policies that overlook the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on women in vulnerable communities offer little relief to those bearing the brunt of its most severe consequences. Similarly, advocating for reproductive rights without addressing how climate change exacerbates gendered inequalities, especially in low-income regions of the world, is equally ineffective. Failure to address the overlapping reproductive and climate injustices faced by women in the Global South reflects a broader web of systemic inequalities. Thus, addressing reproductive and climate inequalities requires an understanding of their shared systems of exploitation, bridging the legal gap between the two to create comprehensive and intersectional policies that tackle the root causes of both environmental and gender inequities in the Global South.

References

- Abbass, K., Qasim, M. Z., Song, H., Murshed, M., Mahmood, H., & Younis, I. (2022). A review of the global climate change impacts, adaptation, and sustainable mitigation measures. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 29(28), 42539–42559. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-022-19718-6>
- Akanwa, A. O., & Joe-Ikechebelu, N. (2020). The developing world's contribution to global warming and the resulting consequences of climate change in these regions: A Nigerian case study. In J. P. Tiefenbacher (Ed.), *Global warming and climate change*, (pp. 15–32). IntechOpen. DOI 10.5772/intechopen.84934
- Alarcão, V., Stefanovska-Petkovska, M., Virgolino, A., Santos, O., & Costa, A. (2021). Intersections of Immigration and Sexual/Reproductive Health: An Umbrella Literature Review with a Focus on Health Equity. *Social Sciences*, 10(2), 63. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10020063>
- Almulhim, A. I., Alverio, G. N., Sharifi, A., Shaw, R., Huq, S., Mahmud, M. J., Ahmad, S., & Abubakar, I. R. (2024). Climate-induced migration in the Global South: An in depth analysis. *Npj Climate Action*, 3(1), 47. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44168-024-00133-1>
- Barry, J. (1998). The Emergence of Ecofeminist Political Economy. *Environmental Politics*, 7(3), 150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644019808414415>

Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. (2025). *What is COP?*. University of Cambridge.

<https://www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/cop-climate-change-conference#:~:text=How%20often%20does%20COP%20take,be%20held%20in%20Baku%2C%20Azerbaijan>

Chen, Y. (2022). How Has Ecological Imperialism Persisted? A Marxian Critique of the Western Climate Consensus. *American Journal of Economics & Sociology*, 81(3), 473–501.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12475>

Colangelo, S. A. (2024). Bridging Silos: Environmental and Reproductive Justice in the Climate Crisis. *California Law Review*, 112, 1255–1319. <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38K06X251>

Del Álamo Marchena, E. (2021). Migration and Human Displacement in the Context of Climate change: Reflections on the Category of Climate Refugees. *Paix et Sécurité Internationales*, 9, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.25267/Paix_secur_int.2021.i9.1708

Dyett, J., & Thomas, C. (2019). Overpopulation Discourse: Patriarchy, Racism, and the Specter of Ecofascism. *Perspectives on Global Development & Technology*, 18(1/2), 205–224.

<https://doi.org/10.1163/15691497-12341514>

Ebi, K. L., Vanos, J., Baldwin, J. W., Bell, J. E., Hondula, D. M., Errett, N. A., Hayes, K., Reid, C. E., Saha, S., Spector, J., & Berry, P. (2021). Extreme weather and climate change: Population health and health system implications. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 42(1), 293–315. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-012420-105026>

- Egli-Gany, D., Aftab, W., Hawkes, S., Abu-Raddad, L., Buse, K., Rabbani, F., Low, N., & Onarheim, K. (2021). The social and structural determinants of sexual and reproductive health and rights in migrants and refugees: a systematic review of reviews. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*, 27(12), 1203–1213. <https://doi.org/10.26719/emhj.20.101>
- Glazebrook, T., Noll, S., & Opoku, E. (2020). Gender matters: Climate change, gender bias, and women's farming in the global south and north. *Agriculture*, 10(7), 267. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture10070267>
- Kuehn, L., & McCormick, S. (2017). Heat Exposure and Maternal Health in the Face of Climate Change. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 14(8), 853. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14080853>
- Letona, P., Felker-Kantor, E., & Wheeler, J. (2023). Sexual and reproductive health of migrant women and girls from the Northern Triangle of Central America. *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública*, 47(59), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.26633/RPSP.2023.59>
- Ngcamu, B. S. (2023). Climate change effects on vulnerable populations in the Global South: A systematic review. *Natural Hazards*, 118(2), 977–991. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11069-023-06070-2>

Nugent, C. (2019, July). The 10 Countries Most Vulnerable to Climate Change Will Experience Population Booms in the Coming Decades. *Time*.

<https://time.com/5621885/climate-change-population-growth/>

Pérez-Sánchez, M., Immordino, P., Romano, G., Giordano, A., García-Gil, C., & Morales, F.

(2024). Access of migrant women to sexual and reproductive health services: A

systematic review. *Midwifery*, 139, 104167. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2024.104167>

Petersen, L. R., Jamieson, D. J., Powers, A. M., & Honein, M. A. (2016). Zika virus. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 374(16), 1552–1563.

<https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMr1602113>

Rijken, M. J., McGready, R., Boel, M. E., Poespoprodjo, R., Singh, N., Syafruddin, D.,

Rogerson, S., & Nosten, F. (2012). Malaria in pregnancy in the Asia-Pacific region. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, 12(1), 75–88.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(11\)70315-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(11)70315-2)

Ritchie, H., Rosado, P., & Roser, M. (2023). Data Page: *Per capita CO₂ emissions: CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*. Global Carbon Project.

<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/co-emissions-per-capita>.

Ross, L., & Solinger, R. (2017). *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*. University of California Press.

Sorensen, C., Murray, V., Lemery, J., & Balbus, J. (2018). Climate change and women's health:

Impacts and policy directions. *PLOS Medicine*, 15(7), e1002603.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002603>

Sydee, J., & Beder, S. (2001). Ecofeminism and Globalisation: A Critical Appraisal. *Democracy*

& Nature: The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy, 7(2), 281–302.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1085566012006460>

Williston, B. (2023) "Chapter 5 - Ecofeminism". *Environmental Ethics for Canadians*. 3rd ed.,

Oxford University Press, 128-151.

Women Deliver. (2021). *The link between climate change and sexual and reproductive health*

and rights. [https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Climate-Change-](https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Climate-Change-Report.pdf)

[Report.pdf](https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Climate-Change-Report.pdf)

World Health Organization. (2014). *Gender, climate change and health*. World Health

Organization. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/144781>