

WOMEN HEALING EARTH: REVISITING ROSEMARY RUETHER'S WORK  
ON MORAL AGENCY & ECOLOGICAL ETHICS AMONG WOMEN  
OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH—INVITED SESSION

Topic: Women Healing Earth  
Convener: Teresia Mbari Hinga, Santa Clara University  
Moderator: Teresia Mbari Hinga, Santa Clara University  
Presenters: Lilian Dube, University of San Francisco;  
Theresa A. Yugar, California State University, Los Angeles  
Sarah E., Robinson-Bertoni, Santa Clara University

Twenty years ago, Rosemary Ruether edited a collection, *Women Healing the Earth: Ecology, Feminism and Religion* (Orbis, 1996). With this book and the Convention theme as a heuristic, this invited session set out four goals.

First, to celebrate Rosemary's prophetic ecofeminist vision and that of women from the third world. For the invited contributors who, among others, included ecofeminists such as Ivone Gebara (Brazil), Vandana Shiva, (India), and Isabel Phiri (Malawi), the book was a platform intentionally created by Rosemary for their voices to be heard. The comprehensive and inclusive list of invitees is testimony to Rosemary's capacity to cross borders—between rich and poor, global North and global South. Such border-crossings, according to her, are revelatory, transformative, and conducive to an enhanced and nuanced sense of solidarity with the vulnerable.

Second, to respond to the CTSA theme of ecology by highlighting insights and perspectives from the global South, as the description of each paper below shows.

Third, to encourage active listening to and engagement with women from the global south who offer insights and model social justice and advocacy work enhancing human and ecological wellness—despite the fact that they have suffered greatly from the deadly impact of multiple intersecting crises such as environmental degradation and seemingly ubiquitous violent conflicts. While Rosemary intended the book to lament these deadly crises, it also celebrated women's moral agency as they actively and creatively work toward a more just, livable world. Following Rosemary's lead, the panelists intentionally named and celebrated the creativity, genius, resilience and agency of women who continue to offer profoundly viable ideas and strategies in the struggle against much that threatens life today. Such agency and creativity for example was named and celebrated by Theresa who spoke specifically of Latin American women who "Circle together and "Conspire "to transform the world for all to flourishing.

The fourth goal was to encourage listening to new voices, on feminism and ecological justice, and on strategies and practices that leverage women's insights, values and agency. While all three panelists celebrated Rosemary as a trailblazer and mentor in Ecofeminist thought, each of them had something fresh and refreshing to offer.

Lilian Dube prefaced her paper, "Restorative Justice and the paradox of broken women healing the Earth," by reminding us of her Zimbabwean roots. Building on her own experiences growing in a context informed by the Zimbabwean worldview, and its more earth friendly ecological ethics, Dube celebrated this ecofriendly worldview, but simultaneously lamented its interruption by colonialism and neocolonialism.

### *Invited Session: Women Healing Earth*

Dube also celebrated women's moral agency by recalling the work and legacy of the legendary spirit medium Nehanda, a heroine of Zimbabwe's first Chimurenga, (i.e. liberation struggle) against British colonizers in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Though lynched for her role in that struggle, Nehanda became a major inspiration for Zimbabwe's second Liberation struggle, that led to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. Nehanda's agency and legacy was symbolized by reverence of her "lynching tree" and its recognition as an "urban *Green shrine*" in the City of Harare. When this tree recently fell, (by accident) it provoked heated debates and discussions with ecological resonance to the debates that inspired Rosemary's 1996 book as well as CTSA's 2017 theme.

In her paper, "Towards Global Solidarity and Praxis in Integral Ecology," Sarah Robinson-Bertoni applied insights both from Rosemary's book and Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*. She focused on the theme of solidarity germane to both writings and raised analytical questions regarding the very concept of solidarity and its multilayered interpretations—Solidarity with whom? By whom? For whom? Whose voices are we leaning in to hear? She also considered the role of privilege in injustice; she seeks to define solidarity to include taking action against privilege.

Theresa Yugar's paper, "Con-Spirando: A Circulando Juntas:" spoke to the Latin American context and shared statistics that demonstrated the intensity of ecological degradation and its impact particularly on women and children. While lamenting this ethically scandalous reality, Theresa also named and celebrated women as agents of healing the earth. Specifically, she explained the ethical significance of the proposed "Circulando Junta" a virtual bilingual platform for sharing and networking among concerned women as well as the Conspirando collective, a Latina feminist group whose stated goal is to empower women from Latin America and the Caribbean "to be autonomous people. . . and to promote relations of reciprocity and respect for ourselves and for our environment." While at one level Conspirando: A Circulando Juntas was simply a title descriptive of the paper's subject matter, in a subtle way this title also hinted at the preferred method, particularly among global south feminists who insist on the imperative of collaboration with each other as key to their socially transformative work. Circling and Conspiring together, therefore, becomes a metaphor for eco-feminist praxis particularly from the global south (and potentially globally).

The conversation that ensued was lively and the audience appreciative of the profound insights offered through the papers. The panelists themselves left the room more energized and determined to continue "circling" and "conspiring" together as the collaboratively planned next steps beyond the CTSA.

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