



**NARRATING AFRICAN ECOFEMINISM: CLIMATE JUSTICE
AND WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN VANESSA NAKATE'S
*A BIGGER PICTURE: MY FIGHT TO BRING A NEW AFRICAN VOICE TO
THE CLIMATE CRISIS***

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Abstract:

This article examines how *A Bigger Picture: My Fight to Bring A New African Voice to the Climate Crisis* (henceforth *A Bigger Picture*) by Nakate (2021) contributes to African ecofeminist discourse on climate justice and environmental activism. Although climate justice and ecofeminism have received increasing scholarly attention, limited research has examined *A Bigger Picture* through the lens of African ecofeminism. Existing studies on climate activism predominantly focus on Western environmental movements, often overlooking how African women activists narrate climate injustice and articulate locally grounded responses to ecological crises. Drawing on African ecofeminist theory, the study uses qualitative textual analysis to examine the memoir's representation of climate injustice, women's environmental leadership, and an African ecofeminist vision of climate justice. The analysis reveals that Nakate constructs climate change as a multidimensional crisis shaped by historical inequalities, climate coloniality, poverty, and gendered marginalization. The memoir exposes the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on African communities while simultaneously portraying women and youth as active agents of ecological sustainability and social transformation. Furthermore, Nakate challenges the marginalization of African voices within global climate discourse by foregrounding local experiences, indigenous environmental knowledge, and community-based approaches to climate resilience. This study extends African ecofeminist criticism to contemporary climate memoirs and the environmental humanities. It demonstrates how *A Bigger Picture* redefines climate activism through an African feminist perspective that integrates environmental justice, gender equity, and sustainable development. By positioning Nakate's memoir within African ecofeminist discourse, the study enriches existing debates on climate justice, women's environmental leadership, and the representation of African experiences in

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global environmental narratives. The article further contributes to the growing body of scholarship that seeks to decolonize environmental studies by centering African voices and knowledge systems in discussions of climate change and sustainability.

Keywords: African Ecofeminism, climate change, climate (in)justice, Women's Environmental Activism, Vanessa Nakate

1. Introduction

The escalating climate crisis has intensified scholarly interest in the relationship between environmental degradation and social inequality. Contemporary climate discourse increasingly recognizes that climate change is not solely an ecological issue but also a matter of social, economic, racial, and gender justice (Barnes, 2021; Maseti, 2022; Sultana, 2022). Ecofeminism presents a useful framework for examining these intersections by highlighting the connections between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women (Gaard, 2015; Warren, 2000). Within the African context, ecofeminism has evolved to address the continent's specific experiences of colonialism, environmental injustice, poverty, and gendered inequalities. Maathai (2007) contends that environmental degradation in Africa is inseparable from political and social inequalities, as ecological degradation often undermines livelihoods, particularly those of women. Similarly, Maseti (2022) argues that African feminist scholarship must address the intersections of environmental sustainability, social justice, and indigenous knowledge systems.

Nakate's memoir reflects these concerns by emphasizing that climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable communities despite their minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. Her observations align with climate justice scholarship, which maintains that climate impacts are unevenly distributed across geographical and socioeconomic boundaries (Gaard, 2015). Nakate repeatedly draws attention to drought-stricken regions, food insecurity, and displacement within African communities, demonstrating how environmental vulnerability is often linked to poverty and historical marginalization. Furthermore, the memoir exemplifies an intersectional approach to climate activism. Sultana (2022) argues that climate change should be understood through the concept of "climate coloniality," whereby historical patterns of colonial domination continue to shape contemporary environmental inequalities. Nakate's narrative echoes this argument by criticizing global systems that allow industrialized nations to maintain high levels of carbon emissions while African communities bear disproportionate environmental costs.

Moreover, African ecofeminist scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of women's environmental leadership in confronting climate challenges. Maathai observes that women play critical roles in climate adaptation, sustainable agriculture, and natural resource management. Nakate reinforces this perspective by portraying women not merely as victims of environmental degradation but as active participants in climate resilience and environmental stewardship. Through these representations, the memoir advances an African ecofeminist vision that recognizes women as agents of ecological sustainability and social transformation.

Although existing scholarship has explored climate justice and environmental activism, limited attention has been paid to how Nakate's memoir articulates an African ecofeminist vision of climate justice. This article addresses this gap by examining how *A Bigger Picture* narrates the interconnected realities of environmental degradation, gender inequality, and climate activism. It argues that Nakate employs an African ecofeminist perspective to expose the unequal impacts of climate change, foreground women's environmental agency, challenge the marginalization of African voices, and advocate for collective and inclusive approaches to climate justice.

2. Literature Review

In its contribution to African literary ecocriticism, *Theorizing the Environment in Fiction: Exploring Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism in the works of Selected Black Female Writers* by Pasi (2017) stands out as an important intervention into the issue of the Anglo-American-established perspective of African writers as either opposed to or insufficiently interested in global ecocritical paradigms. Pasi foreshadows the writing of African women in colonial and post-colonial Namibia and Zimbabwe to show that ecological consciousness in African literature is historically expressed in terms of socio-political and economic domination, gender oppression and material deprivation. Her work therefore disrupts Western-oriented ecocritical paradigms, which generalize nature writing and relegate African knowledge and experiences.

Pasi's idea to dismiss the Western claims is especially appealing in the postcolonial ecofeminist viewpoint. Remarkably, by following the parallel patterns of domination: man against nature and patriarchy against black women, Pasi follows a similar line of thought to ecofeminist theorists like Shiva and Mies and consequently contends that the ecological and gendered forms of domination are mutually strengthening each other within the colonial and capitalist structures. Pasi, however, pushes this argument further by placing it in African historical contexts, thus opposing this abstraction that is usually typical of mainstream ecocriticism. Her claim that African writers have always involved nature and the surroundings in various discourses redesigns African literature not as dependent on colonial nature writing, but rather as a discourse that dialogically interacted with land, survival, resistance, and identity

Converging Perspectives: Environmental advocacy in Rachel Carson's Silent Spring and Wangari Maathai's Unbowed (2022) by Pacifica Maarita interprets the environmental praxis of Maathai as one deeply based on grassroots activism, community mobilization, and women's empowerment. Maarita convincingly shows that Maathai, in her environmental campaign, does not follow a technocratic or elite-led conservation paradigm but rather prefigures the collective involvement, especially by rural women, as the foundation of sustainable development. This focus is in sync with postcolonial ecofeminist theory that criticizes Western, top-down environmental interventions in terms of replicating colonial structures of knowledge and power. Maarita notes community mobilization as a powerful and transformative instrument that was developed in the GBM (p.12). She highlights the importance that Maathai gives to collective agency as an antidote to political oppression, environmental pollution, and financial marginalization. This mobilization can be interpreted as a calculated opposition to colonial and neocolonial

governance that previously marginalized African people, particularly women, in terms of governing the land they reside in and making decisions on the environment. Maathai's participatory tree planting does not simply represent environmental care; it also depicts land as a location of political, cultural, and gendered struggle. So, the community action in *Unbowed* is a decolonial praxis as well as an ecological intervention that reinstates indigenous relations among women, land, and communal responsibility.

Although Maarita is correct in pointing out the manner in which Maathai broke the shackles of patriarchal oppression through skills training and participatory leadership, this article reflects how Nakate's memoir gives African voices prominence in global climatic discourse, which strengthens the ecofeminist stance of intersectionality and group action.

Notably, this article argues that Nakate's memoir is not just a piece of propaganda in support of environmentalism; it reiterates environmentalism as a feminist, postcolonial movement that is entrenched in the daily lived condition. Through the setting of grassroots action in the context of autobiographical storytelling, Nakate disorients hegemonic Western environmental discourses in which the voices of African women are frequently marginalized. By doing so, she proves the fact that sustainable development cannot exist without narrative empowerment, which means a right to speak, to remember, and to act.

3. Theoretical Framework: African Ecofeminism

This study is anchored in African ecofeminism, a theoretical perspective that examines the interconnectedness between environmental degradation and the oppression of women within African contexts. Ecofeminism emerged during the 1970s as a critique of patriarchal systems that simultaneously subordinate women and exploit nature. According to Warren (2000), patriarchal ideologies create conceptual hierarchies that position men above women and culture above nature, thereby legitimizing various forms of domination and exploitation. Similarly, Gaard (2015) argues that ecofeminism exposes the structural connections between ecological destruction, gender inequality, racism, colonialism, and economic injustice.

African ecofeminism adapts these concerns to the realities of African societies. Rather than emphasizing an essential connection between women and nature, African ecofeminists focus on the material conditions that link women's lives to environmental sustainability. Women in many African communities are primarily responsible for securing water, providing food, collecting fuel, and managing household resources. Consequently, environmental degradation directly affects their social and economic well-being (Mandal, 2025). African ecofeminism, therefore, highlights how environmental crises exacerbate existing gender inequalities while also recognizing women's agency in environmental conservation and community resilience.

A key feature of African ecofeminism is its attention to colonial and neo-colonial structures that contribute to environmental injustice. Scholars argue that many contemporary ecological challenges in Africa cannot be separated from histories of resource extraction, land dispossession, and unequal global economic relations (Maseti, 2022). The framework also resonates with Sultana's concept of climate coloniality, which explains how historical patterns of colonial domination continue to shape present-day climate vulnerabilities. Moreover, it

recognizes indigenous knowledge systems and community-based environmental stewardship. Unlike dominant environmental approaches that privilege technological solutions, African ecofeminists emphasize the importance of local ecological knowledge, collective responsibility, and sustainable relationships with nature (Maathai, 2007). This perspective views environmental conservation as inseparable from social justice and community empowerment. African ecofeminism will thus illuminate the intersections between climate change, gender inequality, environmental activism, and political representation. The framework enables a critical examination of how Nakate portrays African communities as both victims of climate injustice and agents of environmental transformation. Furthermore, it facilitates an exploration of the memoir's advocacy for inclusive climate governance, indigenous environmental knowledge, and transnational solidarity in addressing contemporary ecological challenges.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Climate Change and the African Experience

A Bigger Picture constructs climate change not simply as an environmental phenomenon but as a discursively produced system of unequal power relations that reproduces colonial hierarchies between the Global North and the Global South. Nakate, rather than presenting environmental degradation as a universal crisis, narratively frames it as an issue of historical accountability and distributive injustice. Through repeated contrasts between Africa's negligible contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and its disproportionate exposure to drought, food insecurity, flooding, and displacement (p. 106), the memoir disrupts dominant environmental narratives that universalize climate change while obscuring the asymmetrical distribution of responsibility. This oppositional presentation reflects what African ecofeminists identify as the inseparability of ecological degradation from histories of colonial exploitation and global inequality. Nakate thus aligns herself with climate justice scholars who argue that climate change is fundamentally a question of unequal responsibility and unequal vulnerability (Gaard, 2015; Maseti, 2022; Sultana, 2022).

Nakate's discourse further acquires political force through her strategic lexical choices and evaluative language. Her repeated emphasis on disproportionate injustice, responsibility, and vulnerability shifts climate discourse from the scientific register of environmental management to the ethical vocabulary of accountability and reparative justice. In doing so, she converts climate change from an ecological event into a moral and political crisis. This rhetorical positioning resonates with Sultana's conception of climate coloniality, which reveals how colonial-capitalist systems continue to determine whose environments are rendered expendable and whose lives are considered worthy of protection. Rather than merely illustrating Sultana's argument, Nakate's memoir embodies climate coloniality through autobiographical testimony that translates abstract theoretical formulations into lived African experience.

The memoir's dialogic engagement with global climate justice discourse becomes particularly evident through Nakate's incorporation of multiple activist voices. The inclusion of Asad Rehman's condemnation of wealthy nations' refusal to accept historical responsibility establishes an intertextual dialogue that expands the memoir beyond an individual narrative

into a collective indictment of unequal climate governance. The quotation functions not merely as supporting evidence but as a polyphonic strategy through which diverse voices converge to expose the structural violence embedded within contemporary climate politics. Nakate's subsequent declaration at COP26, "*We cannot adapt to starvation. We cannot adapt to extinction. We cannot eat coal. We cannot drink oil. We will not give up,*" intensifies this critique through rhetorical repetition and parallel syntactic construction. The repeated negative modal 'cannot' refutes dominant policy discourses that normalize adaptation while neglecting structural responsibility. Simultaneously, the parallel clauses transform climate activism into a discourse of resistance that challenges political complacency and exposes the inadequacy of technocratic solutions divorced from questions of justice.

Nakate moreover demonstrates that environmental degradation cannot be divorced from broader structures of socioeconomic inequality. By documenting communities whose livelihoods depend upon agriculture and natural resources, she foregrounds the material consequences of ecological disruption on everyday life. However, these communities are not represented merely as victims of environmental decline. Through autobiographical witnessing, Nakate unfolds how climate vulnerability is socially and politically produced by unequal global economic relations rather than by ecological conditions alone. Consequently, the memoir discursively reframes climate injustice as the outcome of historically entrenched systems of colonial extraction and global capitalism, thereby reinforcing the central ecofeminist claim that ecological crises cannot be divorced from political and economic domination.

This critique expands beyond environmental vulnerability to encompass the politics of representation. Nakate's account of her exclusion from the World Economic Forum photograph in Davos demonstrates how climate coloniality operates not only through material inequalities but also through epistemic exclusion. The cropped photograph functions symbolically as a visual metaphor for the systematic marginalization of African knowledge within global climate discourse. Although presented as an individual experience, Nakate reconstructs the incident as a metonym for the broader erasure of African environmental realities (p. 128). The memoir therefore illustrates that representation itself constitutes a site of ecological power, where visibility determines whose experiences become legitimate sources of environmental knowledge and whose perspectives remain politically invisible.

Viewed through Hall & The Open University (2012) politics of representation, the Davos incident reflects the ideological mechanisms through which dominant institutions regulate visibility and authority. Nakate's narration converts personal exclusion into a critique of the discursive structures that privilege Western expertise while relegating African voices to the periphery of international environmental governance. Her emphasis on making African experiences visible therefore disrupts the epistemic hierarchies that sustain climate coloniality and simultaneously reclaims interpretive authority over African environmental realities.

Consequently, the memoir operates as a counter-narrative that redefines African subjects as producers rather than recipients of climate knowledge. Nakate consistently contrasts the discourse of climate charity with that of climate justice, replacing paternalistic representations of Africa as a passive recipient of humanitarian intervention with an ecofeminist discourse grounded in agency, accountability, and collective responsibility. This lexical opposition

performs an important ideological function by rejecting benevolent narratives that obscure historical responsibility and instead foregrounding justice as the ethical foundation of global climate governance. In this regard, Nakate's memoir participates in the broader decolonial project identified by Tamale (2020), destabilising the epistemic structures that have historically marginalized African voices while reconstructing climate discourse around inclusion, reciprocity, and ecological justice. Through these discursive strategies, *A Bigger Picture* democratizes environmental knowledge by reimagining African experiences not as peripheral illustrations of climate change but as indispensable frameworks through which global climate justice must be understood.

4.2 Women and Environmental Vulnerability

Nakate, in her memoir, constructs women's environmental vulnerability not as an inherent condition of femininity but as a socially and politically produced consequence of ecological injustice. Consistent with African ecofeminist thought, Nakate resists essentialist assumptions that women are naturally closer to nature. Instead, her memoir demonstrates that women's heightened exposure to climate change emerges from historically constituted gender roles that assign them primary responsibility for securing water, gathering fuel, producing food, and sustaining household welfare. Consequently, environmental degradation is narrated not merely as ecological decline but as a process that exacerbates existing gender inequalities. Through this framing, the memoir reconstructs climate vulnerability as the outcome of unequal social structures rather than biological difference, reinforcing Maseti's argument that environmental crises reproduce pre-existing systems of gendered marginalization.

Nakate develops this argument through testimonial narration that demonstrates the embodied consequences of climate change on women's daily lives. Her observation that "*when droughts, floods, or deforestation disrupt these resources, women's labour intensifies, limiting their access to education and economic opportunities*" (p. 86) stretches beyond a factual description of environmental hardship. The verb 'intensifies' carries a cumulative semantic force, suggesting that climate change does not create vulnerability in isolation but amplifies already existing forms of social inequality. Likewise, the lexical sequence 'droughts, floods, or deforestation' accumulates multiple ecological disruptions into a continuous pattern of environmental precarity rather than isolated disasters. Through this rhetorical accumulation, Nakate constructs climate change as a persistent condition that progressively narrows women's educational, economic, and political opportunities. Her memoir thus converts domestic labour into an index of structural environmental injustice, illustrating the ecofeminist claim that ecological degradation is experienced through the gendered organization of everyday life.

The memoir moreover reveals that environmental degradation generates cascading forms of social violence that stretch beyond ecological damage. Nakate's account of the locust invasion in northern Kenya illuminates how climate disruption produces interconnected crises of poverty, food insecurity, child marriage, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Rather than presenting these practices as culturally isolated phenomena, Nakate narratively embeds them within a broader ecology of survival in which environmental decline restructures social relations and heightens gendered vulnerability. This causal sequencing exposes climate change as a

catalyst that amplifies existing patriarchal inequalities rather than functioning as a purely environmental event. In this regard, Nakate's narrative substantiates Shiva's (1998) contention that ecological crises intensify gendered inequalities through unequal development, while simultaneously extending that argument by demonstrating how environmental degradation intersects with cultural, economic, and political structures to define women's lived realities.

Agarwal's (2010) assertion that women's environmental vulnerability stems primarily from unequal access to resources, decision-making, and economic opportunities rather than biological difference is similarly reinforced through Nakate's autobiographical testimony. The memoir, however, advances this argument discursively by exposing the linguistic mechanisms through which women's environmental agency is delegitimized. Nakate recounts that when she initiated climate strikes, many 'dismissed' her efforts as futile (p. 58). From a feminist discourse analytical perspective, the verb 'dismissed' performs a significant evaluative function. It does not merely describe disagreement but encodes relations of epistemic power through which women's environmental knowledge is trivialized and excluded from legitimate political discourse. The lexical choice thus reveals that climate activism involves questioning not only ecological degradation but also the patriarchal discourses that regulate credibility, authority, and public participation. The memoir thus illustrates that environmental vulnerability encompasses symbolic and discursive marginalization alongside material deprivation.

Notably, *A Bigger Picture* refuses to reduce women to passive victims of environmental injustice. Instead, Nakate reconstructs vulnerability as the starting point for political agency and collective transformation. Through the establishment of the Rise Up Movement (RUM) and her participation in Fridays for Future (FFF), the memoir recounts a transition from individual exclusion to collective resistance. This narrative progression reflects a broader ecofeminist politics in which personal experience becomes the foundation for communal activism. The first-person testimonial voice gradually expands into a collective discourse of solidarity, demonstrating how autobiographical narration can convert individual struggle into shared political consciousness. Agency, therefore, emerges not as the negation of vulnerability but as its dialogic response.

Nakate's representation of women consequently destabilises dominant humanitarian narratives that present African women exclusively through the discourse of victimhood. Rather, the memoir simultaneously foregrounds women's vulnerability, resilience, and ecological expertise. Women are reimagined as custodians of environmental knowledge, organizers of community resilience, and active participants in climate justice movements. This multidimensional characterization rejects reductive binaries of victim versus heroine by presenting vulnerability and agency as mutually constitutive rather than oppositional categories. Through this nuanced representation, Nakate advances a distinctly African ecofeminist vision in which environmental stewardship, collective responsibility, and feminist activism intersect to contest both ecological degradation and patriarchal domination. The memoir therefore redefines women's environmental vulnerability not as a sign of weakness but as the very condition from which ecological knowledge, political resistance, and transformative climate justice emerge.

4.3 Women's Environmental Activism

While *A Bigger Picture* acknowledges the gendered vulnerabilities produced by climate change, its dominant narrative trajectory is one of resistance, agency, and collective transformation. Nakate frames environmental activism not as an exceptional act of individual heroism but as a dialogic process through which marginalized communities reclaim political visibility and ecological authority. Her autobiographical progression from a solitary climate striker in Kampala to an internationally recognized climate advocate manifests the transformative potential of grassroots activism. Moreover, the memoir narratively reconstructs activism as a process of political becoming, whereby individual testimony evolves into collective environmental consciousness. Through this narrative shift, Nakate demonstrates that ecofeminist activism stems from lived experiences of ecological injustice rather than institutional authority, thereby disrupting dominant assumptions that environmental leadership is the exclusive domain of political elites, scientists, or international organizations.

The memoir moreover constructs activism through a discourse of relationality rather than personal achievement. Nakate consistently frames climate strikes, community engagement, public awareness campaigns, and international advocacy as interconnected practices that derive their legitimacy from collective participation. The accumulation of these forms of activism produces a rhetorical pattern that privileges collaboration over individual accomplishment. As a result, activism is represented less as a singular political event than as an ongoing communal practice through which marginalized voices negotiate inclusion within global climate governance. This relational construction of activism reflects what Gaard (2015) conceptualizes as ecofeminist praxis, where ecological sustainability and social justice are inseparable dimensions of political engagement. Nakate's memoir, rather than merely illustrating Gaard's theory, performs ecofeminist praxis by illustrating how autobiographical testimony becomes a form of environmental intervention.

Nakate's activism is thus discursively constructed through the consistent amplification of voices that have historically remained peripheral within international climate debates. The memoir repeatedly oscillates its narrative focus from the first-person singular to the collective experiences of climate-vulnerable African communities, thereby decentralizing the autobiographical self in favour of communal representation. This shift from the personal 'I' to the collective 'we' transforms individual experience into shared political testimony and defines activism as an ethical responsibility toward marginalized communities rather than a pursuit of personal recognition. Such narrative positioning elucidates African ecofeminism's commitment to communal responsibility, relational ethics, and collective ecological stewardship.

Nakate's activism simultaneously extends and reconfigures the tradition of African women's environmental leadership encapsulated by Maathai's Green Belt Movement. Whereas Maathai foregrounded environmental restoration through localized ecological action, Nakate extends this legacy to the contemporary politics of global climate governance. Her memoir illustrates that environmental activism now entails struggles over climate finance, loss-and-damage negotiations, and the unequal distribution of political visibility within international environmental institutions. Through these interventions, Nakate stretches ecofeminist activism beyond environmental conservation to include the democratization of global climate discourse.

The memoir therefore demonstrates that contemporary climate governance remains structured by colonial asymmetries in which unequal access to representation reproduces unequal access to environmental justice.

A Bigger Picture further demonstrates that environmental injustice is not solely material but fundamentally discursive. Nakate repeatedly reveals how global climate politics privileges particular voices while rendering African experiences peripheral to international decision-making. The memoir therefore examines not only who suffers the consequences of climate change but also whose knowledge is recognized as authoritative in constructing climate solutions. Through this critique, Nakate redefines environmental activism as a struggle over representation, legitimacy, and epistemic justice. Her activism thus questions the ideological structures that determine whose environmental experiences become globally visible and whose remain politically marginalized.

The memoir's ecofeminist politics of inclusion becomes particularly evident in Nakate's articulation of the Rise Up Movement as a platform where "every activist's voice matters" (p. 111). The inclusive quantifier 'every' performs an important discursive function by resisting hierarchical models of leadership and constructing activism as fundamentally participatory. Rather than privileging celebrity activism or institutional authority, Nakate deploys an egalitarian rhetoric that distributes agency across diverse communities of activists. This lexical emphasis on inclusivity reinforces the memoir's broader commitment to collaborative leadership and democratized environmental participation.

Nakate's representation of collective activism further resonates with Mohanty's (2003) critique of universalized notions of global sisterhood. Instead of advocating for a homogenized feminist identity, the memoir creates solidarity through political alliances rooted in shared struggles against environmental injustice while preserving the specificity of African experiences. Climate coalitions are therefore portrayed not as assimilative structures that subsume local identities but as dialogic spaces in which diverse histories, perspectives, and ecological realities remain visible. This emphasis on mutual accountability rather than abstract universality manifests an African ecofeminist understanding of solidarity as relational, contextual, and politically negotiated.

A Bigger Picture thus redefines environmental activism as an ecofeminist discourse of collective empowerment. The memoir disputes the liberal narrative of individual achievement and instead constructs activism through interconnected practices of testimony, representation, solidarity, and ecological responsibility. Women's activism emerges not merely as participation in environmental campaigns but as a transformative political practice that questions colonial epistemologies, patriarchal power structures, and unequal systems of climate governance. By framing African women and youth as producers of environmental knowledge rather than recipients of humanitarian intervention, Nakate advances an African ecofeminist vision in which ecological sustainability, democratic participation, and social justice become mutually constitutive. The memoir therefore demonstrates that environmental activism is simultaneously a struggle for ecological preservation, political recognition, and epistemic decolonization.

4.4 African Ecofeminist Vision of Climate Justice

A Bigger Picture articulates an African ecofeminist vision of climate justice that stretches beyond environmental advocacy to reimagine the ethical, political, and epistemological foundations of global climate governance. Nakate, rather than constructing climate change as a technical problem requiring scientific innovation or policy reform alone, discursively reimagines it as a crisis of historical responsibility, unequal power, and moral accountability. The memoir consistently disrupts the dominant technocratic discourse of climate management with an ethical discourse centred on justice, relationality, and collective responsibility. Consequently, climate justice emerges not merely as an environmental objective but as a transformative political philosophy that seeks to reconstruct relationships between humanity, nature, and systems of global governance.

Nakate's articulation of climate justice is rooted in a persistent rhetorical shift from individual experience to collective obligation. Although the memoir stems from autobiographical testimony, the first-person narrative recurrently expands into a broader discourse of communal responsibility through references to governments, corporations, local communities, and ordinary citizens as interconnected participants in climate action. This progressive broadening of narrative perspective serves an important ideological function by detesting neoliberal assumptions that environmental responsibility rests primarily with vulnerable communities. Nakate, rather, redistributes agency across multiple political actors while simultaneously exposing the disproportionate responsibility of major polluting nations and corporations. The memoir, through this discursive strategy, reconstructs accountability as a collective yet differentiated ethical obligation, thereby conforming with African ecofeminism's emphasis on relational justice rather than individualized environmental responsibility.

Central to Nakate's ecofeminist vision is the epistemic repositioning of indigenous and local knowledge systems. Rather than presenting African communities as passive recipients of externally generated environmental expertise, the memoir consistently redefines local ecological knowledge as an indispensable source of climate resilience and sustainable environmental governance. This discursive privileging of indigenous knowledge destabilises universalized climate narratives that often portray technological innovation as the sole solution to ecological crises. By foregrounding community-based environmental practices, Nakate participates in what Sultana conceptualizes as the decolonization of climate discourse while simultaneously extending Maathai's contention that sustainable environmental stewardship stems from long-term reciprocal relationships between communities and their ecological environments. Consequently, the memoir disrupts epistemic hierarchies that privilege Western scientific authority while marginalizing African environmental knowledge, thereby redefining climate justice as an issue of knowledge equity as well as ecological sustainability.

Nakate's narrative moreover constructs climate justice through a discourse of contextual rather than universal environmental ethics. By privileging African experiences of drought, food insecurity, environmental displacement, and ecological precarity, the memoir rejects homogenizing representations of climate change that erase geographical and historical differences. The repeated emphasis on local experiences serves a critical representational function by illuminating that climate justice cannot be divorced from the specific social, political,

and historical contexts through which environmental crises are experienced. African ecofeminism therefore emerges not simply as a regional application of ecofeminist theory but as an alternative epistemological framework that reimagines how environmental justice is understood.

Nakate further extends this vision through a sustained discourse of intersectional solidarity. The memoir consistently demonstrates that climate injustice cannot be divorced from racial inequality, gender discrimination, economic marginalization, or global poverty. Nakate, rather than treating these as parallel social problems, narratively integrates them into a mutually constitutive structure of oppression in which environmental degradation simultaneously produces and is produced by broader systems of inequality. This cumulative representation illuminates an intersectional ecofeminist politics that understands ecological destruction as inseparable from colonial histories, capitalist extraction, and patriarchal domination. Climate justice therefore becomes a comprehensive struggle for structural transformation rather than an isolated environmental campaign.

The memoir's rhetoric of solidarity similarly departs from universalist notions of humanitarian intervention. Instead of advocating paternalistic forms of global cooperation, Nakate creates solidarity through the language of reciprocity, mutual accountability, and shared political responsibility. Her insistence that meaningful climate action requires listening to historically marginalized communities' questions challenges hierarchical models of environmental governance in which solutions are imposed upon rather than developed with vulnerable populations. This dialogic conception of solidarity resonates with Mohanty's understanding of transnational feminist alliances as political relationships rooted in mutual accountability rather than abstract claims of universal sisterhood. Consequently, solidarity is represented as a negotiated ethical practice that preserves difference while enabling collective political action.

Youth activism constitutes another significant dimension of Nakate's African ecofeminist vision. The memoir consistently positions young people not as symbolic representatives of the future but as legitimate political actors whose lived experiences authorize their participation in contemporary climate governance. This representation destabilises dominant generational hierarchies that frequently marginalize youth voices within environmental policy debates. Nakate, through autobiographical testimony and collective advocacy, reimagines young activists as producers of environmental knowledge and agents of political transformation. The memoir therefore extends ecofeminist commitments to care and sustainability by locating responsibility not only across gender and geography but also across generations.

A Bigger Picture advances an African ecofeminist vision in which environmental sustainability, social justice, epistemic decolonization, and democratic participation cannot be divorced from each other. Rather than proposing climate action as a narrowly ecological project, Nakate constructs it as a transformative discourse that questions unequal systems of knowledge, representation, and political authority. Through testimonial narration, dialogic engagement with global climate debates, and the continual centering of African experiences, the memoir redefines climate justice as an ethical struggle to democratize both environmental governance and environmental knowledge. In doing so, Nakate expands African ecofeminism beyond a

theoretical framework into a lived political praxis through which ecological sustainability becomes inseparable from justice and collective human dignity.

5. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that *A Bigger Picture* reconfigures African ecofeminism as a discursive and political framework through which climate change is represented not simply as an ecological crisis but as the interconnectedness of environmental degradation, historical injustice, gender inequality, and unequal global power relations. Nakate, through autobiographical testimony, presents climate justice as a struggle over representation, accountability, and epistemic inclusion, contesting dominant climate narratives that privilege perspectives from the Global North while marginalizing African experiences and environmental knowledge.

The analysis has further shown that Nakate's memoir discursively transforms women from subjects of environmental vulnerability into agents of ecological and political change. Through testimonial narration, collective rhetoric, and the foregrounding of grassroots activism, the memoir redefines environmental leadership as a relational and community-based practice rooted in African experiences. In doing so, *A Bigger Picture* expands contemporary ecofeminist thought by integrating indigenous knowledge, intersectional justice, and participatory climate governance into an African perspective on environmental sustainability.

Beyond its reading of Nakate's memoir, this study contributes to literary and environmental humanities scholarship by demonstrating that African ecofeminism functions not merely as a thematic concern but as a narrative and discursive practice through which climate injustice is interpreted, contested, and reimaged. The article therefore advances existing scholarship by reimagining African climate memoirs as important sites for theorizing environmental justice, decolonial knowledge production, and feminist ecological agency. The study, rather than treating African experiences as peripheral illustrations of global climate change, argues that they provide indispensable epistemological frameworks for understanding the uneven realities of the climate crisis.

Future research may build upon this inquiry by comparatively examining memoirs and life narratives by African women environmental activists across diverse geographical, linguistic, and cultural contexts. Such studies would further illuminate the plurality of African ecofeminist perspectives while deepening scholarly understanding of how autobiographical narratives participate in the production of environmental knowledge and climate justice discourse.

A Bigger Picture thus demonstrates that meaningful climate justice cannot be solely achieved through technological innovation or environmental policy. It requires the democratization of climate discourse, the recognition of historically marginalized voices, and the transformation of the political and epistemic structures that sustain environmental inequality. By privileging African experiences within global climate debates, Nakate's memoir reimagines environmental activism as a sustained ethical and political project in which ecological sustainability, social justice, and human dignity intersect.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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