

6-1-2018

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Recommended Citation

Niazi, Tarique Ph.D. (2018) "Streeby, Shelley. *Imagining the Future of Climate Change: World-Making Through Science Fiction and Activism*. Oakland, California: University of California Press. 2018.," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 9: No. 2, Article 32.

DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1430

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol9/iss2/32>

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Communities of color have the sparsest presence in mainstream environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, National Audubon Society, and National Wildlife Confederation. Is this because of the exclusionary bias of these organizations or because of an indifference of communities of color to environmental concerns? Shelley Streeby documents in *Imagining the Future of Climate Change* that it is the former. According to her account, in 1990, native and indigenous people urged the Group of Ten – the most prominent environmental organizations – to address the exclusion of communities of color from the environmental movement. They proposed that “through dialogue and mutual recognition, we can create a global environmental movement that protects us all” (p. 59). When their calls went unheeded, they formed the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, decrying that mainstream environmental organizations “choose not to accept leadership from people of color” (p. 59).

Despite evidence to the contrary, some critics have interpreted the low visibility of minorities in mainstream environmental organizations as a function of minorities’ indifference to environmental concerns. Such criticism, however, are misplaced, as racial and ethnic minorities and low-income communities have always been on the frontline of environmental degradation and its uneven distribution. In the 1990s, Robert Bullard¹ and later David Pellow,² in their pioneering research, found that minority and low-income communities were disproportionately exposed to environmental pollution. Their seminal work led to the explosion of what came to be known as Environmental Justice scholarship, which challenged environmental classism and environmental racism. The environmental justice movement has since been able to bring about changes in national policy on dumping and distribution of environmental pollution. Of these, President Bill Clinton’s Executive Order of 1994, which mandates every federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission; passage of environmental justice laws in almost every state in the United States; and expansion of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to environmental justice cases are the most well-known accomplishments. Environmental justice scholarship predominantly focuses on how minorities and native and indigenous people have been deliberately targeted for chemical contamination and uncontrolled toxic waste.

Streeby has further accentuated the multifaceted contributions of the environmental justice movement by flagging the environmental activism of African-American and Native-American communities and, by implication, debunking the widely circulated but flawed view that minorities are indifferent to environmental concerns. The activism that Streeby documents is not just reactive to environmental degradation but proactive to imagine and create a different future and a different world for all humanity. She regards climate change as the direst of all environmental threats and goes to show how African-American, Latino-American, and native and indigenous communities are actively engaged in imagining and creating a climatically just world. Hence, ‘climate justice’ has become the masthead of the minority communities’ struggles in the environmental justice movement.

The lens that Streeby uses to magnify these struggles, at first blush, beggars belief. She employs such literary genres as ‘science fiction,’ ‘speculative fiction,’ and ‘climate change fiction’ to document the imaginative contributions of African-American and native and indigenous communities for climate justice. However, Streeby ultimately credibly defends this approach and claims that a lot of science fiction features “radically transformed climates,” which

begat a new subgenre of climate change fiction. “Cli-fi or climate change fiction,” she writes, “is best situated within the larger category of speculative fiction, an umbrella genre that includes science fiction and fantasy” (p. 4). Here it is important to note that “science fiction is not about the future; it uses the future as a narrative convention to present significant distortions of the present” (p. 18). It is a brilliant way to present science fiction as a projector of “distortions of the present,” which lends this genre the respectability that it deserves. This approach invests the present with an agency to design the future, as Streeby writes: “We in the present shape the future that is to come by thinking about it and foreseeing it” (p. 25).

Media popularized the term ‘climate change fiction,’ which extends to a range of “dystopian visions of near-future climate change.” In this genre, Streeby lists the early major works of Barbara Kingsolver (*Flight Behavior*), Nathaniel Rich (*Odds against Tomorrow*), and Margaret Atwood (*The Year of the Flood*). The cli-fi genre has since grown apace. Streeby, while telling the story of imagining the future of climate change, does not limit herself to mining the imaginative literature in various fiction genres alone. She goes beyond that to chronicle classical and contemporary real-life struggles that communities of color have been waging for climate justice. She, for instance, opens the slim volume with a detailed description and in-depth analysis of the native people’s struggle against the construction of Dakota Access Pipe Line (DAPL), which pitted the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North Dakota against the well-entrenched interests of the fossil fuel industry. In 2016, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and its allies protested the construction of 1,172-mile DAPL to ship the oil fracked from the Bakken fields in North Dakota to refineries in Illinois. The proposed route crosses the wide swath of Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, and part of Lake Oahe near the Standing Rock Reservation. The Standing Rock Tribe opposed the pipeline for its potential to pollute their water resources and desecrate their burial grounds. Streeby argues that communities of color and native and indigenous people are the most consistent voice against the fossil fuel industry, which is driving climate change around the globe.

Streeby deftly relates the DAPL struggle to past strivings of indigenous people and their futurisms in speculative fiction that is “all too often excluded from the category of cli-fi” (p. 5). She connects movements, speculative fictions, and futurisms of indigenous people and people of color that extend beyond cli-fi “in the rich and deep connections to social movements and everyday struggles and to other cultural forms” (p. 5). She chooses “social movements and culture” as her methodological lens to search for “meaning in the connections people make between cultural texts and the important social movements of their times” (p. 6). Her goal is to “introduce the history and most significant flashpoints in imagining the future of climate change over which these movements struggle” (p. 6).

According to Streeby, Sheree Thomas first used the term ‘speculative fiction’ to refer to “writing that had previously been invisible but was there all along” (p. 25). One such writing is W.E. B. DuBois’s story, *The Comet* (1920), which was denied its place in science and speculative fiction until now. Dubois sets his story in Manhattan, New York, which becomes depleted of human life after a comet rains down noxious gases on the city, killing all of its inhabitants. The only survivors are a “Black workingman and a rich white woman.” Streeby infers from the story that “Dubois uses this transformative change to think critically about man-made social institutions such as legal segregation: the splitting of the world into black and white halves as a result of the Supreme Court ruling on *Plessy v. Ferguson*” (p. 26). Using the narrative device to imagine a different future, DuBois highlights a distortion of his present about racial divisions in America and invites readers’ critical reflection on race relations of his time. Inserting

the Black Lives Matter movement here, Streeby ingeniously connects the reality of race relations in Dubois's time, his imaginary escape to a fictional future, and the real-life struggle for racial and climate justice that continues to this day.

Similarly, she records the indigenous people's imaginative literature, especially that which bears upon climate change. She refers to *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, whose editor, Grace Dillon notes: "Indigenous sf³ is not so new – just overlooked, although largely accompanied by an emerging movement" (p. 27). Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) is read as a near-future story built out of elements of the present, in which "the fight for indigenous land reclamation and tribal sovereignty is a matter of planetary survival" (p. 27). Dillon "opens up sf to reveal Native presence," making the case for Silko's *Almanac* and other native texts as 'indigenous science fiction' and arguing that in native hands, sf has the "capacity to envision native futures, indigenous hopes, and dreams recovered by rethinking the past in a new framework" (p. 27). Indigenous science, fiction, and futurisms have "converged to shape struggles over *DAPL as well as other* struggles over water, oil, resource extraction, throughout the world" (p. 36). Streeby connects these imaginaries with native and indigenous people's real-life struggles, the latest of which was the nation-wide March for Science in 2016, at which U.S. presidential candidates were hesitant to speak the c-word – 'climate change.' Native and indigenous people staged the March for Indigenous Science, which drew massive participation from non-native people as well. Yet the denial of science on climate change continues to this day, and to dangerous proportions. To highlight this "distortion of the present," Shelley Streeby's *Imagining the Future of Climate Change* could not be timed better. It indeed is a worthy addition to environmental humanities and environmental justice literatures.

Notes

¹ See, Bullard, Robert. 1994. *Uneven Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color*. New York: Random House.

² See, Pellow, David. 2004. *Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

³ sf is an acronym for science fiction

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