

Gender and Environmental Law. Challenges and opportunities for promoting the role of gender in environmental justice

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PANEL 3. New and critical developments of Ecofeminism. Intersectionality and multiple discriminations. Environmental and gender-critical theories. Gender mechanisms, methodologies and strategies for the protection, promotion and defense of environmental defenders.

Our Global Community is Stronger than Your Bullets: Women Environmental Defenders and Strategies to Overcome Silencing and Violent Repression.

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Although some sources document how women who join environmental justice movements have historically been silenced or pushed into supportive behind-the-scenes roles (Gaard 1993; Mohai 1992), a growing body of work shows that women are now often at the frontlines of such movements as leaders as well as make up a large proportion of membership (Newman et al. 2004; Di Chiro 2008). Yet women defenders' agencies are often still restricted to acting within the confines of mainstream conservative gender roles as wives and mothers in their daily lives. This leads to what Deonandan and Bell (2019) call disciplining dissent, in which women are violently punished not only to exclude and repress them, but also as a political tactic.

This research analyzes case studies of women defenders who are still alive and found success in achieving various goals of their activism to understand the methodologies they use to overcome silencing and violent repression as well as suggest strategies to protect them. Cases are from the EJAtlas, an online open-source inventory of ecological distribution conflicts. Recurring patterns suggest that a strongly unified community and movement are critical to keeping women defenders and their activism alive as well as producing positive results. States and corporations often divide people within the community and undermine its success and ability to protect activists, but many women leaders manage to strengthen unity despite, and especially after, violent repression. Such strength in togetherness is often reinforced by collaboration with international organizations and even government agencies. Female activists also successfully reinvent culturally specific narratives to maintain respected status within their communities. Academics can promote, protect, and defend women environmentalists because scholarly contributions bring legitimacy and visibility to their movements, undermining companies' efforts to delegitimize and silence them as well as exposing corrupt actions of their enemies.