



## Revolutionary Mothering in Northern Cauca, Colombia

***“We invite all the women anywhere in the world who have given birth to life, we who have given birth to humanity, to continue giving birth to the liberty of our peoples. To continue giving birth to liberty for nature, and for this humanity that is at the brink of collapse”*** – Francia Marquez  
– Spokeswoman of the Black Women’s Mobilization for the Care of Life and Ancestral Territories.

***“Those of us who nurture the lives of those children who are not supposed to exist, who are not supposed to grow up, who are revolutionary in their very beings are doing some of the most subversive work in the world. If we don’t know it, the establishment does.”*** – Alexis Pauline Gumbs –  
Revolutionary Mothering.

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In a most timely anthology, [“Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines”](#) a new generation of writers, poets, activists, and mothers elaborate on the powerful evocations of their foremothers to highlight a radical reframing of mothering as a social, rather than biological, “practice of creating, nurturing, affirming and supporting life.” In [discussing their editorial work](#), Mai’a Williams and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, raise the question of what and how it means to mother while at the front lines of resistance in both material and imaginary senses. For Black Women in Northern Cauca, the assault on their ability to care for themselves, each other, their children and their communities, places them on the front lines of countless intersecting fronts. From food sovereignty, to environmental justice; liberatory health systems, to autonomous economies and governance, Black Women in Northern Cauca are desperately struggling to bring to life a future of peace and safety.

Over the past week, hundreds of black women from the region of Northern Cauca, in southwestern Colombia have been participating in [the National Inter-Ethnic Agrarian Protest](#). They have been blocking the Panamerican Highway and other primary roads throughout the region as part of a national protest of black, indigenous, and campesino communities demanding just agricultural policies, collective land titling, and an end to state and paramilitary threats, assassinations, and displacement. For the sisters of the *Black Women’s Mobilization for the Care of Life and the Ancestral Territories* their decision to participate in the national protest was an act of Revolutionary Mothering:

***“We simply said that The People are protesting and that we, caretakers of life and our ancestral territories had to be a part of it, and we have been.”***

Just over a year and a half ago, dozens of the women now engaged in the ongoing National Inter-Ethnic Agrarian Protest marched from their ancestral community to the capital city of Bogota, where they went on to occupy the ministry of interior until competent authorities were sent to negotiate in good faith. That mobilization captured national and international attention, as the women articulated their acts of resistance as necessary acts of mothering their lands, their children, their families and each other. Speaking against the pressures that would force them to flee from their ancestral rural homes, to the dangers of the city Francia Marquez, [spokeswoman of the mobilization stated](#):

***“We are not willing to be one more [of the 4 million displaced Colombians]. We are not willing to have our children in the streets, and having people in suit and ties treating them as if they were garbage. We are willing to remain in our territories. Because the territory, to us, has been our father, has been our mother, and it will continue to be for our children.”***





[Four weeks ago](#), the *Black Women's Mobilization* participated in three days of protests of organized by the Association of Community Councils of Northern Cauca (ACONC), a regional organization made up by the various black communities that inhabit the region. They faced off against riot police who [indiscriminately fired tear gas into homes, leading to the hospitalization of 3 babies](#).

***"We feel sadness, disappointment, because of the abuses from the government, because of the death threats that we continue to receive. Because our territories continue to be destroyed and there isn't a response from the national government despite talking about the peace process without offering any answers to these situations that are impacting us, and impacting the women disproportionately."***

Despite their sorrow, the sisters of the *Black Women's Mobilization* continue to participate in regional and national protests.



***"The conclusion to why we participate are the same: Permanent failure of the government to honor our agreements, permanent violence, and the permanent lack of a guarantee of our rights. It's the same. The same reason. We did the first protest, nothing came of it, so we said that we are going to do another because this one is national. And if we are suffering and we are making demands of the government, how would we not participate in national actions?"***

Around 80 women participated in the earlier days of the protest holding the blockades day and night. Over the past few days, hundreds have participated, taking turns resting, standing guard, childrearing, and making meals. Their actions speak to Christen A. Smith's resounding testament to the tremendous vitality of Black Women's resolve to safeguard their children:

***"We will continue to invent ways to keep our children and ourselves alive and well. Radical Black mothering wants to trade sorrow; we do not need it to be our primary artifact. We will continue to invent ways to keep our children and ourselves alive and well."*** - [Sorrow as Artifact: Radical Black Mothering in Times of Terror—A Prologue](#)

The resolve of the *Black Women's Mobilization* is all the more telling as their participation is nonetheless clouded by fear:

***"Some come very afraid because three people have been killed. They've [Riot Police] killed three from the indigenous community just a bit from where we are. And farther down towards Buenaventura, another has been killed. So that generates fear, but nonetheless, we here, resisting, as they say."***

This is the second major protest in which the *Black Women's Mobilization* has participated within a month. They will continue to participate in regional and national protests, as well as advancing a variety of community initiatives all aimed at ending the destruction of their lands, preventing their assassinations, and ensuring that future generations are able to reside on their ancestral territories.

***"We are planning for November, in the context of the two-year anniversary of the first march of the Black Women's Mobilization for the Care of Life and the Ancestral Territories, a strategy to create an encounter, a***



***more national and if possible international, of women that are also struggling to care for life and their territories. It would be very important; women from Brazil, women from Honduras, women from the United States; from the African Continent if they can come it would be very important. We need to, as women, strengthen ourselves; more so as black women.”***

For more information, including updates, and contact information pertaining to the ongoing struggles of black communities in Northern Cauca, please visit <http://www.afrocolombian.org>