

What of the Body on the Land?

Article by Tracy Amofa

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For many in the Global South, climate impacts can translate into an existential threat that forces them to seek refuge elsewhere. But safety – even in fortified, distant lands – may only be temporary.

What is there to say of a land under the sea when they believe their walls are strong enough to keep the water out?

Do I tell them I come from a land with droughts and a sea at its shores? They tell me it's hard to believe. They ask from which region I fled and if there was a conflict. The only conflict was the bodies fighting the land to feed them, digging holes as deep as trenches only to fill them with the little water left. I say the conflict was one against hunger and thirst. I am asked whether I was at risk of being sold and if there were beasts after my body. I tell them I cried without tears as I fed on the last food my husband found and watched as he journeyed for more, only to not return. I tell them of the child who almost ate me alive, only to die before I could push it out. I ask them how I could survive water because all I have known is the lack of it. I tell them I'd drink it, but I heard I would drown when the barriers go down. I know how to keep walking, but I have never learned to swim. They say the land will survive as it always does; the water could not kill it! I laugh because I have seen dead lands, I have personally witnessed their deaths as I passed through them. How could they speak of the land with no regard for it? Do they not know it's what's keeping us?

I ask them if I am allowed to survive along with the land. They allow me to learn to swim as they evaluate what I last endured. I am a body that wants to enact the longevity of the land. If the land knows to continue to exist, I, too, want to sustain my body. When does the swimming class start again?



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