



Eco-Feminism for Climate Action

Adenike Oladosu

Nigeria

Adenike Oladosu grew up in Ogbomosho, Nigeria, where delicious cashews and mangos are grown on nearby plantations. From a young age, Adenike could see that unfair agricultural practices were harming rural communities, especially for indigenous people. So when it was time for her to go to college, she moved to north central Nigeria to study agricultural economics at the University of Agriculture in Makurdi.

Thus began Adenike's journey into the environmental movement. Her university was in "the food basket of Nigeria," near Lake Chad. While there, she was a firsthand witness to the destruction that climate change was having on this vulnerable region of her country. Water scarcity was turning farmland into desert. Communities that had never known floods before were watching their lands and livelihoods disappear under torrents of water. Powerful heat waves blasted the arid pastures, leaving nothing left to farm. As the land grew arid and pastures disappeared, farmers and herdsmen were fighting for their survival. Their conflict became so widespread that her classes were disrupted, and it took her an extra year to finish her studies.

Nigeria prides itself on its natural wildlife reserves, waterfalls, dense rainforest, savannas, and rare primate habitats. However climate change is ravaging this nation. Nigeria is not alone: many African nations are desperately facing water scarcity. Without water, crops can't grow, which leads to millions of people at risk of malnutrition. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization has estimated that more than 815 million people are malnourished around the world. Most are in Africa, and climate change is making this dire situation worse.

The implications are far-reaching. When conflicts arise, food becomes even more scarce. When farmers and herdsmen lose their livelihoods, they are more vulnerable to being recruited by terrorist groups like Boko Haram. The increasing severity of climate change escalates violence, and in turn, strengthens the powerful grip of such groups. In 2014, when Boko Haram militants kidnapped 276 Nigerian girls from the Chibok High School, the world finally took notice.

The rise in gender-based violence is deeply troubling to Adenike. "Wherever there are security issues arising from the environment, the women are always the default victims," she says. "This deters us from ever achieving gender equality." The kidnapping of these girls made Adenike realize that girls and women's rights must be at the center of the climate movement.

Adenike knew that something had to be done. And the 2018 U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report has confirmed her worst fears: that report says that the world has only twelve years to take drastic measures, or it will be too late to stop climate change. "These issues have a timeline," she says. "We are heading toward a point of no return. We need to deal with climate change *now*, so that we can overcome it and be victorious."

In 2018 Adenike joined the worldwide Fridays for Future movement started by Greta Thunberg, the young Swedish activist. Now 25, Adenike serves as Nigeria's Fridays for Future ambassador. And working with Nigeria Earth Uprising and African Youth Climate Hub, she focuses on women's rights, security, and peacebuilding across Africa, especially in the Lake Chad region.

Adenike calls her own personal brand of activism "Eco-Feminism," and stresses that climate change solutions must prioritize the safety and well-being of women and girls. She travels around the country, going to schools to educate

students about the effects of climate change. She works with indigenous communities, to learn how traditional knowledge can contribute to climate resilience. She shows people how new technologies can improve their well-being and livelihood. She teaches them about renewable resources, and about how they can use better sources of energy in their own communities. And she shows them how to advocate for renewable energy on a larger scale. Through education, she hopes the movement will spread. “When people know how to use alternative energy, they can replicate these actions, and other people will learn how to use them,” she explains. “With that, changing habits becomes more rapid, and naturally people will switch from fossil fuels without being forced.”

For International Women’s Day in 2021, Adenike believes that environmental issues should be the core theme, so that women’s issues can be brought to the forefront of the climate justice movement. As she has grown into her role as an international leader in the climate movement, she’s concerned that there is too little focus on communities in the Global South. In 2019, when she attended COP 25 in Madrid, she expected that the regeneration of Lake Chad, and its innovative climate finance programs, which are helping communities adapt to and reduce the effects of climate change, would be spotlighted. But to her dismay, climate change in the Lake Chad region was hardly even mentioned. “If international representatives don’t recognize the current dangers of climate change in African countries, there will be global repercussions,” she says. For example, the people who are being displaced by climate change are increasingly migrating to countries in the Global North. Many have already been forced to leave their homes and live in refugee camps. “If Africa loses the race of climate action, it’s going to affect all of our countries,” Adenike says, and she emphasizes, “We really need to support Africa *now*.”

In Nigeria, Adenike is fighting to re-subsidize renewable energy, and find sources of energy that have low carbon emissions. “Every nation everywhere needs to prioritize renewable energy,” she says. She also wants to see more unified government action, so that climate change is treated as the crisis that it is. She was disappointed that representatives at COP 25 failed to ratify Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which promotes international cooperation among nations in order to reach their carbon emission targets. “Article 6 is essential if we are to reduce the effects of climate change,” she says. “There *must* be more unified action in order for the Paris Agreement to succeed.”

Currently Adenike’s climate activism focuses on two major fronts. First, she is trying to engage the world’s youth, especially in African countries, and get them to really care about climate change. “Many youth have yet to pay attention to these issues that will define our future,” she says. Through her education outreach, she helps the children of today to understand what is at stake. “I believe education is a powerful weapon that we can use to conquer climate change,” she says. Planting trees is now an important part of Fridays for Future in Nigeria. As a form of positive protest, school communities plant trees, while some of the children hold signs that say things like “Keep It In The Ground.” And they talk about how if they take care of the trees, they will grow into a forest for their own children.

According to Adenike, climate change should be the top priority for everyone, everywhere; and the media should be amplifying climate issues and helping to promote climate action. She wants more youth everywhere to join the climate movement, and to participate in initiatives like Fridays for Future. To connect with more young people, she does a lot of social media outreach. “As more youth join this movement, it will make our leaders wake up to the reality of what is happening,” she says. “We need both individual and collective action to combat climate change. Everyone has to take responsibility. We don’t have to wait for government action.” She adds, “The only way to solve climate change is to keep going, and keep demanding action. We are on the winning side. We can’t lose this race. We need *everyone* to join this movement for climate justice.”

The seeds of success in every nation on Earth are best planted in women and children.

Joyce Banda, former President of Malawi

Call to Action: Join Adenike Oladosu and others around the world in demanding climate action now. You can visit her website <http://womenandcrisis.blogspot.com/> or follow her on Twitter @the_ecofeminist. And visit Fridays for Future to find out about climate action in countries around the world. <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/>

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