

International
Institute of
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**Decolonial Climate Futures in the Caribbean:
Justice and sustainability from the frontlines
of the climate crisis**



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Colonial Climates, Decolonial Futures.

Gustavo García López

Thank you everyone that organized this event and all who are here with me today. I want to talk to you about decolonial climates.

Prelude: The world has been on fire for a long time



In his protest song against US imperialism in the late 1960s, Puerto Rican artist Roy Brown sang: “Fire, fire, the world is on fire / Fire, fire, the Yankees want fire”. From Puerto Rico and Chile to Vietnam and Guinea-Bissau, fires raged from independence struggles and military invasions. Fifty years later, we speak again of a “world on fire” from the climate crisis, from the fossil fuels burning, but also, from the people making collective worlds of justice, freedom, self-determination, and interdependence (Abolitionist Collective).¹ I want to reflect on the historical interconnections between these different worlds on fire. I will argue that the fires of the climate crisis are also the fires of colonialism, and will reflect on what a decolonial climate future can look like. I will do this drawing on my experiences from the Caribbean islands of Borikén/Puerto Rico into which I was born, and in conversation with scholars and activists engaged in this reimagining, attending to climate justice as freedom struggles by black, brown, indigenous, global South peoples, seeking to remake livable lives in common beyond colonialist extractivism and ‘development’². I want to think of justice in relation to land, sovereignty and commons-making: Caring for territories and our human and non-human families, democratically, equitably, free.

Prelude: Decolonial words of justice as insurgent dignity



Art by Emory Douglas (top) and EDELO (bottom), [Zapantera Negra](#)

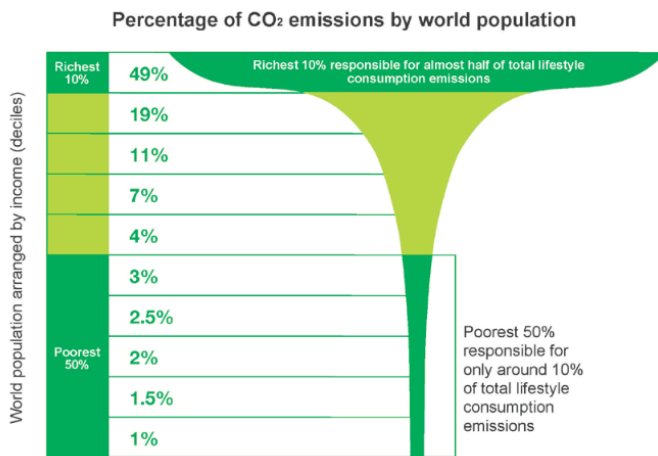
I am We / Power to the people. I speak with many who have come before me. I am here thanks to my parents, who taught me justice and love for soil and plants, my abuelas, tios, primos, and all my ancestors, friends, mentors, who have accompanied me in this journey. I come expressing the sorrow, anger and love from our Boriken home-islands. I come inspired by the Zapatistas, who have arrived these days to Europe to “seek what makes us equal” and to make clear we are still in rebellion.³ I come with the word as a flower which will not die, a word that came from the bottom of history and earth which can no longer be torn by the arrogance of power, as the Zapatistas say⁴. I come thinking-feeling the contradictions of speaking about decolonization, while receiving an award from a Prince, as a white-skinned ‘Latino’ man embracing Taino and Middle-Eastern heritage. I come knowing myself as a colonized, but also as a colonizer wearing his white innocence mask⁵. I come to speak truth to power, humbled by the many world-beings that have given life for justice and freedom, and the many networks of care and commons-making that support me. I am here thanks to Irina, intellectual partner, friend, instigator, carer, mother of our daughter Maia. I am here *because* of Maia, who means “Mountain” (Greek mythology), “Mother” (Tupi, Buddhist mythology), Magic (Sanskrit), “Love” (Nepali), “Courage” (Maori)⁶. Maia who talks to trees to thank them and protect them. She who has taught me so much in so little time about what matters most in this life –heart, care, truth– and to whom I owe the responsibility to give everything to help build a liveable future for all. I promise her *no one is going to devour us, to push this ocean over the Edge*⁷. I tell her “...For us joyful rebellion...For us insurgent dignity”⁸.

Colonial climates: Killing us profitably⁹

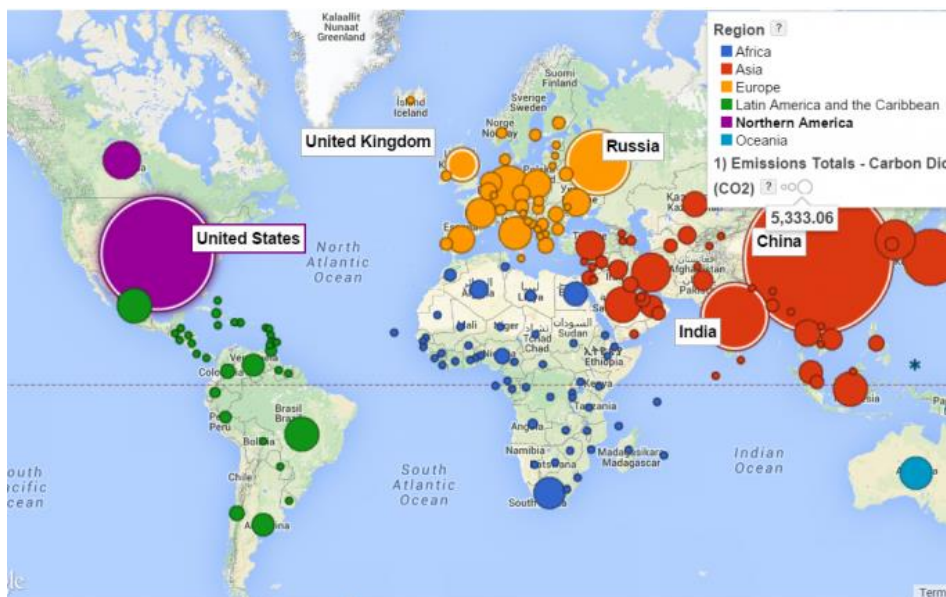


Colonialism brought institutionalized racism to justify accumulation of wealth and power. To remember this history is to purposefully take stock of the magnitude of colonial damage, in order to redress it.¹⁰ Memory is justice, nothing is complete without it¹¹. Colonialism destroyed communal ways of life and knowing-being. It gave rise to the idea that all territories found across the globe were resource for the colonizers. It was a “veritable catastrophe”¹², a genocide and ecocide, which was entangled with the privatization of the global climate commons. This “co2onialism”¹³ persists to this day in many forms: in dramatic North-South inequalities, extractivist policies, corporatocracy, militarism.

Colonial climates are climates of inequality and debt



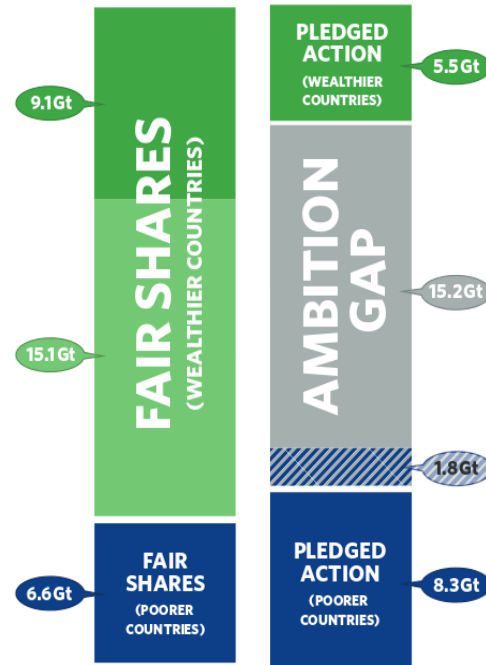
(Top) *The rich are incinerating the planet.* Source: Gore (2015)



(Bottom) This interactive map with 160 years of emissions records shows a majority of emissions continue to occur in Global North regions, led by the USA. It also shows that in recent decades, China and India have grown rapidly, in significant part due to the relocation of production from rich countries, manifested in China's dubbing as "the factory of the world". Source: WRI (2014).¹⁴

We can see climate colonialism in the obscene climate inequalities between rich and poor. As the image shows, the richest 10% of the world's people generate c. 50% of all consumption-related greenhouse gas emissions, while the poorest 50% of the world—the ones most impacted by climate changes—generate c. 10% of these emissions.¹⁵ Since the imperial industrial revolution, rich countries took as 'loans' the emissions of the future for the rest of the world, generating an ecological/climate debt,¹⁶ which add to the already existing colonial debts awaiting reparations¹⁷. Because of these inequalities, the Anthropocene is not of all humanity. It is an "Anthro-Obscene"¹⁸ a "scandalous thing",¹⁹ a "monstrosity" (Abolition Collective).²⁰

Colonial climates are climate genocide: #StopGenocide



Source: Civil Society Review²¹

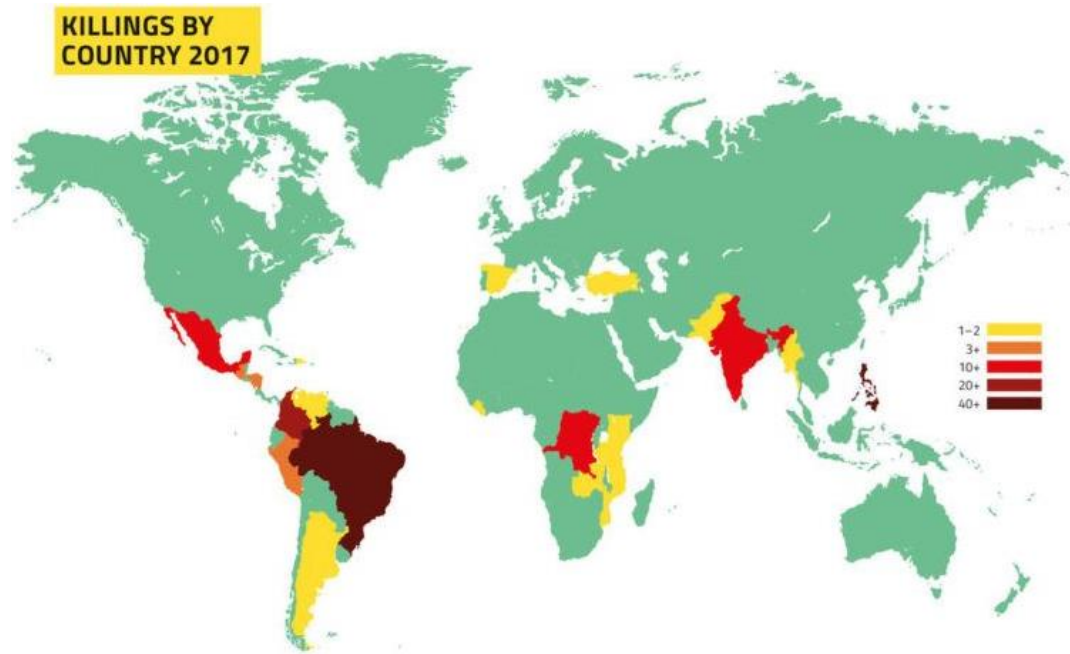
Climate colonialism is evident in international negotiations, where the richest countries have resisted binding emission reductions and climate reparations²². As shown in the graph, in the Paris Agreement, the poorer countries have pledged more reductions than their fair shares, while the richer countries – the ones with more capacity and responsibility to act-- have done the opposite.²³ This substantial gap in the reductions needed will deprive us of keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees. As the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) argued in the 2009 Copenhagen Conference of the Parties (COP), this amounts to suicide. Thus we chant: “No to climate colonialism. No to climate genocide!”²⁴

This reminds of us other similar crimes happening today, from the Brazilian Amazon’s genocide²⁵, to Campania’s biocide²⁶.



Stop Biocide campaign protest in Campania, Italy

Colonial climates are extractivist zones: #MurderingOurFuture



The vast majority of the murders are in the Global South, though often the assassinations are planned with the tacit or explicit support from Northern corporations and governments. Source: Global Witness (2017)²⁷

This climate genocide repeats the colonial logic of some regions being considered zones of extraction, of sacrifice, of disposability, of subhumans.²⁸ This is seen in the increasing numbers of environmental defenders killed every week, hundreds and growing every year, and the countless others silenced by threats:²⁹ to destroy the forests, like Ze Claudio and Maria in Brazil, to build the dams, like Berta Cáceres in Honduras, to extract the oil, like Ken Saro-Wiwa in Nigeria, to mine the lands, like Datu Kaylo Bontulan in The Philippines. These deaths become justified in the name of progress. The same logic repeated by Forbes magazine, celebrating how the current pandemic, despite so much devastation, made so many more new billionaires in 2021³⁰.



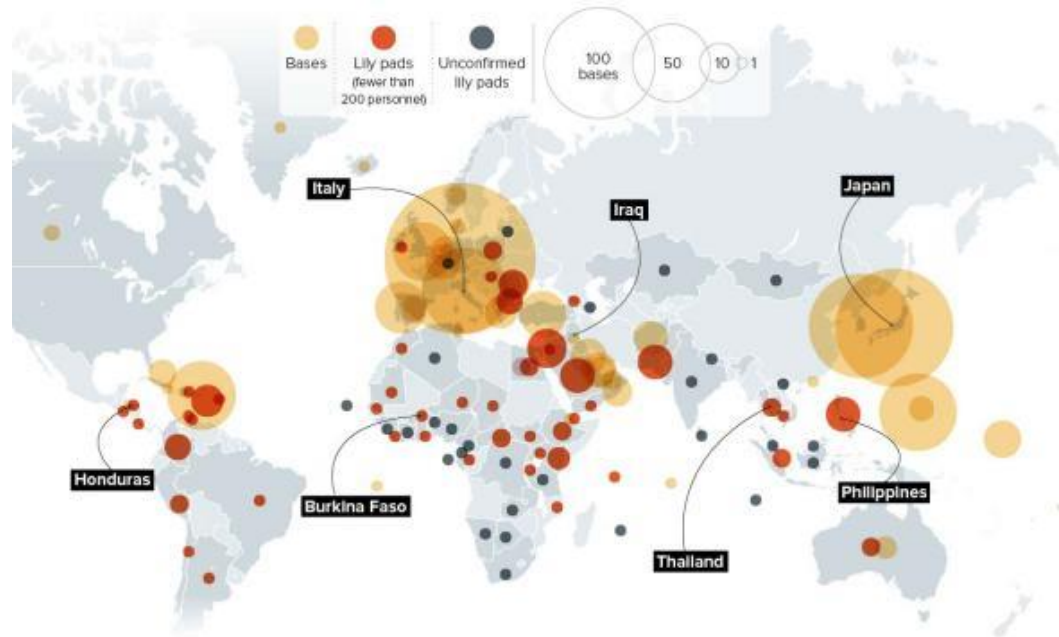
Berta Cáceres Vive, La Lucha Sigue

Colonial climates are corporate crimes against humanity: #TheyAllKnew



Climate colonialism is in how 100 fossil corporations are responsible for 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions³¹. In how Exxon makes more money in one financial quarter, than the entire GDP of dozens of Sub-Saharan nations³². We see it in the environmental crimes of Exxon in Alaska, Shell in Nigeria, Chevron in Ecuador, Total in Mozambique, and so on. In the cancerous fossil fuel alleys from Louisiana and Navajo Land to Guayama Puerto Rico and Ogoni Land. In the fact that these corporations knew and hid evidence of climate change for 50 years. In the deceit and double talk, publicly declaring support for climate action, while spending billions to bribe public officials to obstruct action³³, to promote climate denialism and greenwash their image³⁴. We see the climate colonialism in how a black man is killed for being black, while these corporations face no accountability for what are no less than unprecedented crimes against humanity. We see colonialism in how governments, prime ministers and royal families own, subsidize and lobby for these corporations; while the major banks spend trillions financing them, even after the Paris Agreement³⁵. The same banks like JPMorgan-Chase that gamble, launder, defraud and blackmailing to make a killing from highly-indebted countries such as Puerto Rico.³⁶

Colonial climates are militarized climates: #TheGlobalBootprint



US Military bases across the globe. Source: Vine (2015)³⁷

Climate colonialism is in the U.S. Military-Industrial complex. With hundreds of bases all over the world ready for invasion (as seen in the map), it is the largest global consumer of petroleum and a major climate warmer³⁸. A military that facilitates controlling territories for extracting more fossil fuels. The global climate footprint goes together with a military *bootprint*³⁹

Climate genocide in the Caribbean: Disappearing sovereignty / disappearing islands



Non-sovereign territories abound in the Caribbean. Source: Bonilla and Hantel (2021)⁴⁰

Climate colonialism is deepest in the islands of the Caribbean and the Pacific. They are amongst the most impacted by the climate crisis, yet many remain under the control of Northern countries (see map).⁴¹ Our islands are seen as “remote and isolated”, depopulated, less important⁴², ‘poor’; at the same time that they are subjected to intensive exploitation⁴³: For instance, the Caribbean was the world’s largest exporter of refined petroleum products, mostly for the USA, in the mid 20th century. We see climate colonialism in the logic of “let them drown” as islands disappear with the sea level, the same logic that pushes refugees to drown in the Mediterranean⁴⁴. The same logic that US Security Adviser Henry Kissinger used to justify the nuclear bombing in the Marshall Islands, when he said “who gives a damn” about so few people living there, and then won the Nobel Peace Prize⁴⁵.

Climate genocide in the Caribbean: Dissapearing sovereignty / dissapearing islands



Solidarity campaign against the mines in the US. The text in the right hand emphasizes that 63% of the country owned by the US, and concludes that by 2020, it will be a “Puerto Rico without Puerto Ricans”. Art by Terry Forman, Fireworks Graphics Collective, c. 1970

In Puerto Rico, this climate colonialism is seen in the plans for ‘free’ zones for development that the US began in the 1960s, to turn us into the “showcase” for the rest of Latin America, for petrochemicals to refine the most toxic fuels, and for their military to train their armies and test their weapons, such as Agent Orange⁴⁶. A plan that if fully executed, would mean genocide for Puerto Rico – similar to how they made Guam⁴⁷ and The Marshall Islands practically uninhabitable⁴⁸. They argued we were too small, overpopulated, lacking enough resources to be sovereign.⁴⁹ We see climate colonialism in how they’ve continued with these plans ever since, abandoning the contaminated plants and bases and adding new ones: pharmaceuticals, transgenic crops, coal plant, proposed waste incinerators and methane gas infrastructure⁵⁰.



Source: The Puerto Rican Herald (2002)

Climate genocide in the Caribbean: Disaster capitalism post-hurricane Maria



Man in his lost home after Maria. Source: N/A

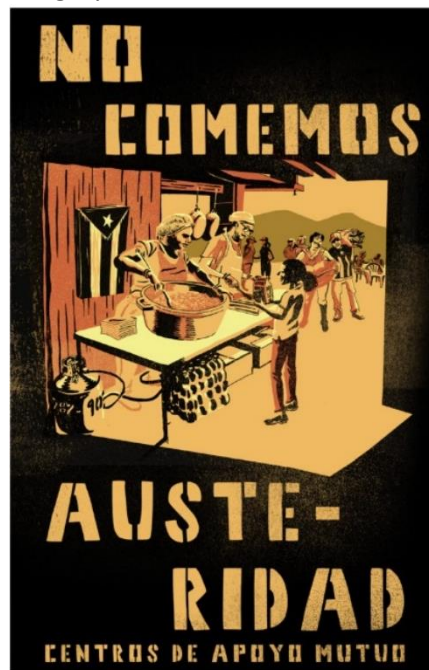
We felt climate colonialism with their 74+ billion debt crisis generated by corruption and speculation and hidden from public view; and the imposition of a Fiscal Control Board to impose austerity and make sure we pay it⁵¹. We felt it with hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean, which showed how impoverished, extracted, polluted territories, become so deadly when facing climate disasters, especially for black, brown, indigenous peoples. The same we saw with hurricanes Katrina in New Orleans, Dorian in the Bahamas, Iota in Nicaragua, Ida in Mozambique. We saw this colonialism in how they laughed at the 4,645 deaths from Hurricane Maria, and cheered the emptying of the country with the emigration of tens of thousands. We saw climate colonialism in how businesses and politicians use these tragedy as opportunities to make profit-- pay illegal debts, award billions in contracts to corporate vultures, displace communities, and reduce and privatize essential services: health, schools, electricity⁵².

Decolonial futures: Making climate commons



The colony is a disaster. / The disaster is the colony. Art by F. Lovascio di Santis, in collaboration with Proyecto de Apoyo Mutuo de Mariana, Humacao⁵³

Yet we also imagined and experimented with decolonial climate futures. As an imperative to ‘change everything’⁵⁴, decolonizing the climate means reimagining justice as freedom (as Mali Ranganathan puts it)⁵⁵ to care and nurture our commons – our coasts and oceans, our mountains and rivers, our energy, our food, and our communities. Such a decolonial approach involves interconnecting struggles for self-determination, land/territory, and racial and gender justice. After Maria, we affirmed, “the disaster is the colony”,⁵⁶ fist clenched in a sign of resistance. We joined forces with journalists, and activists from Climate Justice movements in the US and the Caribbean, to document and denounce this disaster capitalism. We see how reclaiming commons for decolonial futures means working together or commoning at the intersections of movements for debt cancellation and reparations, for solidarity and self-management, food and energy sovereignty, and climate action now.



(Left) From the Disasters of capitalism to Disaster capitalism. (Right) We Don't East Austerity.

Art by AgitArte⁵⁷, adapted for forum by PAREs in collaboration with the US Climate Justice Alliance and The Intercept..

Decolonial climates are redistributive and debt-free



"People before the debt!" Protest of Jornada se Acabaron las Promesas in front of the US Federal Court in San Juan.



Down with corporate welfare. Art by Bemba PR. Reproduced in Zambrana (2021)



Feminist Embargo: (Make) the Banks Pay (Colectiva Feminista en Construcción. In Zambrana (2020)

Making the climate a commons requires taxing and degrowing the rich, to reduce excess luxury emissions and allow space for livelihood emissions for all⁵⁸. It requires the rich to pay their fair share to support adaptation, and redress the damages from colonial-climatic disasters;⁵⁹ transferring the wealth to the most impacted communities in the frontlines of the crisis, which are the ones most often #LeadingWithSolutions⁶⁰. This means fighting for a debt #AuditNOW! and elimination of illegal debts. These feminist and anti-colonial movements show a new "pedagogy of the indebted"⁶¹ that imagines "anti-debt futures"⁶², demanding new agreements that put "people before the debt", "make the Banks pay"⁶³, "end corporate welfare", make a debt audit, and recognize the colonial debts owed to us. As put by Jubileo Sur: "We do not owe, We are the creditors!"⁶⁴

Decolonial climates are commoning food and solidarity



Here We Serve Solidarity. Centros de Apoyo Mutuo. Art by AgitArte

Decolonial climate futures demand that we build new relations and labours of care and solidarity in common to reproduce life. We saw this after Maria in the dozens of mutual aid initiatives⁶⁵ that prepared and shared food and other basic needs, helping clean up debris, serving “solidarity, not charity”⁶⁶. As stated in this picture from Mariana, Humacao, these projects were “moved by happiness”, countering the sorrow from the government’s criminal negligence. Because, “in the fissures of crisis there is joy / for without it / there is death”, as put by poet Ana Portnoy⁶⁷. Taking sovereignty into our own hands⁶⁸, we learned that “community is our best chance at survival”⁶⁹ and that in the process, we

can move from despair to healing and forge a new Puerto Rico: rebuild homes and mobilize for the right to housing and stay in place, expand agroecological farms for food sovereignty, develop new models of collective land ownership.



“We are moved by happiness.” Proyecto Apoyo Mutuo Mariana /Asociación Recreativa y Cultural de Mariana

Decolonial climates are commoning energy sovereignty



“March of the Sun: Adjuntas and Puerto Rico: Solar Town” / “For an energy future that is ours”. Source: Casa Pueblo

Reconfiguring how we produce and consume energy is one of the urgent tasks for a decolonial climate future. This requires commoning energy. Organizations like Casa Pueblo (People’s House) in the central mountains, and the Jobs Bay Eco-Development Initiative (IDEBAJO) in the south coast, have led the movement to enact an equitable, democratic national solar energy transition⁷⁰. Against the government plans to continue fossil fuels slavery through new methane gas infrastructures⁷¹, Casa Pueblo’s 50%conSOL and IDEBAJO and others’ #WeWantSun have envisioned the Sun key to an “energy future that is ours”⁷². They have enacted community solar projects to address basic energy needs, provide local employment, and regenerate communal ties; but also to delink from energy colonialism,⁷³ to create their own ‘utopia’ of energy commons without waiting for change from above.



IDEBAJO’s “socio-productive” projects include an urban food garden and the Coqui Solar initiative. Source: IDEBAJO.

Decolonial climates are commoning the public sphere



(Left) Activists denounce “An illegal contract/ LUMA wants to impose” and “LUMA wants to steal/ Our essential services”, while demanding #WeWantSun



(Right) “There will be no peace with LUMA”. Protest led by a feminist 'drummers' collective

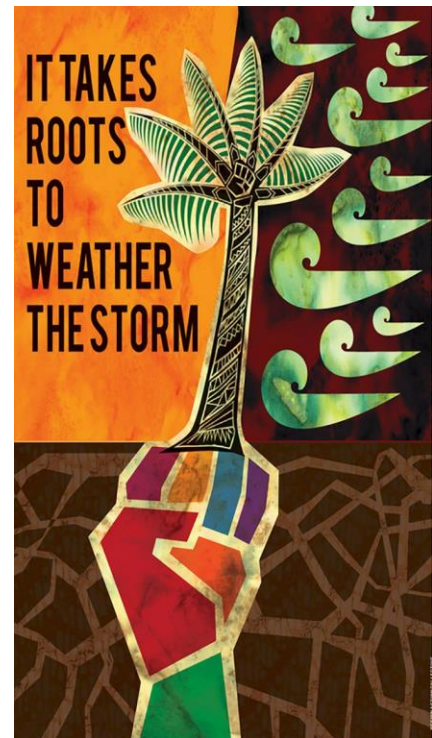
Decolonial futures defend and reclaim essential services indispensable to the common good, in that sense, they also common the public sphere. We see this in the emerging movement against privatizing the energy system to LUMA, a consortium of two North American methane-gas infrastructure companies. Concerted resistance is emerging between environmental justice and climate action activists, labour organizations from electricity, education, and transport, feminists against the debt and privatization, amongst others. They show how privatization is incompatible with a renewable energy transition, or with guaranteeing just recovery processes in future climate disasters. They denounce the stealing of *our* basic services through imposed illegal contracts. As put by Mariolga Reyes: “*When they privatize everything, they will have deprived us from everything*”. Drawing on the inspiration of the mass mobilizations that expelled the highly-corrupt governor, Ricky Roselló, in the summer 2019, the movement promises to offer another “combative summer”⁷⁴. They remind us that without justice, there will be no peace.

Decolonial climates are just(ice) recoveries and transitions



(Left) Fridays for Climate Justice and Just Transitions protest in front of Puerto Rico's Capitol Hill, organized by El Puente- Latino Climate Action Link. Source: El Puente.

(Right) "It Takes Roots" Campaign by a coalition of environmental justice organizations in support just recovery / just transition. Source: Climate Justice Alliance



Decolonizing climate futures means building commons movements that push for the necessary actions now to ensure justice in future disasters and the coming transitions. Beyond the dominant discourse of emergency and crisis, which foresees only more crisis, we have found emergence and the hope of something new. We have learned to achieve together what we could not achieve separately, understanding that all our justice struggles –for education, for health, for housing, for food, for clean water, the sun, for anti-debt futures, for women and black liberation, for national sovereignty – are interconnected⁷⁵. We have learned that #ItTakesRoots to Weather the Storm. We re-imagine just recovery as systemic changes, not climate changes, as building collective power, agency, self-determination⁷⁶. Because “justice without power is impotent, and power without justice is tyranny.”⁷⁷ We fight to transition from an extractive economy into a ‘regenerative’ one, working to prefigure a future where we thrive, where ‘all that we have is what we owe to one another’.⁷⁸

Decolonial climates are liberation, from Caribe to Palestine

(Left) Stopping the factories of death. Source: Global Witness (2020)

*(Right) Resist like Palestine / Fight like Colombia / Vote like Chile.
Source: N/A*



To counter the repeated failures of international negotiations, a proliferation of multi-sited actions will be needed, from neighbourhood and municipal to national and transnational⁷⁹, a process of “islanding” that builds collective protection and environmental healing for our island-futures⁸⁰. This could take us to our neighbors in the Dominican Republic, who fight against the expansion of coal infrastructures and their toxic ashes; to Haiti, fighting against a military occupation and a crippling extortionary debt; and Cuba, which despite a criminal blockade has been one of the leaders in climate adaptation and food sovereignty in the region. It takes us to Colombia –where we join in struggle against coal mining and for a just energy transition in the Guajira. To Chile, with the Mapuche’s centuries-long struggles to recover their ancestral lands from agroforestry industries, and with the movement for a new constitution with the environment at its core. To Palestine and all indigenous peoples longing to be free and in peace. To Romania where they defeated the largest gold mine in Europe and now fight for food sovereignty. To South Africa and the Pan African nations who advocate climate justice and reparations. To Portugal’s fight against the new lithium rush. To the Zapatista encounters sprouting across Europe. May we continue to make these futures together. May our Island-Earth be for everyone. Thank you.

Notes and References

¹ Abolitionist Collective (2020) Introduction. In Abolitionist Collective (Eds.), *Making Abolitionist Worlds: Proposals for a World on Fire*, pp. 1-6. (Brooklyn: Common Notions).

² I am also thinking here of the crucial questions that Riofrancos (2019) elaborates: “who or what are the agents of a decolonial politics? What is the nature of their resistance, and their world-making?” [Agency, critique, and complicity in *The Extractive Zone*](#). *Cultural Dynamics*, 31(1-2) 140–150. I am inspired by discussions on how to decolonize the studies and praxis of environmental justice, development, disasters, and climate change, from diverse geographies and perspectives. **From the USA/Turtle Island**, see Julie Sze (2020) *Environmental Justice in A Moment of Danger* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Mali Ranganathan (2017) [The Environment as Freedom: A Decolonial Reimagining](#). *SSRC Items*; Laura Pulido and Juan de Lara (2018). Reimagining ‘justice’ in environmental justice: Radical ecologies, decolonial thought, and the Black Radical Tradition. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 1(1-2), 76-98. Tom Goldtooth (2020) Indigenous Just Transition: Reflections from the field. In B. Tokar and T. Gilbertson (Eds.), *Climate Justice and Community Renewal*, pp. 179-193. In **Latin America**, see Mina L Navarro Trujillo (2020). Struggles in defense of life within the context of dispossession and capitalist violence in Mexico: a closer look through the lens of the production of the common. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, in press, 1-20; Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar and Liz Mason-Deese (2018). Women’s struggle against all violence in Mexico: Gathering fragments to find meaning. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 117(3), 670-681; Denisse Rocha-Servat and Jenni Perdomo-Sánchez, eds. (2020) *La lucha por los comunes y las alternativas al desarrollo frente al extractivismo*. (Buenos Aires: CLACSO); Lina Álvarez, and Brendan Coolsaet (2020). Decolonizing environmental justice studies: a Latin American perspective. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 31(2), 50-69; lokiñe Rodríguez and Mirna Inturias (2018). Conflict transformation in indigenous peoples’ territories: doing environmental justice with a ‘decolonial turn’. *Development Studies Research*, 5(1), 90-105; Adriana Garriga-López, and Heather Gies, eds. (2020). Solo el pueblo salva al pueblo. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 52(3). Thea Riofrancos (2019). [What Comes After Extractivism?](#) *Dissent*, 66(1), 55-61. For discussions **from other contexts and global comparative perspectives**, see Dinesh Paudel, and Kathryn Rankin (2020). Decolonizing Development: An Agenda for Nepal Geographers. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 25(1), 209-224; Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, and Alberto Acosta (2019). *Pluriverse. A Post-Development Dictionary*. (New Delhi: Tulika Books); Uma Kothari, Nivi Manchanda and Olivia U. Rutazibwa (2018) [Debating Colonial Legacies of Development Studies](#). EADI Development Conference; Christina Gerhard (2020) Sea level rise, Marshall Islands and environmental justice. In B. Tokar and T. Gilbertson (Eds.), *Climate Justice and Community Renewal*, pp. 70-81 (London: Routledge); Irina Velicu and Maria Kaika (2017). Undoing environmental justice: Re-imagining equality in the Rosia Montana anti-mining movement. *Geoforum*, 84, 305-315. [Sandew Hira \(2021\). A decolonial view on climate change](#). *Decolonial International Network*; Massimo De Angelis (2011). Climate change, mother earth and the commons: Reflections on El Cumbre. *Development*, 54(2), 183-189; Gaia Giuliani (2021) *Monsters, Catastrophes and the Anthropocene: A Postcolonial Critique*. (London/New York: Routledge). In **Puerto Rico and the Caribbean**, I am engaging with Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón, Eds. (2019). *Aftershocks of disaster: Puerto Rico before and after the storm*. (Chicago: Haymarket); Adriana Garriga-López (2020). [Debt, Crisis, and Resurgence in Puerto Rico](#). *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 24(2), 122-132; Joaquín Villanueva and Marisol Lebrón, Eds. (2020) The Decolonial Geographies of Puerto Rico’s 2019 Summer Protests: A Forum. [Society and Space Magazine](#); Pedro Lebrón Ortiz (2020). Teorizando una filosofía del cimarronaje. *Tabula Rasa*, (35), 133-156; and Mimi Sheller (2020). *Island futures: Caribbean survival in the Anthropocene* (Durham, Duke University Press). Finally, I am also inspired by the work from groups such as the Climate Justice Alliance and the Indigenous Environmental Network in the USA/ Turtle Island, and the many movements across Latin America and the Caribbean that have given life to a diversity of decolonial cosmovisions and practices.

³ Subcomandante Moises, quoted in [Jornal Mapa \(2021\) A Montanha Zapatista navega rumo à Europa](#).

⁴ Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional - EZLN (1996) [CUARTA DECLARACIÓN DE LA SELVA LACANDONA](#). [Enlace Zapatista](#).

⁵ Here I seek to engage with the ideas of the “white mask” (Fanon, 1952), and “white innocence” (Wekker, 2016). The “white mask” was developed by Martinique anti-colonial intellectual Frantz Fanon (1952) in *Black Skin, White*

Mask (France: Éditions du Seuil), to describe the torn psyche of the black colonized peoples, who after suffering the violence of slavery and the erasure of their culture, wear a white mask to adapt to the culture and language of the colonizer, to prove their intelligence and worth. In “White innocence”, Afro Surinamese-Dutch author Gloria Wekker (2016, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Duke University Press), to describe how colonial racism is embedded in Dutch culture, but hidden behind a veil of ‘innocence’ in the imaginary of the Dutch as ‘tolerant’ and multicultural society.

⁶ The name Maia was dreamt by her mother Irina before she was born. Later, we have encountered and welcomed these diverse meanings in conversations with people from different cultures. See Wikipedia (2021) [Maya \(given name\)](#)

⁷ Part of the poem “Dearm Matafele Peinam” by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner (2016), dedicated to her daughter, quoted in full in C. Gerhard (2020) Sea level rise, Marshall Islands and environmental justice (endnote 2).

⁸ EZLN (1996) CUARTA DECLARACIÓN DE LA SELVA LACANDONA. (endnote 4)

⁹ I want to thank the activists who made this banner and their phrase “your climate profits kill” and Irina Velicu for the inspiration for this title. Irina was inspired by the phrase “Killing me softly” which also became a movie about gender violence, directed by Kaige Cheng.

¹⁰ M. Ranganathan (2017), [The Environment as Freedom: A Decolonial Reimagining](#), endnote 2

¹¹ EZLN (2000) [Mamá Piedra. Enlace Zapatista](#)

¹² Nelson Maldonado Torres (2016). [Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality](#)

¹³ Tim Forsyth and Zoe Young (2009) [Climate change CO2onialism: What impacts for the South? | Eurozine](#).

Praba Pilar. (2021) [CO2ONIALISM in the Extractocene - Women Eco Artists Dialog](#).

¹⁴ World Resources Institute – WRI (2014) [Explore Changing Global Emissions through Interactive Maps |](#)

¹⁵ See also the newest report by Oxfam, Gore (2020), [Confronting carbon inequality: Putting climate justice at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery](#), which sustains and expands on the 2015 report’s findings. See also Y. Oswald, A. Owen and J.K. Steinberger. (2020). [Large inequality in international and intranational energy footprints between income groups and across consumption categories](#). *Nature Energy*, 5(3): 231-239, which shows similar trends for energy (10% consuming c. 50% of energy). Both studies show differences become most stark in transportation, from cars, and especially from air travel, with the top 10% consuming 75% of energy in this sector.

¹⁶ Brian Tokar (2020) Climate justice and community renewal: An Introduction. In B. Tokar and Tamra Gilbertson (eds.) *Climate Justice and Community Renewal*, pp. 1-16; also The Hamilton Project and Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (2019). *Ten Facts about the Economics of Climate Change and Climate Policy*. On the concepts of ecological and climate debt, see Gustavo Castro Soto (2009), [La deuda ecológica, social y económica de Europa con Centroamérica](#). Rikard Warlenius (2018). Decolonizing the atmosphere: The climate justice movement on climate debt. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 27(2), 131-155

¹⁷ The question of the debts from colonialization and associated demands for reparations have become increasingly prominent in recent years. See Harpreet Kaur Paul and Dalia Gebrial (2021) [Who Pays? Debt, Reparations and Accountability](#). In H. Kaur Paul and D. Gebrial (eds.) *Perspectives on a Global Green New Deal*. (London: Rosa Luxemburg Fund); ReCommons Europe (2020) [In the face of the past crimes of the European colonial powers and European neo-colonialism, reparations are needed. CADTM](#).

Broulaye Bagayoko (2021) Colonial Debts and Reparations. In H. Kaur Paul and D. Gebrial (eds.) *Perspectives on a Global Green New Deal*. (London: Rosa Luxemburg Fund).

Claudia Rauhut (2018). Caribbean activism for slavery reparations: an overview. In *Practices of Resistance in the Caribbean*, pp. 137-150.

¹⁸ Henrik Ernstson and Erik Swyngedouw. [Rupturing the Anthro-obscene! The Political Promises of Planetary & Uneven Urban Ecologies](#).

¹⁹ Amaia Pérez Orozco (2014) *Subversión feminista de la economía: aportes para un debate sobre el conflicto capital-vida*. (Madrid: Traficantes de sueños), citing Donna Haraway (1991)

²⁰ Abolitionist Collective (2020) In *Making Abolitionist Worlds: Proposals for a World on Fire*. See endnote i

²¹ Civil Society Review (2015) [Fair Shares: A Civil Society Equity Review of INDCS](#).

²² In the 2009 COP in Copenhagen, the G-77 delegation and climate justice movements demanded \$400 billion in climate reparations for Africa, and differentiated binding emissions reductions. The top emitters made a backroom deal which offered only \$10 billion and no binding targets. The celebrated 2015 Paris Agreement has maintained each country’s emissions reductions commitments (INDCS) as voluntary. See Mithika Mwenda and Patrick Bond

(2020) African climate justice: Articulations and activism. In B. Tokar and Tamra Gilbertson (eds.) *Climate Justice and Community Renewal*, pp. 108-128.

²³ Civil Society Review (2015), *endnote 21*. As the report observes, contrary to what the 2015 Paris Agreement do (allows each country to establish its own INDCS without differentiating), an equity approach needs to take into account both historical responsibility and capacity to act. The analysis “calculates countries’ “fair share” of responsibility using an equity analysis, based on historic contributions to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions, and their capacity to take climate action, based on national income while taking into account what is needed to provide basic living standards.” (CSR)

²⁴ PACJA, quoted in M. Mwenda and P. Bond (2020), reference in endnote xvii

²⁵ Felipe Milanez (2020). [Fighting the invisible anaconda amidst a war of conquest: notes of a genocide](#). *Ambiente & Sociedade*, 23.

²⁶ A Sud [CAMPAGNA STOP BIOCIDIO CAMPANIACITTADINI](#). A Sud ONLUS.

Slavatore Paolo de Rosa (2015) [Linking fronts, building the alternative, enhancing autonomy: Lessons from 15 years of Campania’s social mobilizations](#). In *Political Ecology for Civil Society*, pp. 177-184.

²⁷ Global Witness (2017) [At What Cost](#).

²⁸ On the zone of the subhuman, see Nelson Maldonado Torres (2016) [Outline of ten theses on coloniality and decoloniality](#). Paris: Frantz Fanon Foundation. See also Boaventura de Sousa Santos,

For perspectives on **extractivism and the extractive zone**, see Macarena Gómez-Barris (2017). *The extractive zone: Social ecologies and decolonial perspectives*. Duke University Press; Thea Riofrancos (2020). *Resource radicals: From petro-nationalism to post-extractivism in Ecuador* (Durham: Duke University); Maristella Svampa (2015). *Commodities consensus: Neoextractivism and enclosure of the commons in Latin America*. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 114(1), 65-82..

On the concept of **sacrifice zones and disposable lives**, see Marcelo López de Souza (2021). [‘Sacrifice zone’: The environment–territory–place of disposable lives](#). *Community Development Journal*, 56(2), 220-243.

²⁹ Global Witness (2020) [Defending Tomorrow](#).

³⁰ Randall Lane (2021) [Operation Wealth Speed](#). *Forbes’ 2021 Billionaires List*.

³¹ B. Tokar (2020), see endnote xv

³² Michael Watts. Blood oil: The anatomy of a petro-insurgency in the Niger delta. *Focaal*, 2008(52), 18-38

³³ Coffin (2020) [Absolute Impact: Why oil majors’ climate ambitions fall short of Paris limits - Carbon Tracker Initiative](#)

³⁴ ClientEarth (2021) [The Greenwashing Files | ClientEarth](#). Oreskes and Supran (2020) [Climate Guilt, Brought to you by Big Oil - Drilled News](#)

³⁵ Kirsch, A. (2021) [Banking on Climate Chaos 2021](#).

³⁶ On the link between the coloniality of the debt in Puerto Rico and the work of La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción, see Rocío Zambrana (2018) [Black Feminist Tactics: On La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción’s Politics without Guarantees](#). On the links between the debt and energy colonialism, see Sandy Smith-Nonini (2020) Smith-Nonini, S. (2020). [The Debt/Energy Nexus behind Puerto Rico’s Long Blackout: From Fossil Colonialism to New Energy Poverty](#). *Latin American Perspectives*, 47(3), 64-86.

³⁷ David Vine (2015) [Where in the World Is the U.S. Military?.](#) *POLITICO Magazine*. See also Steven Savell and 5W Infographics. *Where We Fight*. [Cost-of-War](#)

³⁸ Neta Crawford (2019) [Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change and the Costs of War Final.docx \(brown.edu\)](#)

³⁹ Peter Wall (2019) [Global Footprints | geographical imaginations](#)

⁴⁰ Yarimar Bonilla and Max Hantel (2021) [Visualizing Sovereignty: Cartographic Queries for the Digital Age](#). *Archipelagos*

⁴¹ As Godfrey Baldacchino (2009) observes: “No other type of territory has been so affected by the colonial endeavour as have islands...[they] were the first territories to be colonized in the European Age of Discovery; they have suffered the colonial burden most intimately and thoroughly, and have been the last to seek and obtain independence, if at all.” G. Baldacchino (2009) Book Review: Steven Hillebrink (2008) *The Right to Self-Determination and Post-Colonial Governance*. *Island Studies Journal*, 103-105.

⁴² C. Gerhard (2020), endnote 2.

⁴³ Mimi Sheller (2020), *Island Futures*, Chap. 1, observes, the Caribbean has always served as “pivotal space” in the geographies of “offshoring” -- plantations, industrialization, tourism, banking. In the 20th century, the region had extensive investment in mining and refining of bauxite; ports, military bases and weapons testing ranges; and oil

drilling and refining; now coupled with the expansion of mass tourism and air travel and high-tech and service industries (Sheller).

⁴⁴ Naomi Klein (2016) Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World. [London Review of Books](#), 38(11)

⁴⁵ Quoted in C. Gerhard (2020), endnote 2.

⁴⁶ Deborah Berman Santana (1996) *Kicking off the bootstraps: Environment, development, and community power in Puerto Rico* (University of Arizona Press). About the expansion of US military bases specifically, see García Muñiz, H. (1991) U.S. Military Installations in Puerto Rico: An Essay on Their Role and Purpose. *Caribbean Studies*, 24(3), 79-97.

⁴⁷ Lutz, C. (2010) US Military Bases on Guam in Global Perspective. *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 8(30): Nr. 3

⁴⁸ Gerhard (2020), endnote 2.

⁴⁹ Debora Berman Santana (1996) [Geographers, colonialism, and development strategies: the case of Puerto Rico](#). *Urban Geography*, 17(5), 456-474.

⁵⁰ Catalina de Onís (2018). [Energy colonialism powers the ongoing unnatural disaster in Puerto Rico](#). *Frontiers in Communication*, 3, 2. Gustavo García-López (2020) [Environmental Justice Movements in Puerto Rico: Life-and-death Struggles and Decolonizing Horizons](#). *Society and Space Magazine*. Hilda Lloréns and Maritza Stanchich (2019). [Water is life, but the colony is a necropolis: Environmental terrains of struggle in Puerto Rico](#). *Cultural Dynamics*, 31(1-2): 81-101.

⁵¹ Sarah Molinari (2020) [The Public Reckoning: Anti-debt Futures After #RickyRenuncia](#). *Society and Space Magazine*; Rocio Zambrana (2021) *Colonial Debts: The case of Puerto Rico* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University)

⁵² Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón, Eds.. (2019). *Aftershocks of disaster: Puerto Rico before and after the storm*. (Chicago: Haymarket); Naomi Klein (2018). *The battle for paradise: Puerto Rico takes on the disaster capitalists*. (Chicago: Haymarket)

⁵³ Francesco "Cesco" Lovascio "Vascio" di Santis (2018) [Mariana - The Portrait-Story Project](#).

⁵⁴ Naomi Klein (2015) *This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the climate* (Simon and Schuster)

⁵⁵ M. Ranganathan (2017), [The Environment as Freedom: A Decolonial Reimagining](#), endnote 2

⁵⁶ A slogan that became popular in mutual aid and other just recovery efforts after Maria.

⁵⁷ Agitarte.org

⁵⁸ Anil Agrawal and Sunita Narain (1991) *Global Warming in an Unequal World: A Case of Environmental Colonialism*. (DC: World Resources Institute). See also S. Narain (2019) B. Tokar (2020), endnote 16. Patricia E. Perkins (2019). [Climate justice, commons, and degrowth](#). *Ecological economics*, 160, 183-190.

⁵⁹ Civil Society Review (2015) [Fair Shares: A Civil Society Equity Review of INDCS](#).

⁶⁰ Climate Justice Alliance (2019) [Just Transition Alliance \(jtalliance.org\)](#). Brian Tokar (2020), endnote 16.

⁶¹ Ariadna Godreau (2018) *Las propias*. (Mayagüez, Puerto Rico: Editorial Emergente)

⁶² Sarah Molinari (2020), endnote 48.

⁶³ Fernando Tormos-Aponte and Sharianna Ferrer-Núñez, S. (2020). Intersectional Synthesis: A Case Study of the Colectiva Feminista en Construcción. In *Latinas and the Politics of Urban Spaces*, pp. 53-66 (London, Routledge); Rocio Zambrana (2020) [Black Feminist Tactics: On La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción's Politics without Guarantees](#). *Society and Space Magazine*.

⁶⁴ Jubileo Sur /CADTM (2004) [¡ No debemos, no pagamos! ¡ Somos nosotros los acreedores !](#) CATDM.org.

⁶⁵ Isa Rodríguez Soto (2020) [Mutual Aid and Survival as Resistance in Puerto Rico](#). *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 52(3): 303-308. Adriana Garriga-López (2019). Puerto Rico: The future in question. *Shima*, 13(2): 174-192.

Jacqueline Villarrubia-Mendoza y Roberto Vélez-Vélez (2020). [Centros de Apoyo Mutuo: reconfigurando la asistencia en tiempos de desastre](#). *Centro Journal*, 32(3).

⁶⁶ Dean Spade (2020) [Solidarity not Charity](#). *Social Text*, 38(1), 131-151.

⁶⁷ Ana Portnoy Brimmer (2020) [In the fissure of the crisis - Three Poems from the Summer 2019](#). *Society and Space Magazine*

⁶⁸ Mariolga Reyes (2018) [¿Por quiénes esperamos?](#) (Who are we waiting for?) *80grados*

⁶⁹ Christine Nieves (2019) [Why community is our best chance for survival—a lesson post-Hurricane Maria – TedMed](#). See also [ARECMA \(2021\) PROYECTOS | arecma \(wixsite.com\)](#)

⁷⁰ Queremos Sol (2019) [We want sun](#); Casa Pueblo (2020) [50% con Sol](#).

⁷¹ Arturo Massol (2015) [Urge abolir la esclavitud energética](#). *La Perla del Sur*. Kate Aronoff (2018) [Top Republican Plans to Use Fossil Fuels to Make Puerto Rico "the Energy Hub of the Entire Caribbean"](#) *The Intercept*, May 5.

⁷² Arturo Massol-Deyá (2019) The Energy Uprising: A Community-Driven Search for Sustainability and Sovereignty in Puerto Rico." In Y. Bonilla and M. LeBrón (eds.), *Aftershocks of Disaster* (Chicago: Haymarket).

⁷³ Catalina de Onis (2018) [Fueling and delinking from energy coloniality in Puerto Rico](#). *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 46(5)-

⁷⁴ On the legacies of the "Puerto Rican Summer", also known as the "combative summer", see Joaquin Villanueva and Marisol LeBron (2020) [The Decolonial Geographies of Puerto Rico's 2019 Summer Protests: A Forum](#) *Society and Space Magazine*. Jean Hostetler-Díaz (2020). [Introduction. Calles de la Resistencia: Pathways to Empowerment in Puerto Rico](#). *Latin American Perspectives*, 47(3): 4-12.

⁷⁵ The phrase of "doing together what we cannot achieve separately" and the call for interlinking these struggles, comes from Junte Gente's (2018) [Manifiesto de la Emergencia y la Esperanza](#)

⁷⁶ Mutual Aid Disaster Relief (2019) [Apoyo Mutuo: Building Power in Paradise](#); Climate Justice Alliance, (2019) [Our Power Puerto Rico](#); see also Mimi Sheller (2020) *Island Futures*, endnote

⁷⁷ Anthony Rogers-Wright. [Are "Progressives" Becoming the Debasers of National Conversations? | Extra Newsfeed](#). Quote originally attributed to Blaise Pascal.


⁷⁸ Adriana Garriga-López (2020). [Debt, Crisis, and Resurgence in Puerto Rico](#), endnote 2; also citing Fred Molten. On the "just transition", see [Climate Justice Alliance -CJA \(2020\) Just Transition](#). War On Want (2021) [A Just\(ice\) Transition is a Post-Extractive Transition](#). The CJA and IEN's just transition principles include: *Buen Vivir, Meaningful Work, Self Determination, Equitable Redistribution of Resources and Power, Regenerative Ecological Economics, Culture and Tradition, Solidarity, and Build What We Need Now*.

⁷⁹ Brian Tokar (2020), endnote 16; Fernando Tormos and Gustavo Garcia-Lopez (2018) [Polycentric struggles: The experience of the global climate justice movement](#). *Environmental policy and governance*, 28(4), 284-294.

⁸⁰ I am here inspired by Mimi Sheller (2020), endnote 74, who elaborates a vision for island futures" in the Anthropocene beyond colonialism and the ontology of crisis. Her concept of "islanding", which she develops in conversation with other scholars such as Teresia Teaiwa, denotes action that can serve as healing practice and counter-power, as an alternative imaginary that transcends the continental fantasies of unlimited space and resources and hold hope for "humanity as a global archipelago", Island Earth.

Appendix

Powerpoint presentation used during the inaugural lecture

A painting of a large tree with a human face on its trunk. The tree's arms are outstretched. At the base of the tree, there are several figures: a purple-skinned figure, a woman with a yellow flower in her hair, a man in a blue shirt and a tall green hat, a woman in a pink floral dress, and a green-skinned figure. The background is a blue sky and a blue sea. The painting is framed by a green border with a floral pattern.

Colonial climates, Decolonial futures

Gustavo García López
Inaugural PCC Lecture
June 10, 2021

Prelude: The world has been on fire for a long time



Prelude: Decolonial words of justice as insurgent dignity



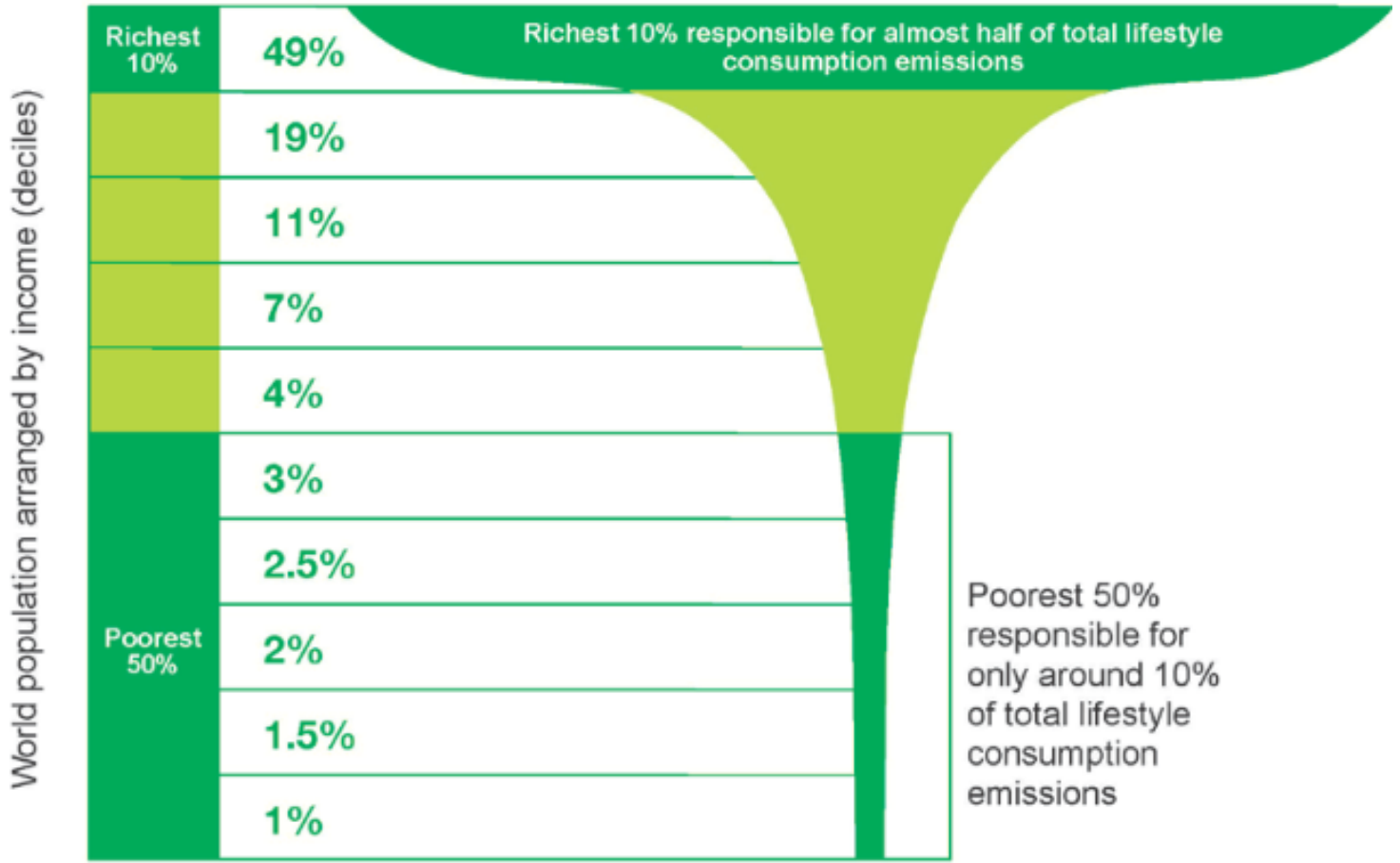
Art by Emory Douglas (top), EDELO (bottom), [Zapantera Negra](#)



Colonial climates: Killing us profitably

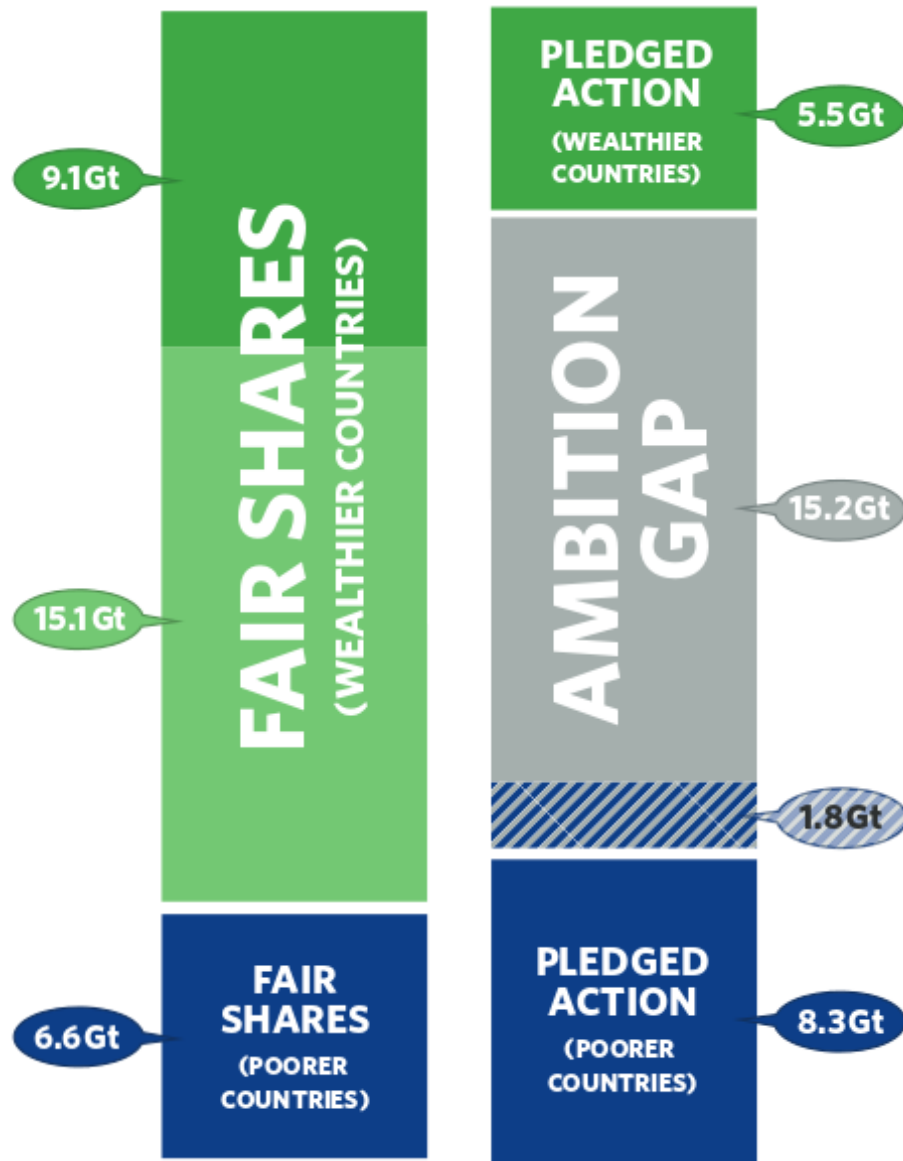
Colonial climates are climates of inequality and debt

Percentage of CO₂ emissions by world population



Source: Oxfam

Colonial climates are climate genocide

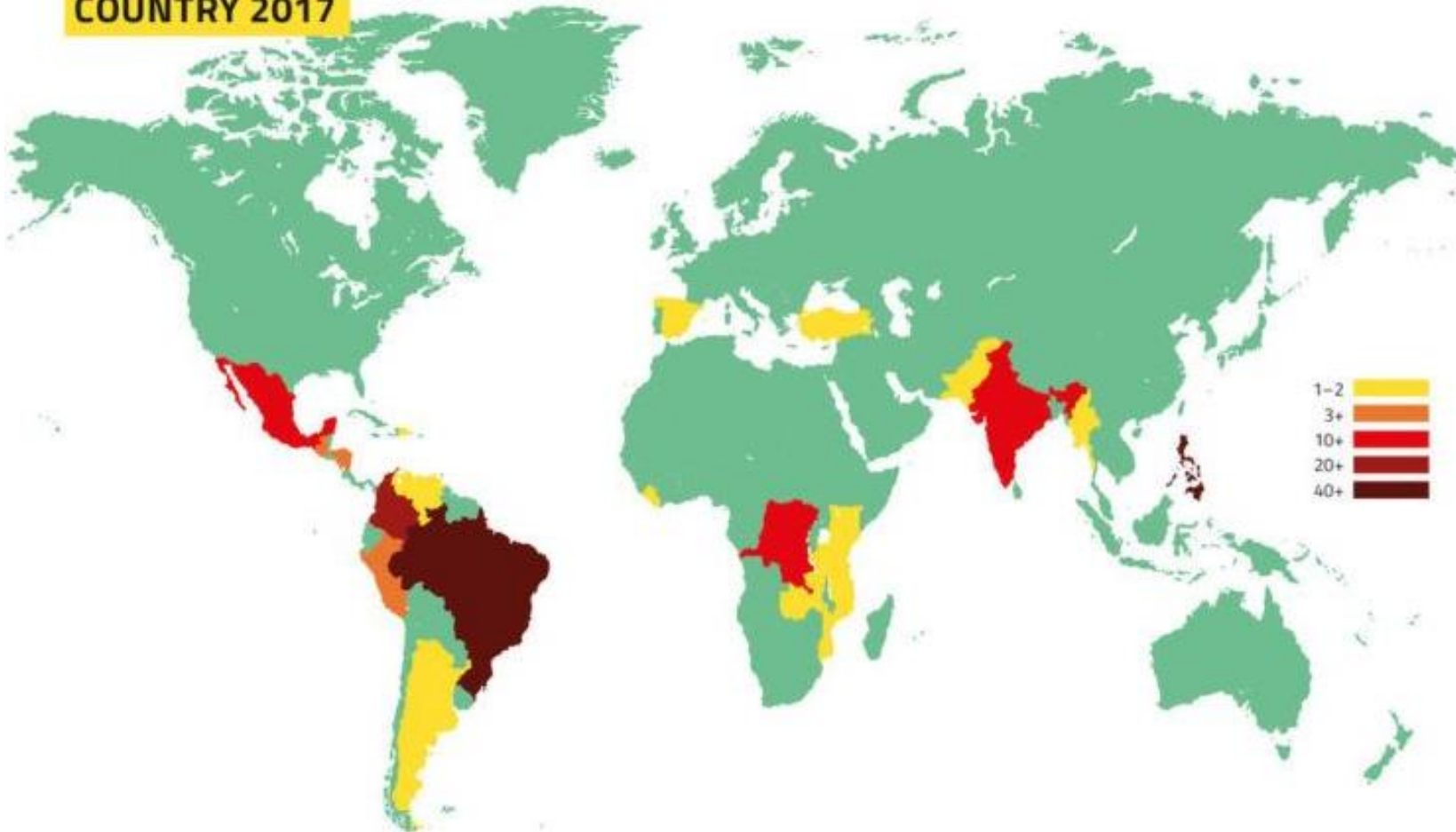


#ClimateHolocaust

#StopBiocide

Colonial climates are extractivist zones

**KILLINGS BY
COUNTRY 2017**



#MurderingTheFuture

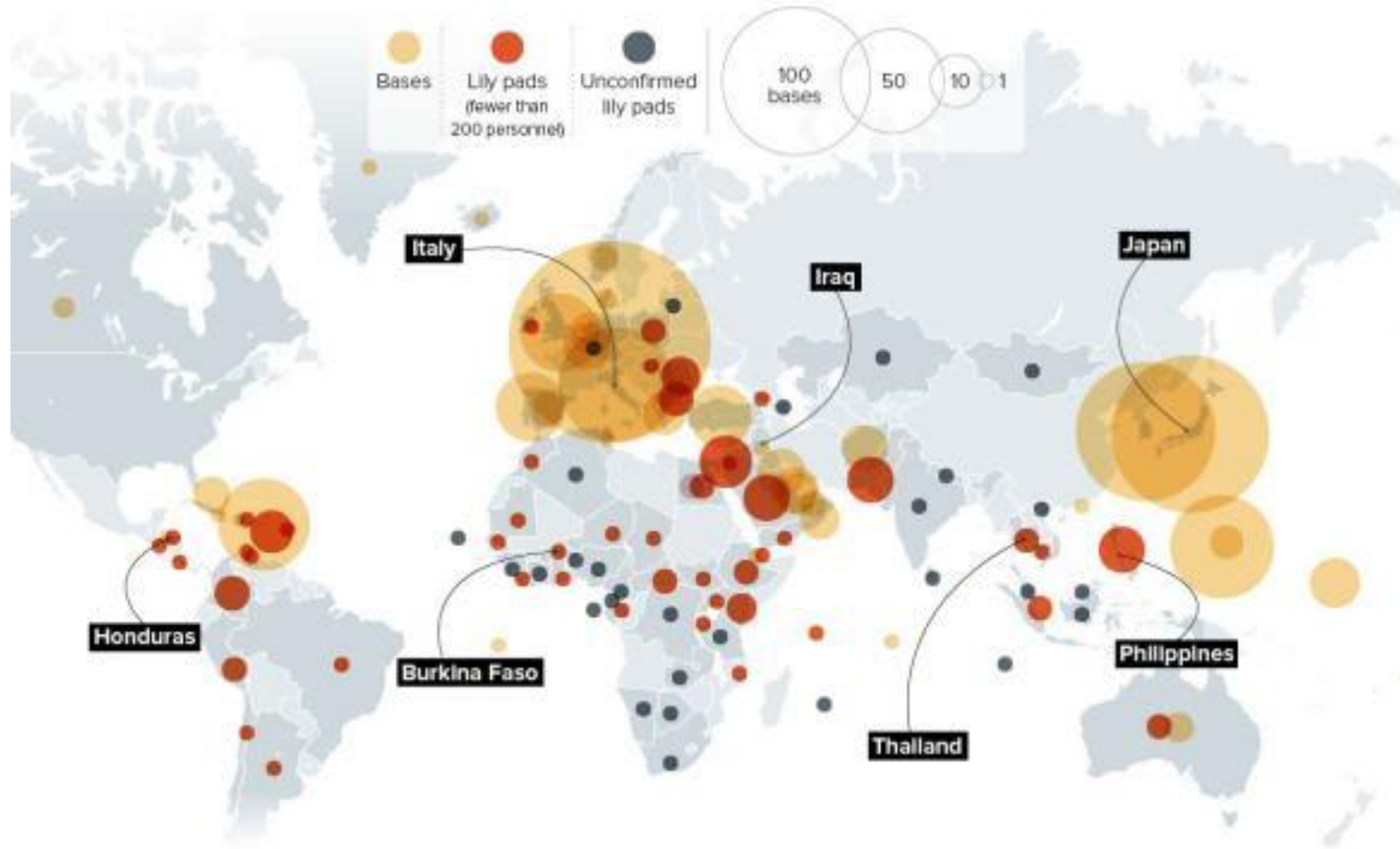
#BertaViveLaLuchaSigue

Colonial climates are corporate crimes against humanity



#TheyAllKnew

Colonial climates are militarized climates



#The Global Footprint.

Climate genocide in the Caribbean: Disappearing sovereignty / disappearing islands



Bonilla and Hantel (2020)

Climate genocide in the Caribbean: Disappearing sovereignty / disappearing islands



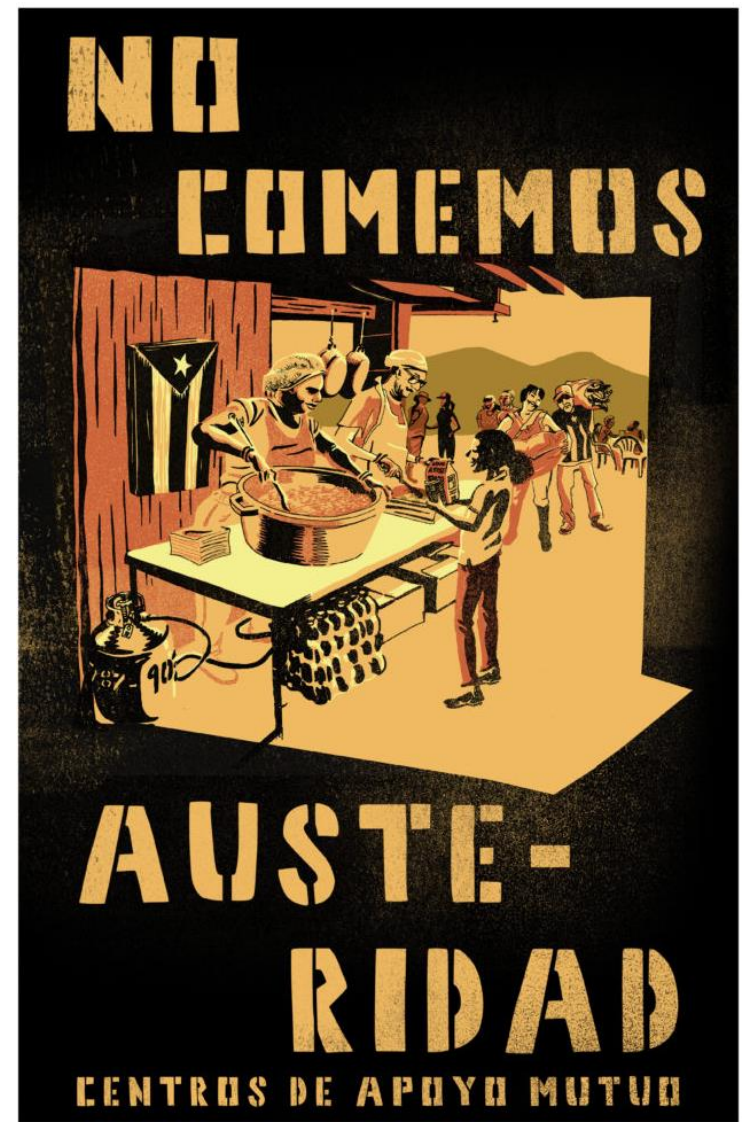
Art by The Fireworks Graphics Collective

Climate genocide in the Caribbean: Disaster capitalism after Maria





*The colony is a disaster. / The disaster is the colony
(Art by F. Lovascio di Santis, Mariana, Humacao)*



*The disasters of capitalism/ Disaster capitalism
. Art by: [AgitArte](#)*

Decolonial futures: Making climate commons

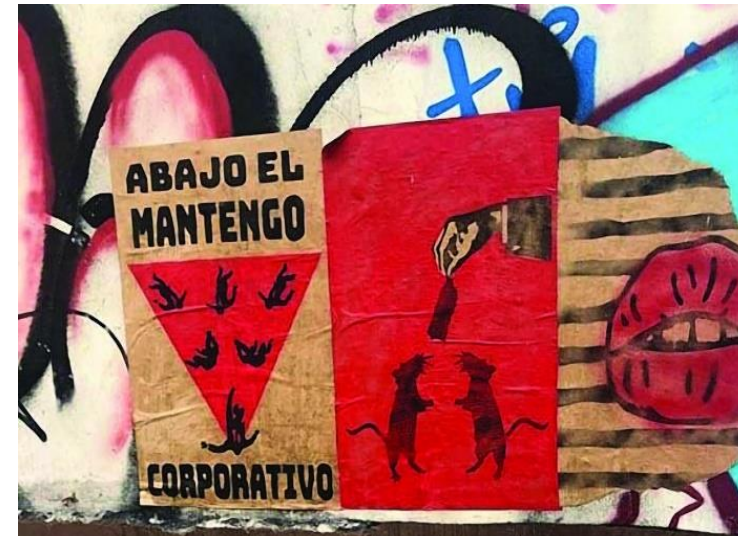
Decolonial climates are redistributive and debt-free



People over the debt/ People over profit



Feminist Embargo:
(Make) The Banks Pay



End corporate welfare. (Bemba PR)

Decolonial climates are commoning food and solidarity



*"Here we serve solidarity.
Mutual Aid Centers" (AgitArte)*



*"We are moved by happiness"
(Proyecto Apoyo Mutuo Mariana)*

Decolonial climates are commoning energy sovereignty



*“March of the Sun: Adjuntas and Puerto Rico: Solar Town”
“For an energy future that is ours” (Casa Pueblo)*

Decolonial climates are commoning the public sphere



"An illegal contract/ LUMA wants to impose"
"LUMA wants to steal/Our essential services"
#WeWantSun

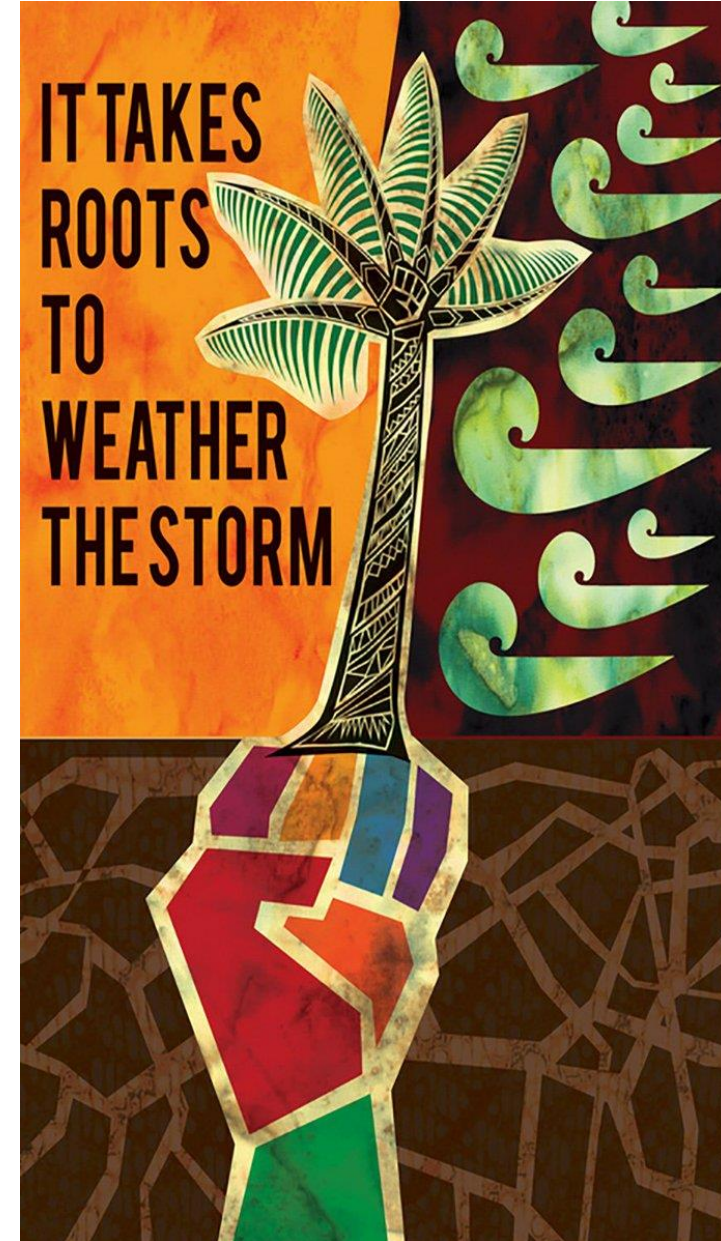


"With LUMA there Will be no peace"

Decolonial climates are just(ice) recoveries and transitions



It Takes Roots to build Climate Justice



Decolonial climates are of liberation, from Caribe to Palestine

