

Issue 10 Autumn 2023

THE VIEW

for women with conviction

AGEING IN PRISON

What happens to women in prison as they get older and they start to suffer from onset of ageing?

PROBLEM SOLVING COURTS

Probation officer Fiona Deacon was determined to find more autonomy and better solutions for women

CLIMATE TRAUMA

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LISA AZARMI

from artist to alchemist

**My BODY
My CHOICE**

News, Views and Trues by and for women in the justice system

How to cope with climate anxiety

We are living through an unprecedented and scary period in human history. Every day the news is full of shocking climate change-related disasters, from hurricanes to forest fires and Biblical flooding. In some ways, we should all be scared by this – it's the only way that enough people across the globe will take action to stop using fossil fuels and limit the damage while we still can.

But I find that, on bad days, this anxiety can be paralyzing. This doesn't help me, my clients, or those of us engaged in this struggle. So I try to use this anxiety as fuel to take positive action. If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, I totally understand. It's hard not to be. But if you take action – going on a protest, writing to your elected officials, boycotting a climate-wrecking corporation, planting a tree, or rewilding a patch of land – you will feel more in control and less overwhelmed.

It's also helpful to consume positive, hopeful stories about the many ways people around the world are making a difference. These stories – of massive increases in renewable energies, or large-scale rewilding/conservation projects – don't get as much airtime as the scary stuff, but they are happening too. So don't lose hope. Do what you can, today, however small that may be. The solutions are in our hands... if we just start using them.



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Mothers unite

Across the globe, mothers are taking a stand to have their voices heard in times of climate emergency and to protect their children's future

Mari Nythun Utheim, Dr Kristine Damberg, Sara Nilsson Lööv

The Mothers Rebellion movement has several points of origin. One of them is Mary-Linn, a mother, photography teacher and artist, living in Los Angeles with her daughter. In May 2022, she got the idea of mobilising mothers across the world after seeing how a Scientist Rebellion action got attention in Los Angeles.

She says: "I couldn't help but notice that our local scientists were all men. I began to think about other groups of people that have some kind of 'authority' in the public imagination, and the idea of mothers popped up right away. Mothers! Mothers are a passionate bunch and we are highly motivated by love to keep our children safe. We are also a wonderfully large and diverse constituency."

It all made perfect sense. She shared her idea of Mothers Rebellion with a group of other mothers and allies in Extinction Rebellion (XR), who worked together to develop the idea and do outreach to every possible contact. Eventually, small zoom meetings took place to plan the first coordinated Mothers Rebellion action in the spring of 2022.

Motherhood in times of climate crisis

Around the same time, a group of concerned mothers in Sweden had been meeting for almost a year, talking about being a parent in times of climate crisis and how they could use their motherhood to create change. Some of them were active in XR, but most without previous experience in activism or politics. But throughout history, mothers had come together and created political change across the world – such as the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia. So why not them?

Before the Swedish election in late summer 2022, their feelings of climate despair intensified. The climate crisis was not being taken seriously by politicians as an existential threat, and most people seemed to live their everyday lives as if no crisis existed. Many seemed to be able to look away from the problem, others were caught by feelings of hopelessness and were almost as passive as the ones who didn't feel concerned by the climate crises.

The mothers felt an urge to break up the 'business as usual' and make it harder for people to look away, using their despair as a tool to create change. Could they be emotionally disruptive by publicly but quietly displaying their motherly grief, despair and worry? Could that make a bigger impact than yet another scientific report?

They decided to give it a go. In a couple of weeks, they created leaflets, mobilised people and printed big banners saying 'Climate emergency – we refuse to look away', 'Climate emergency – we refuse to give up', and 'The Rebel Mothers' climate rebellion'.

Connecting with climate emotions

On 20 August 2022, 70 mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and allies sat down in a circle in the biggest pedestrian street in Stockholm. They played music, sang and shared testimonies of why they were there. They were struck by surprise by how big an effect it had on themselves to sit down together and – with the help of music and speeches – connect with their climate emotions.

Many mothers cried, and so did passers by and people following the live-streamed action. Afterwards, they found themselves empowered and ready to do everything and anything to ensure a safe future for their own and everyone else's children.

One year later, this had grown into a movement of several thousands in Sweden, with groups in more than 20 towns. Some of them connected with Mary-Linn and the mothers in the US, who by that time had come in contact with mothers in Zambia, Uganda and Germany.

They decided to try to connect more mothers across the world through the same type of protest: sitting in a circle with personal placards. Individual placards in addition to banners make every person's participation unique, and allows others to understand why this person stands here now. The placards expose each person's emotions and motivations about protesting. That makes it easier to identify with the protesters, who become individual sentient

people, and not just a crowd.

Mothers Rebellion's demands were, and still are, simple. First of all, we want our politicians to tell the truth. This means that they have to tell the truth about the consequences of their current policies, and the truth about what will happen if we continue on this path.

Secondly, we want them to act now, and do everything they can, all at once. This means declaring a climate emergency. We have come through other emergencies before, such as the Second World War and the Covid pandemic. We know that it is possible to put extreme measures in place when faced with a serious threat to humanity.

Third, we want to be heard. Specifically, we want citizens' assemblies with the right to propose necessary long-term policies without the influence of elections.

Lastly, we want climate justice for those who are the most affected by, but least responsible for, the climate breakdown and the industrial ecocide – those in the global south.

Standing in solidarity across the world

Mothers Rebellion stands in solidarity with women across the world, because the south is more affected by the climate crisis than the north, and women are impacted more than men.

The Horn of Africa has had a four-year long drought⁴ pushing 23 million people into starvation. Of them, 7.5 million are children⁵. The disastrous flooding in Libya in September 2023 took the lives of an estimated 11,300 people⁶. The climate crisis is acute and life-threatening, and we have the moral obligation to act fast.

Our members in the global south testify to the urgency of the situation. In India, mothers were already organising in Warrior Moms to fight against air pollution, which disproportionately affects women and children and the poor (www.facebook.com/warriormoms.in)

They started doing circles along with Mothers Rebellion. Samita Kaur from Warrior Moms says: "Lonely battles join and solidarity lights the way, uniting us towards a shared goal: a healthier future for every child. Also, together we emerge stronger than ever before."

Many circles have also formed on the African continent, and our members share their experiences with the climate crisis. In February 2023, Zambia was hit by devastating floods, affecting over 150,000 people with roads, bridges and homes destroyed, preventing people from accessing schools, health facilities and markets. A debt crisis is undermining the ability of the country and communities to recover and respond.

Our member and rebel mother Precious Kalombwana lives in Kanyama, a poor Lusaka suburb. She cares for her two children as well as her late sister's two, and is a prominent youth leader in her community. She says: "In February, we had floods and my father's house in the village was destroyed. There was no government protection available because they do not have the funds – because Zambia is indebted. So my father now doesn't have a house because of floods. That's why I live in the slums.

"People are dying here because we lack access to hospitals and medicine. We are living in a country where I'm scared for my own and other children's lives. I'm scared because I don't know what will happen tomorrow because of climate change and the debt crisis here.

"Mother's Rebellion has helped us to take action on the streets to demand climate justice and debt cancellation for Zambia to enable a just transition. I firmly believe that individual action is inspired by thinking globally but acting locally."

Giving mothers a voice

What started as a small circle in Stockholm in August 2022 had, by September 2023, grown into a global Mothers Rebellion with 87 circles in 26 different countries across six continents. Almost every day new mothers approach us

and want to join – the wish of connecting and mobilising mothers across the world comes true one step at a time. Could you imagine?

The next step on the horizon is International Children's Day, and our third global Mothers Rebellion on 18 November. Rallying the troops, connecting with even more mothers, allies and other organisations up to that date, we want to increase our reach and give voices to unheard mothers.

For Mothers Rebellion, success means that we are able – through publicly showing our despair over the lack of climate action and our refusal to give up – to make the climate crisis relatable to other parents and activate the silent majority in demanding strong and fair climate action. Success is also creating a community where parents can find support when they feel climate despair. Ultimately, the goal is to mobilise enough people to create a societal shift where the protection of our children's future is the central priority.

Mothers are sometimes portrayed as slightly overwhelmed, distracted and tired. But becoming a parent also involves gaining a kind of strength you never knew you had, a superpower. We grow strong because the newborn is helpless, the child is weak.

For the sake of your child, you can push yourself much further than you could before. The mothers and allies of Mothers Rebellion are filled with hope, community and the love for our, and all, children – and we are more determined than ever to do everything we can to push through the necessary shifts to protect the planet and the lives of our children.

Mothers uniting are powerful, no matter where we are in the world or what colour we are. Let us stand together to protect our children. Our children deserve to see us do all we can. We invite you to stand with us.

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Find us on Instagram: [mothersrebellion.com](https://www.instagram.com/mothersrebellion.com)



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THE VIEW

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