

# US ORGANIZATIONS CONNECTING GENDER JUSTICE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

Reflections and Lessons from Twenty-Eight Groups Working at the Intersection



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## Introduction

### Climate Justice

“Climate justice” is a civil rights and social justice issue that frames how certain groups disproportionately experience a lack of access to social, political, and economic opportunities and protections from climate change impacts. This dynamic movement acknowledges how power and self-interest combine in a warming world to undermine the human rights of disenfranchised communities globally through intensified social, health, economic burdens, and more.<sup>1</sup> Historically, issues related to climate justice have focused on the relationship between environmental justice and systemic racism highlighting the disproportionate burden people of color face in exposure to toxic pollution. To further understand how the climate crisis fuels inequities, practitioners must take an intersectional approach where they actively consider how social and political norms drive exposure to climate advantages or disadvantages. Kimberlé Crenshaw, the civil rights activist who coined the term “intersectional feminism” in 1989, describes intersectionality as “a prism for seeing how various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other”.<sup>2</sup> This approach creates an opportunity to connect various climate impacts to the root causes of the climate crisis: racism, colonialism, sexism, and capitalism.<sup>3</sup>

These root causes combine to drive oppression and exploitation of both people and the planet. As a result, people of color, Indigenous peoples, poor people, people living in rural areas, women, LGBTQIA2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, and other self-affirmative identities) peoples, seniors, children, the differently-abled, unhoused populations and more have increased exposure to climate risks and are forced to continually battle the negative effects of climate change at a much greater rate than the general population.<sup>4</sup>

Lack of attention and response to unjust policies and practices perpetuates social inequities, making it harder for some communities to bounce back from worsening climate impacts like stronger hurricanes or extreme heatwaves.

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<sup>1</sup>Simmons, D. (2020, October 23). *What is 'Climate Justice'?* " *Yale Climate Connections*. Yale Climate Connections. Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2020/07/what-is-climate-justice/>

<sup>2</sup> Steinmetz, K. (2020, February 20). She Coined the Term ‘Intersectionality’ Over 30 Years Ago. Here’s What It Means to Her Today. *Time Magazine*.

<sup>3</sup> *Climate Change, Racism, Patriarchy, and Policy: Climate Justice, Explained*. Climate Nexus. (2021, May 3). Retrieved April 26, 2022, from <https://climatenexus.org/climate-change-us/politics-and-policy/climate-change-justice-racism/>

<sup>4</sup> Ashley, F. (2018, August 7). *Queering our vocabulary - A (not so) short introduction to LGBTQIA2S+ language*. Medium. Retrieved April 26, 2022, from <https://medium.com/@florence.ashley/queering-our-vocabulary-a-not-so-short-introduction-to-lgbtqia2s-language-997ca6c8b657>

## Gender Justice

The Global Fund for Women, an organization that spearheads funding for gender justice groups, defines gender justice as “an intersectional approach that centers the diverse needs, experiences, and leadership of people most impacted by discrimination and oppression. This approach helps achieve both equity (equal distribution of resources, access, and opportunities) and equality (equal outcomes for all).”<sup>5</sup> United Nations Women, or UN Women, elaborates on the definition by adding that gender justice “entails ending the inequalities between women and men that are produced and reproduced in the family, the community, the market and the state. It also requires that mainstream institutions - from justice to economic policymaking - are accountable for tackling the injustice and discrimination that keep too many women poor and excluded.”<sup>6</sup> The Women’s Environmental and Development Organization (WEDO), a global women’s advocacy organization, also states that gender justice is “investing in women’s, Indigenous Peoples’ and grassroots leadership, and lifting locally-led solutions to the climate crisis. It also means creating and driving feminist visions—like the Feminist Green New Deal and Feminist Economic Justice for People and Planet—that challenge the structural inequities that contribute to climate change, rather than reinforce them.”<sup>7</sup>

Gender justice recognizes women's and girls' critical roles and the power they bring towards sustainable development, poverty reduction, and overall human progress. A gender-just world ensures the sharing of opportunities and resources that sustain and expand economic, political, and social empowerment for all who identify as women.

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*Women make things move. They are go-getters. Strugglers.*  
Black Belt Citizens for Health and Justice

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One’s gender identity affects how one experiences climate change. Gender identity refers to a person's individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s assigned sex at birth. In this paper, the term “women” embraces all genders who identify as femmes such as cis women, trans women, gender-expansive and nonconforming persons, or nonbinary persons. Gender justice is “**a human right**” and is central to the climate justice movement.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Gender justice: What is Gender Justice?* Global Fund for Women. (n.d.). Retrieved April 26, 2022, from <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/what-we-do/gender-justice/>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). (2010). *Gender justice: Key To Achieving The Millennium Development Goals*. UN Women. Retrieved April 26, 2022, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2010/1/gender-justice-key-to-achieving-the-millennium-development-goals>

<sup>7</sup> *Hope for 2022: Key #feministclimatejustice moments*. WEDO. (2022, April 12). Retrieved April 26, 2022, from <https://wedo.org/hope-for-2022-key-feministclimatejustice-moments/>

<sup>8</sup> *Women's rights and Gender Justice: Oxfam America*. Oxfam. (n.d.). Retrieved December 2021, from <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/issues/womens-rights-and-gender-justice/>

Women traditionally take on critical reproductive and community management roles in our households, playing many parts simultaneously: caretaker, first aid provider, chef, and more. Their labor is the glue that keeps communities together and moving forward. Women also take on income-generating jobs outside the home. They have less influence in political roles, with limited participation in decision-making at all political levels.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, practices and policies may not, and often do not, reflect or meet the needs of women. When the needs of women are not met, our communities are at unnecessary risk.

Women are often the most marginalized people in society. Marginalization can be described as existing where “individuals or communities are socially excluded, systematically blocked from, or are denied access to participate in social and political processes which are basic to integrate with the society.”<sup>10</sup> Marginalized persons (women) are constrained from experiencing the same rights, opportunities, and resources that exist for others.

Through an intersectional lens, one can observe how the root causes of the climate crisis are in constant interplay. The historic marginalization of women (sexism), intensified by factors like race (racism), means that women, especially women of color, are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis. Marginalization can be based on culture, beliefs, ideology, class, education, race, or any number of factors. Unjust policies and practices increase exposure to climate risks and vulnerabilities while systematically decreasing access to tools and resources that can help communities minimize threats. Recognizing the interconnectedness of all these factors is the key to the successful pursuit of equal human rights. Like the late, great Audre Lorde said, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives”.

### Relationship between Gender Justice and Climate Change

A warming world exposes how gender and vulnerability to climate change are intrinsically linked. The marginalization of women results in women and girls often being poorer, having less access to education, and frequent exclusion from decision-making processes compared to their male counterparts. We see examples of this manifestation across society. Women own less than 20% of land in the world. As a result, it takes women longer to recover from climate shocks and their economic impact.

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<sup>9</sup> Globalisation and Livelihood Options of People living in Poverty (GLOPP) and International Labor Organization (ILO). (2008). *ILO International Training Centre, Module on Gender, Poverty and Employment*. [http://www.glopp.ch/A5/en/multimedia/A5\\_1\\_pdf1.pdf](http://www.glopp.ch/A5/en/multimedia/A5_1_pdf1.pdf). Retrieved April 26, 2022, from [http://www.glopp.ch/A5/en/multimedia/A5\\_1\\_pdf1.pdf](http://www.glopp.ch/A5/en/multimedia/A5_1_pdf1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [Nigam, S. (2014, September 5). *From The Margins: Revisiting the Concept of 'Marginalized Women'*. SSRN. Retrieved from [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2490983](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2490983)

This disturbs women’s livelihoods and their ability to feed their families which are connected to the land. Resource scarcity driven by human-intensified drought or deforestation has forced women into sexual exploitation to gain access to water or firewood.<sup>11</sup> Extraction of fossil fuels, which releases planet-warming gases, brings in thousands of male workers that establish “man camps” in Indigenous territories, exponentially increasing violence against Native women as a result. Women and children are more likely to die than men in natural and man-made environmental disasters.<sup>12</sup>

**“Not seeing a lot of emphasis on the relationship between gender and climate justice around the country.” – Alaskan Community Action on Toxins**

**“Slowly growing trend, but still a big gap between the two movements.” – Grassroots Global Justice**

Discourse on the gendered impacts of climate change in the United States is alarmingly under-researched. Across the United States, extreme weather events like historic heatwaves, intensified hurricanes, or extreme snowstorms correlate to an increase in the risk of gender-based violence. A 2021 gender and racial impact study created by WECAN (Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network) highlights the stories of frontline women in Minnesota, Louisiana, and California who report horrible smells and tastes associated with pollution from unregulated development. Women, who are more sensitive to toxic exposure, experience specific health disorders like breast and ovarian cancer linked to air pollution released from fossil fuel combustion. The consistent exposure of expecting women of color to fossil fuel pollution is linked to negative impacts on fertility, affecting women’s reproductive and mental health.<sup>13</sup>

Marginalization driven by the patriarchy leaves women with fewer resources at their disposal to cope with climate impacts. Though women are the glue

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*“Climate change disproportionately impacts women and women of color based on the jobs, where they live, and the fact that there are a lot less resources for women of color, low-income women of color in general. Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by disasters, both during and afterward, in terms of access to hospitals, rural communities, etc. This work, the impact on women of color, gets invisibilized.”*

**Forward Together**

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<sup>11</sup> Mourdoukoutas, E. (2016, November). Women grapple with harsh weather ...but they can also help mitigate effects of climate change in Africa. *United Nations African Renewal*.

<sup>12</sup> Habtezion, S. (2013). United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). Retrieved April 26, 2022, from <https://www.undrr.org/>

<sup>13</sup> Charles, L., Cissoko, S., & Orielle Lake, O. (2021). *GENDERED AND RACIAL IMPACTS OF THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY IN NORTH AMERICA AND COMPLICIT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS*. wecaninternational.org. Retrieved April 26, 2022, from [https://www.wecaninternational.org/files/ugd/d99d2e\\_918b1e133b2548549b686e4b6eac4cc3.pdf](https://www.wecaninternational.org/files/ugd/d99d2e_918b1e133b2548549b686e4b6eac4cc3.pdf)

that keep communities together, and some communities uphold matriarchs in the family structure, the needs, priorities, and knowledge of women are often ignored or overlooked when it comes to climate policy, undermining both their agency and the effectiveness of sustainable management solutions. The systemic undermining of women’s human rights means that instead of preventing threats, the stage is set for threats to multiply. The health, economic and societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have further put women’s inclusion in environmental governance at risk.

#### Shared Organizational Focus *Alaskan Community Action on Toxics*

“Here in Alaska, we tend to focus on chemical exposures rather than just on climate change, although climate change exacerbates and increases the rate of contaminant deposition in the Arctic” stated Pam Miller, Executive Director. According to Ms. Miller, the intersection of gender justice and climate change is “hugely under-addressed”. There are many different effects between men, women and children that are not considered. To add more complexity, there are different types of chemical exposures that occur – for example, occupational exposure or exposure resulting from climate warming in the north. There is a lack of awareness in terms of understanding and protecting vulnerable populations, particularly Indigenous peoples in Alaska. One major concern is the exposure of firefighters to carcinogenic chemicals in their protective suits. Some firefighters have experienced specific cancers.

In addition to the issues around Indigenous people and other vulnerable people and women firefighters, there is a relationship between the different types of chemical exposures from climate change and the vulnerability of women and future generations. When children are exposed to contaminants in the womb, it can have multigenerational effects that are not usually considered.

Women and girls are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation and will continue to be so until power and resources are shared equitably. Many of the organizations interviewed for this report work on issues solely related to gender justice and women overall while other organizations prioritize their objectives based on immediate impacts on their community.

It should be noted that a community’s perception of the significance of gender justice in the climate movement, or its intersections with other movements, plays a significant role in determining whether an organization will allocate time, energy, and resources to successfully bridge the topics in their respective organizations. The power that women have and the contributions they make in society, often unacknowledged and unpaid, need to be recognized and honored so that everyone who engages in climate justice work understands the critical importance gender justice has in the movement.

The disproportionate degree that gender influences vulnerability to climate change impacts requires its inclusion in all discussions on climate justice. The voices of diverse women from all



backgrounds, especially women of color, Native women, and women in the LGBTQIA2S+ community, are needed to inform equitable policy and climate solutions that drive systems change.

This paper seeks to highlight actions undertaken by organizations in the United States to address the relationship between gender justice, climate justice, and their interconnectedness.

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## Methodology

Our findings and recommendations come from personal interviews with a wide range of organizations and entities working to address the important issues surrounding gender and gender justice.

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*“The White middle class and upper middle class don’t see it. When you point it out they get it. People with privilege are blind to impacts. Others are noticing what some people can’t get compared to what they are getting.” - Mom’s Clean Air Force*

*“Our base gets it and understands that deep connection. We work statewide so it’s hard to be specific but in general we still have lots of work to do. The reality and history of colonialism has really built some unhealthy ideas of our gender roles and we are still trying to heal from that historical trauma.” – Native Movement*

*They definitely come and talk to us about how hard it is to be a woman in a male dominated industry. And really it shows because the minute we connect them with other women who have gone ahead and become their heroes, the response is overwhelming. They just want to relate to people who share their vision and values. – Women’s Environmental Network*

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## Interviews

Interviewees were either recorded or interviewed by telephone by one of the co-authors of this report. The interview questions are provided in Appendix A.

## Methodology/Criteria for Selection

This report is based on results from a series of interviews conducted with key organizations in the U.S. that work at the intersection of gender justice and climate justice. We developed an open-ended interview tool that included fourteen questions to assess organizations’ work on gender issues and climate change, as well as organizational dynamics. We also asked interviewees to describe best practices that they identified, both in their organizations and others’. Information on their respective community along with any other organizations they engage with was also included.

Although fifty-five organizations were initially identified for project interviews, twenty-eight (28) organizations were ultimately interviewed. Of those, two are not currently working on gender justice issues, although both recognized the need for gender justice work.

The research conducted for this paper was first started over three years ago. With time, more organizations have become involved in building people’s power at the intersection of gender and climate justice.



## Findings

### Challenges and Barriers to Addressing Gender Justice and Climate Change

All work focused on people disproportionately affected by an issue involves investigating the challenges and barriers that are ever present. Recognizing and identifying those is key to our ability to triumph over them. In this section, we asked interviewees to identify challenges and barriers they have faced while addressing or trying to address the intersectionality of gender justice and climate change.

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*“Even though the climate movement is not inclusive to women and POC, women are doing most of the work. Creating protocols can help with the burnout so we can continue to do the work we are already doing.” – Women of Color Speak Out (WOCOSO)*

*“Burnout is real. The caring for and addressing the wellness of women who are in this for the long haul is important.” – Alaskan Community Action on Toxins*

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### Concern for the Wellness of Women in the Movement

Foremost, a deep concern about women’s diminishing mental, emotional, and physical health as they engage in uplifting gender justice, was echoed by many interviewees. Most, if not all, women of color working in the social justice movement space suffer from a lack of time and resources to care for themselves or other women in the same space. Many in the movement do not have health care, commensurate salaries, or other basic tools and resources needed to sustain themselves, including emotional, spiritual, and mental support.

Mainstreaming gender justice, climate justice, and their intersections can lead to more resources directed to these issues. Until then, disenfranchised groups do as much as they can with very little, which often leads to health issues and burnout. This can result in the loss of momentum or, in worst-case scenarios, the disbanding or dissolving of an organization doing the critical work of building this grassroots movement.

Caring for and addressing the wellness of women who are in this work for the long haul is critical and necessary to implementing successful climate justice solutions.

## Gender

## Perception

## Barriers

Our interviews illuminate the general lack of awareness and unique value women play as critical advocates in their community. Traditionally women take on reproductive and community roles, like caregivers, first responders, and teachers. Every day they make decisions around calculating the nourishment and nurture of children and families. Women center advocacy through hard and hard work. Stakeholders also communicated the societal perception that caregiving is viewed as “soft” while productive labor is perceived as “strong”. A May 2021 Salary.com study found that stay-at-home moms work an average of 106 hours a week. The labor of motherhood and all who assume roles as caregivers in our society must be recognized and acknowledged. When organizations meaningfully engage in uplifting gender justice to the mainstream, they are also generally perceived as “soft”. These perceptions do not reflect the value women bring to their communities and the planet.

These behavioral responses are influenced by the patriarchy, which fuels sexism. For example, sometimes in the workplace, women need to have a male colleague handle conversations with other males to be heard. Those who have enclosed wealth and power (mostly white heterosexual males) have enabled the historic and ongoing undermining of women’s economic, social, reproductive, and political freedoms. As organizations work to bend the arc of gender justice towards equality, men find innovative ways to weaponize misogyny, the prejudice against women. Misogyny is so pervasive that many women may not know how to recognize it or respond to it in their environments.

In addition to any professional training, women receive, training around how misogyny manifests in communities and how to address it is needed. Misogyny has a slow onset, meaning it may show up in ways that cause a subtle yet consistent shift in power dynamic until suddenly a complete change of environment is revealed. Providing professional trainings on sexual harassment, which is rooted in gender-based violence, started less than thirty years ago and is still not adequate in protecting women in the workplace, much less at home.

When women engage in conversations that aim to highlight the intersection of climate justice and gender justice with those doing climate crisis movement work, they are often met with responses that focus on women’s reproductive rights, the topic of fertility, or population impacts.

### OTHER ISSUES AROUND WOMEN AND THE URGENT CLIMATE CRISIS

“I’ve been really disturbed by how students feel about having babies in a time of climate change. Groups like Conceivable Future have put their finger on the kinds of conversations happening on college campuses, which is really disturbing.” – **Popdev**

“Also, heard that in the climate movement, where women do not want to have kids because the planet is dying, needs to be examined.” – **Women Of Color Speak Out (WOCOSO)**

“Women can be tokenized. Some may want to include women, but it is done in a tokenistic way. Women should be involved in core setting, instead of “We want you to lead the march but not in the recognition of the decision making or organizing.”

Any framing that seeks to restrict a woman's freedom to make choices about her own body is rooted in a patriarchal, colonialist mindset. Instead, climate solutions must also recognize the importance of reproductive justice, including safeguarding the right to have wanted children, not have unwanted children, and to raise children in safe and sustainable communities

Many mainstream gender justice and climate justice organizations are not diverse enough across identities or lived experiences. There exists a need for more women of color to lead gender justice and climate justice organizations not only to influence decisions but to also bring in and develop the leadership of other like-minded, passionate women of color.

It is often dangerous for women to challenge misogyny, especially in men, in a patriarchal society. It can even result in death. As we move to disrupt the status quo, those who benefit from the status quo may respond with denial, anger, or violence. When there is a toxic male in an organization preventing that organization from achieving its goal of equity and justice and instead creates a hostile environment, there may be a lot of support for that toxic male.

When the influence of the patriarchy goes unchecked, power dynamics cannot be equitably distributed, decision-making does not reflect the needs of women, and things fall apart. In all social movements throughout history, patriarchy has shown up. For this reason, all practitioners engaged in gender justice and climate justice work must stay vigilant and informed on how to effectively challenge and stop toxic masculinity where and, not if but when it shows up. Particular attention should be paid to ways that misogyny, anti-blackness towards Black women, show up. This is especially important for institutions that are "difficult to move" like coalitions, the legislature, and state and local government. Patriarchy breeds in all spaces, therefore stakeholders must recognize and work together to create responses that successfully bend the arc towards gender justice.

### Education

Education about gender justice, climate justice, and its intersections was identified as another important barrier to work. Education expands the learning horizons of individuals and organizations that are without background or experience on environmental issues, and which lack direct links to social justice organizations. It serves as a tool to bring in more community members by enhancing their understanding of and stake in climate and gender issues. It also serves to provide critical information for those outside of impacted communities.

Education is a prerequisite for gender and climate justice resource development and funding. The creation and curation of tools that provide guidance, best practices, and models of effective responses, such as toolkits, trainings, or resource libraries, are needed to rapidly amplify the understanding of stakeholders and funders about gender justice, climate justice, and their interconnectedness. Applying a gender lens to research and data is required to support the urgently needed education necessary to successfully engage in this work. New and shared knowledge equips practitioners with important information which they can apply when making decisions around the pressing issues related to climate and gender justice. These tools in action can drive the development of gender and climate just policies.

“The women in these organizations are constricted. They are going to do this work anyway, but they need support. If they don’t do it, no one will. Whatever it takes. We need to give them recognition, investment and support. We need to resource this movement. And we will see results when we put these resources into their hands.”

### Funding and Resources

Lack of funding and resources was a repeated theme in most of the interviews. The importance of funding was identified as fundamental for organizations to sustain new and ongoing projects.

Many responses also pointed to the general lack of interest in climate and gender justice from philanthropic organizations. Practitioners have found a strong correlation between a philanthropy’s education and awareness of the topic and their willingness to provide appropriate funding. **“There really is a gap in understanding and investing in gender and climate”** as described in an interview.

“Education. And there are not a lot of environmental justice (EJ) groups who want to engage in that education, teaching White people about EJ, saying it is not their job. There is a need to educate these organizations. Big groups address them poorly, there is more need for resourced organizations to do education. Young women of color come up to her and say they never thought they can work on climate, but now they see it. White folks who get it should be teaching organizations how to be better.” **WOCESO**

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*“Some well-intentioned white people who think the same old strategies are going to get us climate wins. They are the gatekeepers to funding, strategy tables, and are holding organizations back from funding, real solutions and getting solutions to a broader base of organizer”*

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Funding allows organizations access to existing resources or to pursue the development of new and needed resources for outreach, capacity building, staff compensation, and more. It can support the development of resource libraries for organizations to share information and expand their reach at the community level, in government entities, and more. One interviewee observed that the resources currently available for groups working at the intersection of gender justice and climate are insufficient. While some philanthropic organizations do provide funding for gender and women’s rights, that funding may not be accessed by organizations and individuals directly engaged in the work. A second interviewee observed, “Large environmental organizations that are putting a focus on gender and women’s rights and getting resources for it are not getting those resources back to frontline groups or groups that have been creating knowledge at that intersection.” Therefore, philanthropists may play an unintended role in perpetuating social inequities if they do not understand the importance of this intersectional work and gatekeeping funding streams.

### Organizational Barriers

Organizational barriers include internal issues like organizational identity. For example, discussions around an identity may ebb between deciding if an organization is a women’s group or a climate change group. Identity issues could lead to a need for clarity around function and focus. A clear focus can help organizations be more intentional as they identify applicable funding sources or partnerships. Some interviewees opined that focusing on issues like race, class, and climate are seen as ‘mission drift’ and may impede an organization’s efforts to connect various social movements.

### Leadership Barriers

There is a great need to build the social, economic, and political power of women. Women who become leaders through sheer skill and talent are often seen as less than or are not as respected as their male counterparts. Factors like sexism, xenophobia, ageism, and immigration status can result in women not being perceived as credible when they advocate for justice.

Furthermore, there is a lack of board-savvy activists committed to saving the planet in leadership positions. Uplifting more diverse, women-centered climate leadership can help mitigate another barrier of support, namely when funders or supporters lose interest. For example, when WOCSO (Women of Color Speak Out) was a new organization, people were intrigued. But as the organization has grown, WOCSO finds itself facing more pushback from other groups.

## Lack of Support at the Intersection of Gender Justice and Climate Justice

Significant gaps in support exist in mainstreaming gender justice, climate justice, and its intersections. First, some stakeholders and practitioners try to silo the issues and withhold from addressing the inherent intersectionality between them. Some perceive that gender and climate justice, and their intersection is separate from “important” work. Others downplay the importance of unifying around these issues.

Some climate groups prioritize “urgency” in their focus and ignore conflict to build relationships. Instead of being conflict averse, organizations should be willing to have courageous conversations that effectively address social conflicts. With this approach, strong, sustainable community relationships are more likely. Strong relationships are important as some may view these issues as controversial. Interviewees noted that it can be difficult to talk with people who may disagree or who do not support this work and that too often, the topic of justice is not approached with authority.

## Issue Priority

Amid a health pandemic, economic failure, and a long-overdue racial reckoning, people face many urgent issues in their communities, and they may feel as if they lack the bandwidth to focus on gender and climate. As communities grapple with issues like violence or climate-forced displacement, some organizations have a difficult time sustaining everyone’s attention on issues related to gender and climate. In addition, many people will not focus on the issue at all because they do not believe that climate change is real. Furthermore, our interviews reveal that generally communities have not seen or understood the strong connection between gender and climate in the United States. It is challenging to get others to understand the relationship between gender justice and the climate crisis or that there is even a need to focus on gender justice. For this reason, it's important to take climate from an abstract topic or headline and connect its impacts to the lived experience of everyday people.

The World Health Organization’s definition of the Precautionary Principle states that “in the face of uncertain but suggestive evidence of adverse environmental or human health effects, regulatory action should prevent harm from environmental hazards, particularly for vulnerable populations.” The enforcement of the Precautionary Principle is encouraged to drive gender and climate protections as irrefutable evidence points to the adverse effects climate change has on women and girls.

## Communication Barriers

In the words of Bella Abzug, “We women do not want to be mainstreamed into a polluted stream; we want the stream to be clean and healthy.” People may dismiss the purposefulness of unity around the issues of gender justice and climate justice. It is

challenging to address climate change in general. The voices of women are needed to effectively communicate and address their disproportionate climate burden. Effective communication efforts are also needed to drive ongoing stakeholder outreach and it was found that some organizations do not engage in outreach.

Although academic researchers write extensively about climate change, research papers that are meant to share knowledge are at times too technical. This sets up barriers to inclusive communication, potentially causing these education tools to be dismissed as ineffective in spaces where education is most needed.

Other interviewees described how organizations can fall into crisis narratives, weaving their communication outreach with fear instead of hope - the necessary component for long-term engagement and advocacy. Equally, the importance of words and how they drive the framing of a situation must be considered. For example, when Indigenous peoples are grouped under existing “people of color” or “minority” umbrellas, they can lose their sovereign nation momentum.

#### Other Barriers

Instead of empowering community leaders and organizations, often there are not enough resources to pay them for their time and expertise. This can transform the educating, bringing in, and uplifting of stakeholders from opportunity to burden instead.

Additional barriers include the presence of historically racist institutional frameworks and laws, which must be consistently addressed. Our current legal systems have very few accountability mechanisms in place to monitor and enforce elected officials in uplifting the Black community around environmental issues. In addition, some people/organizations want Indigenous peoples and people of color to do the work of informing and educating them, instead of those entities developing the tools necessary to sustainably work with and uplift community organizations. It was further determined that organizations do not dedicate the time and resources necessary to address racism. Trainings, such as anti-racism trainings, are necessary for those organizations to engage with diverse communities in a culturally responsive manner ready for relationship building.

### Overcoming Barriers: Strategies to Address Challenges at the Intersection of Gender Justice and Climate Change

#### Create supportive relationships

One major theme that resulted from discussions with interviewees was the need for more relationship building. Healthy relationships provide a sense of purpose and overall well-being. Analysis of women engaged in the work determined they often lack resources to support their physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual health. Building and strengthening



relational webs and community networks rooted in nurture and care can be one way to allow people engaged in the work to support themselves and one another. Commitment to gender and climate justice must include the acknowledgment that our health and wellness matter. Regularly “filling our cup” is a worthy long-term endeavor to commit time, energy, and resources to.

Relationships should be built within and across communities and can include connecting ongoing practitioners with those who are passionate or curious about gender justice and climate crisis. WRISE (Women of Renewable Industries and Sustainable Energy) leads with an incredible example of relationship building as their thirty-five chapters convene nationally and locally several times a year.

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*“Looking for the lynchpin that could shake it all up and change the dynamic. ...And finding leaders now and getting their voices into the mix.” – Women of Renewable Industries and Sustainable Energy (WRISE)*

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Women from the chapters gather several times a month to host discussions and conferences on diverse issues centered on their shared passion and

commitments. On the receiving end of understanding and compassion, we can begin to feel a renewed sense of hope, determination, and excitement. Networks of support can help women feel seen and heard in their experiences.

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*“Being able to collaborate more is great. One of the things that I’ve found is that there has always been competition with other women in my own work department. Being able to collaborate rather than compete is so important, and WEN offers opportunities for that.” WEN*

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Organizationally, exploring partnerships and other types of networks are important for sustaining support and determination – whether a group is building a renewable energy workforce or connecting the dots on gender-based violence in the aftermath of extreme weather events. Partnerships also help organizations and leaders gain credibility and traction in the gender justice space while creating new and exciting opportunities for collaboration. Creating women’s caucuses is a great way to build power, gather data, and develop a collective voice and advocacy strategy.

### Strengthen female leadership

Centering voices that have been historically marginalized in the decision-making and action-taking process is critical in shaping a just future. For that reason, it is important to ensure that all stakeholders are included in discussions. This includes putting effort, time, and resources into building trust between the most impacted stakeholders. A space where women can exercise their power and participation at the decision-making table can create a future where the burdens of the climate crisis do not fall heaviest on their shoulders. It must be ensured that women of color, Black women, transwomen, and femmes of different backgrounds, ages, and economic levels are represented. Empower women and put them in positions of power. What would the internal movement look like if it held a stronger feminist lens? What changes would have to be made? How would we stay accountable to ourselves?

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*“Educate and empower as many women as possible.”*  
– CLEO Institute

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Coalition and network building offer a channel to bring a feminist lens externally. How can we bring a more explicit gender lens to our networks and extend it to the policies we create or support?

Other findings around female leadership include approaching policy and popular education work from a Black women’s lens. For example, Black women talking to other Black women about why this work is needed. Not only does this foster a space to engage deeper on these critical issues, but it also fosters a space to do the healing. As Black women take an intersectional approach with a feminist lens, they can assess a variety of issues at interplay through a framework of what is best for Black women and girls.

### Be culturally competent

Ensure that all measures are taken to build a movement come from a culturally relevant place. This is ongoing work. Dedicate time and resources to uplift everyone in their understanding of cultural shifts and norms. Culture influences behavioral shifts and policy. With a culture that more readily embraces the value of women and gender justice, a more climate-just future is possible.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations and comments were extracted from both the interviews and the expertise of the authors. These recommendations suggest intersectional practices individuals and organizations can take to integrate gender justice and climate justice into the same movement and/or strengthen that integration.

### Education is Key

Organizations must be more explicit about the connection between gender justice and climate change. For too many, the intersection is not common knowledge. To help people understand how these issues are linked, practitioners must take an intersectional approach that sharpens peoples' ability to understand how gender and climate inequality operate and exacerbate each other.

Encourage people to think more broadly about the rights of everyone in this country. Consider how certain social and political identities drive exposure to discrimination and privileges and take a feminist lens to climate solutions.

### Support Intersectional Knowledge and Power Building

Empower women by increasing access to resources, knowledge building, and opportunities. Types of trainings identified include equity, gender justice, and climate change trainings with the added focus on highlighting their intersection.

### Drive Inclusivity and Partnership

To address the interconnectedness between gender justice and climate justice, it must be recognized that these two ideas are intrinsically linked. Organizations must strive to highlight this connection. As we build this common ground, inclusivity and collaboration must be a major part of this work. Diverse partnerships rooted in respect allow for the cultivation of mutual empowerment that can support mainstreaming gender and climate justice and their intersectionality.

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*“Coalition building is one of the entry points. We’re doing it already, but you can never do enough of it. We don’t feel we have all of the tools to connect people in meaningful ways.” – Huairou Commission*

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### Encourage Leadership Diversity

Organizations and individuals must thoughtfully engage with more diverse audiences and seek out potential leaders by providing a welcoming atmosphere with mentorship, engagement, and leadership opportunities. Involving curious or like-minded women with diverse social and cultural backgrounds in the gender and climate justice space helps maximize representation across identities, building power around the lived experiences and needs of women from all walks of life which can go on to inform more effective policies and practices at this intersection. Furthermore, through mentorship and leadership opportunities women can connect with and

empower each other while strengthening their skills, passions, and wellness, contributing to an overall more robust organizational infrastructure.

### Build Deep Relationships with Communities

Actively listening to communities builds trust and credibility, which is needed for relationship development that will inform equitable gender and climate action where it's most needed. It is counterproductive to listen to 'Green Groups', who exploit communities with their agenda or determination of what action should look like without centering the voices and lived experiences of those most impacted. These same entities should prioritize issues based on what is identified in deep listening and partnership sessions with communities. Creating safe and healthy environments for open dialogue is needed for gender justice discussions.

### Engage in Policy Work

Time and resources should be allocated to sharpen an organization's understanding of and capacity to take a gender lens to policy solutions. Organizations need to build and commit to a policy agenda rooted in justice principles such as the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing. There are a variety of ways an organization can engage in exercising its position on gender and climate justice issues. Organizations can join support networks and partnerships like coalitions to move political agendas forward. Members can engage in the legislative process by contacting elected officials, endorsing or opposing proposed policies, or hosting listening sessions with the communities. Engagement in the local policy landscape is critical as often decisions at this level can have an immediate impact on communities.

### Increase in Financial and Philanthropic Support

Invest in women-led initiatives. This includes providing funding for gender justice work, as significantly more funding is needed. Furthermore, organizations must make funders aware of extreme dangers that exist for female environmental rights defenders. **As with many justice issues, funding and resources are major factors in the ability of action to begin or continue.**

### Develop Data Analyses

A significant amount of research data and tools are needed to make gender justice and climate justice actionable. Knowledge gaps include an analysis of gender and age. Additionally, developing a systems analysis is important for understanding how policies and mechanisms uphold our current systems. Guided by the Just Transition Framework, we can drive system change by sharing information that brings a gender analysis to a global or national policy space.

### Next Steps: What do you wish you were doing?

This paper highlights what organizations in the United States have done, and are trying to do, as well as what yet remains to be done in the areas of gender justice, climate justice, and its intersections. More social, financial, and political support is needed to create a sustainable impact and prioritize the wellness of practitioners in this space. Community-based and grassroots-focused organizations are doing three times the work with less than one-fourth of the

funding. Most organizations are driven by the immediate needs of those most at risk, so they struggle and “take from Peter to pay Paul” to ensure that their doors are open to provide any assistance needed.

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“Gender should be intertwined in every situation, how families and cities mitigate.” – **Adelle Dora Monteblanco**

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As such, we asked the interviewees what other work or bodies of work they would be

engaged in if they had more resources. All the responses revolved around addressing areas and issues that they felt were not receiving enough attention.

Although lack of funding and resources were identified almost unanimously as a barrier to the work, most interviewees acknowledge the dire needs that remain and wish they could be doing more. This speaks to the incredible needs that communities have, and the sheer determination practitioners must possess to extend their resources, and often themselves, to the most vulnerable. When practitioners pour out much of themselves without engaging in restorative and healing practices, it can lead to health problems and burnout. As such, a great idea is to dedicate time and bring in resources like coaches, mentors, counselors, and healers to work with women.

The interviewees also reported that they would like to focus on connecting with other women who are doing this work. An important part of supporting women includes helping them “tell their stories” by elevating their voices. There is a need for those stories to be captured because it helps establish a collective voice. Another benefit of capturing stories includes increasing visibility on these issues by using tools like social and digital media platforms to uplift women’s voices, including sharing the history of women who have been working at the intersection of gender justice and climate change for years.

Relationship building can take place in many forms. Other examples include identifying and engaging with allies and advocates, communicating with stakeholders in positions of power, having conversations with more environmental justice organizations around the country, and becoming more intentional about collaborating with those who work in the gender justice and climate crisis space. As a part of building those relationships, coalition and movement building are essential, as is engaging in deeper grassroots work.

Through these processes, organizations can create connective spaces for better understanding, engage in caucusing and strategizing on issues related to gender justice and climate change (i.e., engaging in conversations with Mom’s Clean Air Force), become more efficient in organizing and even creating an open-source page for organizations to uplift networking and relationship building. Connections would be strengthened by attending conferences, like the Bioneers conference, or a large summit focused on the interconnectedness between gender justice and

climate change. Such an event would provide another level of national attention in making the connection between gender justice and climate justice.

Strong networks and relationships can bring in assistance from outside sources like universities (interns and students), consultants, and physicians that would help manage the overall workload of practitioners.

In addition to funding, more resources for education and knowledge building are needed. Interviewees identified the need to educate and empower as many women as possible. One interviewer described wanting to reach out to women who are disengaged and have not yet connected the dots on the impacts a changing climate is inevitably having on their own life. Toolkits aimed at guiding conversations about gender justice and climate change issues can be helpful. In the interviews, generation-to-generation education was also identified as extremely beneficial and necessary.

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*Having sufficient resources is not only limited to having enough dollars. Time and people available to work can also hinder the success of even the greatest ideas and aspirations.*

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*“I wish we had more resources to engage more women. ...There is such a need for women’s leadership training and workshops.” – Alaskan Community Action on Toxins*

Many would like to engage in more data analysis. Data is very useful in the educational activities described above. An increased focus on data and analysis activities can address existing data gaps and improve the credibility of research conducted by these organizations and others, like community science efforts.

Furthermore, it will bring more focused attention to gender justice and climate change work. Potential data analysis projects include conducting a landscape analysis of strategies practitioners use to meaningfully engage in this work and cataloging Just Transition projects with a feminist lens taking place on the ground.

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*“We can’t keep up with the number of trainings that we could be doing. ...Communities of color, community organizing strategies need to be funded, we are all on a shoe-string budget. We aren’t at the potential that we could be.” – Native Movement*

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In addition, one interviewee suggested their interest in analyzing women’s groups at the national level, to learn from their experiences. Data gathering on intersectional issues is also important, such as voting issues, restorative justice, and children’s rights. These would have to be followed by a white paper summarizing specific analyses from gathered data, increasing the visibility and urgency of this work and its intersections.

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*All in all, this comes down to more talking, more dialogue, and more stories to make these issues more engrained.*

*“There is an incredible story to tell, could guide communities in the right direction.” – **Women's Earth Alliance***

*“We talk about it as is comes up but it needs to be institutionalized for ourselves more.” – **Local Clean Energy***

*“Tell history of women who have been working at the intersection for years.” – **Women's Environmental Development Organization***

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions on Gender Justice and Climate

## Gender and Climate Change Survey Questions

- 1) In your experience, what is the relationship between gender and climate change in the United States?
- 2) What other forms of social inequality do you address (ex. Race, class, political disenfranchisement, immigration, housing, etc.), and how does each form play a role in the gendered impacts of climate change and vice versa?
- 3) Is the intersection of gender and climate change an under-addressed issue in the US? If so, why/how?
- 4) What does your organization do?
- 5) Who is your community? What/who is the primary constituency/community you serve? With whom does your organization work primarily? (How this is asked will depend on the answer to #4.)
- 6) How does your community perceive the relationship between gender and climate change?
- 7) In your work, how do you address the intersection between gender and climate change?
- 8) What is your biggest challenge in addressing the intersection of gender and climate change? Why/How?
- 9) What are your most effective strategies/tactics in addressing the intersection of gender and climate change? Why/How?
- 10) How do your strategies/tactics address the multiple points of intersection of the various social inequality issues you address, including gender?
- 11) Is gender justice adequately incorporated into the climate justice movement in the United States? What evidence do you see of integration? How should the incorporation of gender justice be strengthened?
- 12) Is climate justice adequately incorporated into the gender justice movement in the United States? What evidence do you see of integration? How should the incorporation of climate justice be strengthened?
- 13) What do you wish you were doing to address gender and climate change that you're not? Why can't you do it now and what would you need to be able to do more?
- 14) What other organizations are addressing the intersection of gender and climate change in the US?



## Appendix B

### Interview Participant Organizations and Background

## **1) [Alaska Community Action on Toxins \(ACAT\), Alaska](#)**

ACAT works at the intersection of environmental justice, health and reproductive health, and human rights. It works at the local, national and international levels to stop industrial pesticides in the Arctic. ACAT also provides leadership training for indigenous women in rural Alaska. There is a need for women to talk about their health issues and share difficult personal information about such things as reproductive health and developmental disabilities. For example, there are more females than males born in Arctic communities and males that are born with both male and female genitalia.

In addition, ACAT works on issues including race, class, and GOTV (Get Out the Vote) efforts in rural Alaska. ACAT also has an integrated voter engagement program for disenfranchised people from that system and plans to conduct work on census issues. Another important focus area for ACAT is reproductive justice and health. As Pam Miller, Executive Director, points out, Alaska has the highest rate of birth defects in the country, higher for native Alaskans than for Whites. Even accounting for the usual risk factors - tobacco and alcohol – those high rates still cannot be explained.

ACAT mainly works with rural Alaskan Indigenous communities focused on gas pipelines and issues around persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in Alaska. ACAT has worked with the Stockholm Convention – which works for the global environment – on the vulnerabilities of Arctic Indigenous communities. It also works within the urban Anchorage environment. For example, ACAT recently helped successfully pass an ordinance to prevent the sale of children’s products that contain 1 of 4 types of flame retardants. These flame retardants contain additional chemicals that are neurotoxic, can cause cancer, and have no proven fire safety benefit. ACAT has also worked with firefighters who also oppose this additive because they are the second-largest population exposed. They also worked particularly with female firefighters. Studies show that this population has six times the rate of breast cancer than the general population. ACAT highlights the link to climate change: higher temperatures lead to more wildfires, which will lead to an increase in breast and testicular cancer among firefighters.

## **2) [Asian-Pacific Islanders \(APEN\), California](#)**

APEN organizes Asian immigrants and refugees for environmental justice. They have two local bases that they work with: Oakland Chinatown with Chinese and Mandarin-speaking immigrants, and Richmond, CA, with Laotian refugees. They have also started organizing a youth base in Richmond. All APEN’s work is dedicated to targeting and transitioning away from the extractive economy and towards building solidarity and a thriving and regenerative economy. To do that, they employ four strategies: base building and leadership development; electoral organizing; systemic policy change; and alliance and movement building.

APEN primarily serves Asian immigrants and refugees as their base, but also organizes the broader Asian American community. For example, many of their youth come from immigrant and refugee families. One of APEN’s key principles is recognizing that capitalism is at the root of the climate crisis. It also is the root of so many of the impacts that members experience at the intersection of poverty and pollution.

Because APEN works with Asian immigrants and refugees, their community members deeply feel the impact of racism and xenophobia. APEN does a lot of work around racial justice as well as immigrant rights to support its members.

### **3) [Black Belt Citizens Fighting for Health and Justice \(BBCFHJ\), Alabama](#)**

As eloquently stated on their website, “BBCFHJ works towards a Uniontown and Black Belt region where all people will unite to act in love for shared liberty and justice for all”. BBCFHC works with Black Belt residents, advocating for “solutions against all injustices”.

BBCFHC runs several programs aimed at empowering residents. Their programs include voter registration and government education, property retention, green job development, and specific networks to empower women and girls.

Recently, BBCFHC protested the dumping of coal ash in the community and advocated for residents affected by landfills. They have also been instrumental in the historical designation of New Hope Cemetery, preserving residents’ long history in the area.

### **4) [Black Women for Wellness \(BWW\), California](#)**

BWW, a reproductive health, and rights organization, engages in activism, research, policy analysis, community organizing, and community planning. BWW works with Black women and girls and alongside various community organizations and focuses on the environment and civic engagement.

BWW has a particular focus on the impact of capitalism on environmental hazards. They have worked to educate their community on the exposure to toxic chemicals in food packaging and personal and hair care products. They emphasize the extra layer of exposure inherent in food deserts and hair products specifically advertised to Black women and girls.

### **5) [Climate Parents, Sierra Club](#)**

Climate Parents mobilizes diverse parents and families for clean energy and climate policies. They integrate parent, family, and child narratives into policy fights on climate solutions. Climate Parent writes op-eds in swing districts, urging senators to stand up for climate justice. They recently held a media event with Senator Tammy Duckworth, who spoke about how her young daughter motivated her to support Climate Partners. She also highlighted the importance of clean air and rejected attacks against climate science.

In South Carolina, Climate Parents works as part of the clean energy for all effort and the Sierra Club’s ‘Ready for 100’ campaign. Climate Parents also engage in reflecting deeply on putting equity at the center of their work. They constantly seek guidance from groups on the ground.

Climate Parents also focuses on its 100% Clean Energy School Districts campaign. Other focus areas include underserved areas, a push for renewables in ways that defray expenses and can be reinvested in school districts, and work in areas where climate parents are key stakeholders.

#### **6) [The CLEO Institute \(Climate Leadership Engagement Opportunities\) Florida](#)**

The CLEO Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan organization exclusively dedicated to climate crisis education and advocacy. Founded in 2010 and headquartered in Miami, FL, CLEO works with communities across Florida to build climate literacy and mobilize climate action for a just, resilient future. It achieves this mission through community engagement, youth organizing, and policy efforts.

CLEO's Empowering Resilient Women program was launched in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma in 2017 as a response to the visible gaps that left marginalized communities under-represented and under-supported in emergency preparedness. The program takes a gender lens to climate impacts and solutions and focuses on uplifting women in historically disenfranchised communities across FL to improve their hurricane preparedness, food and energy security, and more. Through a mix of guided discussion, virtual exercise, and hands-on learning at urban food gardens, this program seeks to achieve its vision of empowering women to make choices that invest in their resilience as individuals and communities at large.

#### **7) [Food and Water Watch \(FWW\), Florida](#)**

Food and Water Watch focuses on corporate and government accountability relating to food, water, and corporate overreach. To protect food, water, and climate, FWW organizes people around the country to build political power.

FWW mobilizes at the local, state, and federal levels. Each FWW office has a district focus. In the Florida office, where the interview was conducted, the focus is on hydraulic fracturing. The FWW audience is composed of mainly white upper-middle-class residents. Hialeah, where a large amount of the work is done, has a high Cuban population and a strong Latinx community. In addition, FWW had a temporary organizer in former Speaker Jose R. Oleva's district.

A barrier to working on other issues is engaging a more diverse audience. In the most recent legislative sessions, five different ban fracking bills were filed. FWW's message focuses on fracking and usually avoids discussing climate change because of the strong opposition to discussing climate change in Florida.

#### **8) [Forward Together](#)**

Forward Together is a multi-racial, multi-issue organization whose mission is to transform culture and policy to work for all families. Its mission encompasses activism, research, policy analysis, advocacy, community organizing, and community planning. Forward Together works primarily with low-income communities, communities of color, and communities in rural areas. It works to unite communities to win rights, recognition, and resources for all families.



Forward Together works at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality to address racism and sexism, particularly the long history of reproductive oppression. Furthermore, they work with the Strong Families Network on criminal justice, racial justice, reproductive justice, and education.

#### **9) [Georgia Wand, Georgia](#)**

Georgia WAND advocates for social justice and racial equity through clean energy, water, air, land, and education. Facilities in Appling and Burke counties make nuclear weapons or focus on nuclear energy. As extreme storms and threats occur, atmospheric distribution of radionuclides, radioactive forms of elements that are natural or man-made, increases near these sites. High levels of radiation can cause negative health effects. In Georgia, at least 50% of the population around the Savannah River nuclear weapons plant in Burke County is people of color, living in rural populations. Georgia WAND highlights the fact that climate change increases radionuclides in the environment, which can then be taken into the body through drinking water, plants, and animals.

Nuclear facilities employ many people from their community, so Georgia WAND avoids coming across as anti-nuclear. They use a “nuclear harm reduction” strategy to educate and collaborate with residents. They also partner with other community organizations to advocate for air and water cleanliness legislation.

#### **10) [Grassroots Global Justice \(GGJ\)](#)**

GGJ is a national alliance of grassroots, base-building organizations with 60 member organizations across the US. Member organizations work in climate justice, housing justice, worker’s rights, and immigrant rights. GGJ connects to international movements that have a similar politic of resisting neofascism, connecting local movements in the US to movements across the world.

GGJ has four main areas: Overall Movement Building, Grassroots Feminism, Global Well Being (Climate Justice), and Revamping Anti-Militarism Work. GGJ partners with several disenfranchised groups for movement and base building, including people of color, working-class White people, genderqueer, gender non-conforming people, and LGBTQIA+ identifying people. Housing justice is also a focus area for GGJ. Most of the group leaders are people of color.

GGJ also works in partnership with communities focusing on issues like the climate crisis, those on the frontlines of the housing crisis, those struggling to hold on to land, immigrant communities, and gender-oppressed (women, trans, non-binary) people. In addition, GGJ focuses on understanding how all these issues have effects on gender-oppressed people and the clear politics of anti-capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy.

#### **11) [Huairou Commission](#)**

The Huairou Commission describes itself as a “women-led social movement”. It is a network of grassroots women’s groups from poor urban, rural, and Indigenous communities, working in over 45 countries, with a base of 750,000+ women and 101 member organizations. Its members work with technical allies towards transformative change that improves the living conditions, status,

and quality of the life of women, their families, communities, and municipalities.

The Huairou Commission engages in grassroots organizing, community organizing, and secretarial functions to support the priorities of community groups. The Commission is a bit unique - beyond direct facilitation of community groups, it keeps its eyes open for political spaces where grassroots communities can engage with finance partners. It also creates space for communities in public decision-making. In addition, the Huairou Commission works to encourage self-help and home care around HIV and is defined by “women who are working for change, not parachuting in”, and is led by communities themselves to support grassroots initiatives and leadership.

### **12) [League of Women Voters \(LWV\)](#)**

The LWV focuses on community organizing and engagement, policy analysis and activism, and empowering voters. LWV is a very engaged organization composed of leagues run by volunteers.

The LWV serves underrepresented communities and focuses on engaging younger women in the process. Many women “woke up” after the 2016 elections. The LWV helps them find their voice, and works with them to answer the question, “How can I make a change?” LWV offers an opportunity to get involved in local government and community issues. A lot of work on environmental issues occurs at the local level, and LWV has been working on local water issues for a long time. LWV actively considers the most impacted in underrepresented communities and how to better serve them. It wants an electorate that truly represents the entire body and engages in registering voters. It also hosts a community college program and naturalization ceremonies with new citizens and participates in public events to try and engage people on issues around climate change.

LWV created a national Climate Change Task Force in 2006, which offers an online toolkit that is consistently updated with new topics from the climate space and offers ways for people to get involved in their communities. It also provides resources that people can use to communicate the urgency of climate change with others around them.

### **13) [Local Clean Energy Alliance, California](#)**

The Local Clean Energy Alliance (LCEA) mostly focuses on advancing local clean energy to address electric energy needs in communities. LCEA addresses the “dirty energy” disproportionately developed in communities of color, pushing for local clean energies instead of combusting fossil fuel. Clean energy is traditionally too expensive and inaccessible to communities of color. LCEA focuses on community choice energy policy and works to create safe jobs in the energy efficiency workforce, produces local wealth, and addresses local issues of utility and energy access.

Geographically, LCEA works with communities of color with low-paying jobs in East Bay, East Oakland, and other parts of greater Alameda County. These communities specifically address stationary and nonstationary sources of pollution, like metal foundries or diesel trucks.

#### **14) [Mize Family Foundation, Seattle](#)**

The MIZE Family Foundation is an environmental and human rights defender. They engage in work around security, wellness, burnout training, etc. and they use all forms of media to spread the word about climate change. Furthermore, MIZE also addresses gender and food security in Sub-Saharan Eastern Africa. They award 15 small grants per year, between \$10k-\$20k, to grassroots organizations that promote global environmental justice.

#### **15) [Mom's Clean Air Force \(MCAF\)](#)**

According to their website, MCAF is “a community of more than 1 million moms and dads united against air pollution”, including specific issues related to climate change, to protect the health of children.

MCAF works to ensure that elected leaders put the health of children and communities first by proposing strong climate and clean air solutions that deliver protections to everyone, especially frontline families who are disproportionately burdened by pollution and climate-fueled disasters. In addition, it works through a network of state-based community organizers to address national and local policy issues. Membership in MCAF does not require a person to be a parent, “only a person who breathes”. Members meet with lawmakers at every level of government and on both sides of the political aisle to build support for equitable, just, and healthy solutions to pollution. Protecting children’s health is a nonpartisan issue.

MCAF works on several issues including air pollution, climate change, toxic chemicals, environmental justice, and several urgent national campaigns like the Build Back Better Act, EPA Methane Regulations, Baby food Safety, Electric School Buses, and the Black Maternal Health Act of 2021.

#### **16) [Native Movement, Alaska](#)**

Native Movement is dedicated to building people’s power, rooted in Indigenous values for all. Native Movement supports grassroots-led projects that ensure Indigenous rights, the rights of Mother Earth, and all her living beings come together to create sustainable communities for all. Native Movement embraces the principles of environmental justice, climate justice, and social justice. They work to hold the justice system accountable for women, trans, LGBTQ women as the justice system and law enforcement disregard their lives.

Native Movement engages in many trainings in urban and rural Alaska and works closely with many organizations across the state. They form a world view based on ancestral ties to place. They provide trainings for advocates to harness deeper understanding and grow in alignment with broader movements. It supports and builds community organizers, acknowledging that movement building is rooted in a deep understanding of intersectionality and decolonization frameworks and that “Indigenous values are for more than indigenous people”.

#### **17) [Physicians for Social Responsibility \(PSR\)](#)**

PSR advocates for public health through addressing the dangers that threaten communities, using medical and public health expertise to prevent nuclear war and proliferation. They also

focus their work on reversing the current trajectory of climate change, protecting the public and the environment from toxic chemicals, and eliminating the use of nuclear power.

### **18) [PopDev](#)**

PopDev critiques overpopulation thinking and the idea that “too many people” are responsible for global problems like environmental degradation, climate change, poverty, hunger, and even war. PopDev engages in advocacy and research and is oriented toward nudging policymakers towards alternative frameworks for understanding population dynamics. PopDev primarily works with activists, academics, like-minded community groups, and others who are trying to puzzle through population questions.

PopDev has become a mouthpiece around alternative population frameworks – in their opinion, feminist groups have stopped working on the issue. PopDev works with environmental groups; in the organization’s first years, they mostly collaborated with feminist organizations, anti-population controllers, and service providers. Their partners fluctuate depending on what issues are the current focus. Looking forward, they hope to draw in more geographers to make connections with climate change.

### **19) [TEWA Women United, New Mexico](#)**

The non-profit organization TEWA Women United transitioned from an all-volunteer group to a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in 2001. Tewa Women United was incorporated for educational, social, and benevolent purposes, specifically for the ending of all forms of violence against Native Women, girls, and Mother Earth, and to promote peace in New Mexico. TEWA works in the United States and interfaces as both a sovereign nation and a nonprofit.

TEWA has five prominent programs: Environmental Health and Justice; a sexual violence prevention program called VOICES: Valuing Our Integrity with Courage, Empowerment, and Support; an Indigenous women’s health and justice initiative; the Doula program; and a youth program that focuses on life skills development to prevent dating violence. Programs take place in schools and the Circle of Grandmothers.

TEWA also works for financial literacy for its communities, addressing issues of financial literacy, gender justice, environmental justice, and women’s empowerment. TEWA believes that spirit-rooted activism is the native way and has designed a “weaving” program that focuses on interweaving the mind, the heart, and the spirit.

### **20) [United Women in Faith, Seattle](#)**

United Women in Faith is the largest denominational faith organization for women, with approximately 800,000 members. The organization is almost 150 years old, and its stakeholders include women, children, and youth. It is socioeconomically diverse, somewhat racially diverse, and has Indigenous partners in some areas. The organization is mostly composed of people of the United Methodist faith, but other people also participate.

Its mission is to foster spiritual growth, develop leaders, and advocate for justice. Members raise \$20 million each year for programs and projects related to women, children, and youth in the United States and more than 100 countries around the world. Their principles and values include promoting the empowerment of women, children, and youth; anti-racism and multiculturalism; inclusion and equity; fair labor practices; and economic and environmental stewardship and sustainability.

### **21) [Women of Color Speak Out \(WOCOSO\)](#)**

Women of Color Speak Out is a collective of direct-action activists that formed during ShellNo, a coalition that opposed Shell and Arctic Drilling. Shifting the dominant environmental narrative in policy and science, WOCOSO speaks out on how systems of oppression have led to worldwide ecological disaster. They speak on capitalism, colonialism, racism, and the Prison Industrial Complex and how these systems lead to climate change.

WOCOSO focuses on recruiting and broadening the EJ and CJ movement. Their work is split into two parts, where members support and lift each other's work. Half of the work is about creating safe spaces for folks and women in the environmental movement, and half focuses on speaking to communities of color, underserved, or EJ communities, and mainstream environmental movements.

### **22) [Women of Renewable Industries and Sustainable Energy \(WRISE\)](#)**

WRISE works primarily in three buckets. The first is recruitment, focusing on how to get more women into the renewable energy working sector: partnering with K-12 programs or college, universities, and fellowships on recruitment towards getting more and increasing retention of women in clean energy sector jobs, working with chapters at local levels and individual women on career trajectories in the energy space. The second bucket is working with companies to create a professional culture that supports women and advances them in work programming at all levels and challenges gender-biased institutional policies. Thirdly, WRISE focuses on amplifying women's voices overall by connecting women to trainings, opportunities, advocacy groups, and networks.

WRISE's membership tends to be mid-career mostly white women already working in the renewable industry. However, WRISE's goal is not solely to grow its membership base but to provide publicly beneficial conversation around women's role in renewable energy and organize and advocate within numerous communities.

### **23) [Women's Earth Alliance \(WEA\)](#)**

WEA funds local, grassroots women who are environmental leaders in their communities as they work for solutions to environmental challenges. WEA's theory of change is "when women thrive, the earth thrives". WEA invests in holistic leadership and focuses on building links to increase capacity for making the changes communities need. WEA supports women who are making this change, giving resources, tools, and the connections they need to scale their impacts.

#### **24) Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN)**

WECAN works to lift the voices of grassroots, frontline, and indigenous women acknowledging that women impacted “first and worst” should be able to advocate and make decisions around climate change.

WECAN works with frontline communities—Indigenous, women of color, those of the Amazon and MENA regions, and more. They support women in the Democratic Republic of Congo to reforest and protect old-growth forests. They also engage in advocacy at climate negotiations and are active in divestment campaigns with banks.

WECAN helps build women’s leadership in climate change all over the world and ensures their voices are heard. The organization launched a project called Women SPEAK to share thousands of stories of women in the frontlines of climate change.

#### **25) Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)**

WEDO was developed to create space and build power in global policymaking that has been dominated by men. In the early 1990s, WEDO was involved in global neoliberal policymaking. Since then, it ensures that women are present at the intersection of women’s rights, environment, climate change, and sustainable development. WEDO believes in equal rights in deliberations and decision making, in collective advocacy, and a feminist agenda in policymaking spaces.

The work WEDO focuses on includes being an organizing partner of the Women’s Major Group—Engaging in Sustainable Development. WEDO works primarily with women’s organizations instead of environmental organizations but believes that it is equally important to be vocal about fossil fuels as reproductive, economic, or social justice. WEDO works with reproductive health or environmental organizations to help link these with other issues.

#### **26) Women’s Environmental Network**

When WEN started 23 years ago, it was for giving a voice to women because they were not being asked to the table, they were being shut out from most of the decision-making process. So, women formed their own group and started to have annual meetings to discuss the issues they were facing. In 2020, WEN grew to over 3,000 members with no barrier to entry. With small event fees, women can attend events and find their tribe. Many members are younger women trying to get into the environmental sector or trying to develop their own professional careers. WEN makes sure that women are connected to other women in similar journeys towards leadership.

#### **27) Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE)**

WVE engages in activities to amplify women’s voices to address the dangers of toxic chemicals and products. They also campaign for transparency and safety protection laws. In addition, WVE

addresses occupational exposures in the cleaning and salon industries, which predominantly employ female workers.

WVE's main community includes women and companies. Women usually come to WVE because they are concerned about their children. WVE has engaged in statewide initiatives to reduce women's exposure to mercury and introduced comprehensive legislation to ban the sale of mercury products in Montana. WVE develops and implements all aspects of the national Safe Cleaning Products Initiative, which has garnered international media attention and moved major corporations to make unprecedented policy changes, resulting in the introduction of federal legislation that, when passed, will reduce women's exposure to cleaning product chemicals.

#### Individual Interviewee

#### **28) Adelle Dora Montebianco -**

Dr. Montebianco has a bachelor's in Environmental Science and a Ph.D. in Sociology.

She studies inequality at the nexus of gender, health, and the environment, and her research focuses on reducing maternal health disparities and increasing communities' resilience to climate change.

## Appendix C

### Organizations Working on Gender Justice – Identified by Interviewees



- 1) ^Alaskan Community Action on Toxics
- 2) ^APEN
- 3) Black Mesa Water Coalition
- 4) California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative
- 5) California League of Conservation Voters
- 6) CARE
- 7) Climate Justice Alliance
- 8) Coming Clean
- 9) Communities for a Better Environment
- 10) Con Mujeres
- 11) Conceivable Futures
- 12) Cooperation Jackson
- 13) EMEAC
- 14) Evangelical Environmental network
- 15) Frontline Defenders in Dublin
- 16) ^GGJ#
- 17) Global Green Grants
- 18) Got Green (Mother's and Families Initiative)
- 19) Hunger Project – New York
- 20) ICUN (Internationally)
- 21) Incredible native run organizations
- 22) Indigenous Climate Action (Canada)
- 23) Indigenous Environmental Network
- 24) JPB Foundation has been intentional about environmental funding and diversity
- 25) Medicine and Climate Change
- 26) ^Mom's Clean Air Force – NRDC\*
- 27) Moms Demand Action
- 28) Mothers Out Front\*
- 29) MRNN
- 30) NAACP\*
- 31) ^Native Movement – Alaska\*
- 32) Nurses group out of Arizona
- 33) Philanthropies in Europe
- 34) Physicians for Social Responsibility (LA Chapter – lots of overlap with air pollution)
- 35) PSA
- 36) Sierra Club\*
- 37) Student delegation to COP23
- 38) SWOP
- 39) SWU Commadres
- 40) ^TEWA Women United
- 41) ^The Cleo Institute
- 42) Uprose
- 43) Urgent Action Fund
- 44) Violence Against Mother Earth

- 45) WE ACT
- 46) ^WECAN\*
- 47) ^WEDO
- 48) Women in Clean Technology and Sustainability
- 49) ^Women of Color Speak Out
- 50) Women's Donor Network
- 51) ^Women's Environment Network
- 52) ^Women's Voices for the Earth#

^Organization was interviewed for this report

\*Organization was mentioned at least twice

#Organization was mentioned three or more times