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Making Place in the Midst of Catastrophe and Change

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Making Place in the Midst of Catastrophe and Change

Abstract

A transnational feminist position essay and poem.

Keywords

placemaking, feminism, feminist theory

Making Place in the Midst of Catastrophe and Change

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We are called to gather in times of catastrophic wars and climate change. Making place is our challenge as transnational feminists in the midst of global pandemics both viral and racist in content and form. Let us call on the wisdom and foresights of Octavia Butler who, as one of many forward-thinking feminist ancestors, invites us to understand the powerful forces of change in the face of catastrophic environmental disasters, human failure, and denial. In *Parable of the Sower* (1993), she articulates the essentials of adapting with change by sustaining an ecological awareness that is grounded in forethought, care, education, and work to support community life.

The symbolic weight of transnational feminist gatherings is to break down the walls, which uphold those capitalist, patriarchal, white-supremacist, heteronormative structures of economic, political, educational, and social institutions that corrupt and erode our ethical responsibilities toward all living beings on the planet. The work of transnational feminist gatherings is to make space for the voices and knowledges of marginalized people and to gather and support the work of making place where communities are falling apart in city centers and rural deserts where poverty takes root to enable fear and isolation; to make place where refugee and migrant communities gather to find respite and resolve to risk everything for their own and their family's survival; to make place where sea levels are rising, fires are burning, and earthquakes are disappearing places people once called home; to make place where fossil fuels, pharmaceuticals, and capital flow with ease through pipelines polluting sacred rivers and lands; to make place where families are separated at militarized borders policed by reprogramed dogs and rabid humans. Feminist place-making in the 21st century calls on us to conscientiously connect with transnational, multicultural, non-binary youth to create communities that are dedicated to critical pedagogical practices in preparation to embrace/shape change while building the conceptual and practical tools to survive and thrive in the midst of catastrophic environmental and colonial disasters and radical ecological evolution. Let us gather to learn with K-12 students making place in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools. Let us gather to learn with migrant and refugee community members and

border patrol agents making place at militarized borders, checkpoints, and detention centers. Let us gather to learn with coastal communities making place while listening to the wisdom of oceans and rivers. Let us gather to learn with more than human beings making place in forests and deserts where we can learn and teach outside/beyond the capitalist model and expectation of success.

We will
make place
amidst
catastrophe and change

We will
gather where
communities
come apart

We will
make place
where compassion
unites

We will
gather where
crumbling economies
create migrant communities

We will
make place
where ecologies
thrive

We will
gather where
crumbling borders
create prisons

We will
make place
where love leads

We will

gather where
crumbling wars
create refugee communities

We will
make place
where children
laugh

We will
gather where
crumbling conscience
create rising seas

We will
make place
where water
speaks

We will
gather where
crumbling curriculums
create fear and distrust

We will
make place
where forests
teach.

Works Cited

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Yamuna Sangarasivam is professor of anthropology and director of the Women & Gender Studies Program at Nazareth University in Rochester, New York. She engages her interdisciplinary training in musicology, dance ethnology, cultural-political anthropology, transnational feminist and queer epistemologies and ontologies to inform her studies of terrorism, nationalism, resistance, and the intersectional politics of race, class, genders, sexualities, national and transnational identities, and divergent abilities. Her book, *Nationalism, Terrorism, Patriotism: A Speculative Ethnography of War* (2021-2022) was published by Palgrave Macmillan. Dr. Sangarasivam's recent scholarly and artistic endeavors in the studies of transnational feminist formations, transnational Asian feminist collectives, and transnational food cosmogonies invite her to journey into the fabulatory arts of culinary worlding to build solidarities across space and time.