

DECOLONIAL QUEER ECOLOGY

DEEP ROOTS

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Summary

In September 2025 EYFA hosted Deep Roots: Tools for Embodied Resistance, a workshop for youth and young activists affected by racism. The workshop was grounded in a decolonial queer ecological approach, exploring embodied ways of relating to land, body, and collective sustainability.

The event took place in Berlin-Kreuzberg at a wheelchair-accessible venue with a garden and access to water. Through a mix of practical exercises and shared reflection, participants learned grounding tools to support long-term, sustainable forms of activism and grassroots organizing. The workshop also created space for exchange, collective learning, and connection.



Venue, Deep Roots Event in Berlin

Introduction

Queer ecology is a field of thought and practice that questions the idea that heterosexuality, binary gender, and linear reproduction are “natural,” while everything else is deviation. It asks: Who decides what nature looks like? And in whose image has it been imagined?

The term queer theory emerged in the 1980s. Writers such as **Gloria Anzaldúa**, whose work bridged embodiment, land, and identity, laid crucial groundwork, especially in understanding borders, hybridity, and non-binary existence as both political and ecological realities. Queer ecology builds on these lineages, **refusing the separation of bodies from landscapes.**

Examples from the aquatic realms: Jellyfish often exist beyond fixed sexes, clownfish can change sex in response to their social group and seahorses subvert reproductive norms. These examples are not exceptions, they are patterns.



Gloria Anzaldúa

From a biological perspective, the natural world is profoundly non-binary.

Around 90% of flowering plants (angiosperms) are hermaphroditic, meaning a single flower contains both reproductive structures:

- Stamens (which produce pollen)
- Pistils or carpels (which receive pollen and produce seeds)

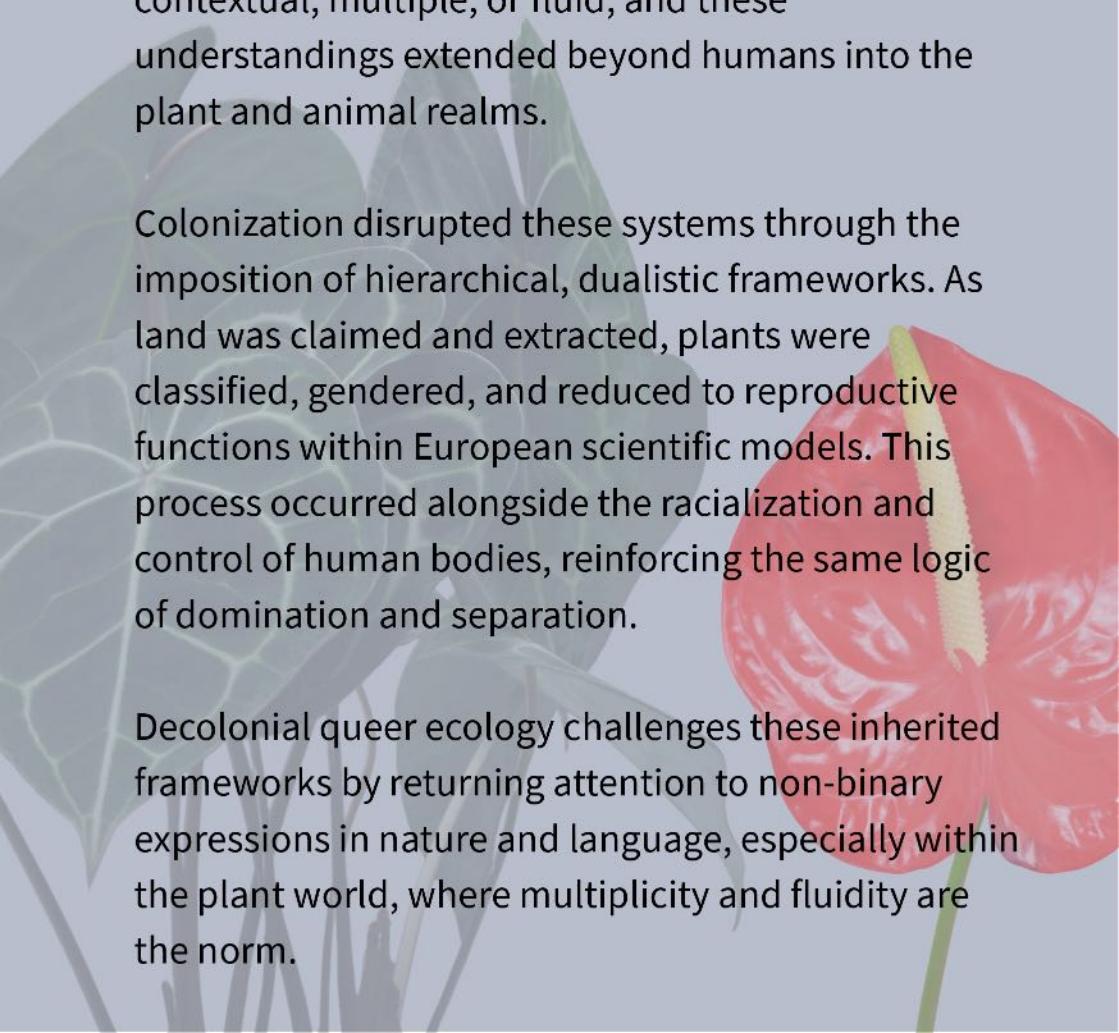
Plants like orchids, roses, lilies, and tomatoes do not conform to a male/female split. Some plants change reproductive strategies over time. Others reproduce without fertilization at all. Many resist categorization entirely.



At the same time, queer ecology remains cautious. Historically, marginalized humans have been dehumanized through forced comparison to animals or “nature.” Decolonial queer ecology does not equal and compare humans and animals.

Background

Decolonial queer ecology begins by recognizing that many pre-colonial knowledge systems understood life as relational rather than binary. Across cultures, language, cosmology, and ecological knowledge did not rigidly divide the world into male/female, human/nature, or mind/body. Gender was often contextual, multiple, or fluid, and these understandings extended beyond humans into the plant and animal realms.



Colonization disrupted these systems through the imposition of hierarchical, dualistic frameworks. As land was claimed and extracted, plants were classified, gendered, and reduced to reproductive functions within European scientific models. This process occurred alongside the racialization and control of human bodies, reinforcing the same logic of domination and separation.

Decolonial queer ecology challenges these inherited frameworks by returning attention to non-binary expressions in nature and language, especially within the plant world, where multiplicity and fluidity are the norm.

Deep Roots

Roots teach us about time. They grow in darkness, underground, unseen. Their labor is slow, essential, and often unrecognized.

Colonial systems privilege urgency. They reward visibility and speed. But ecological time moves differently. Deep roots do not respond to deadlines. They respond to seasons, pressure, and availability.

To work with deep roots is to:

- Honor cycles rather than linear progress
- Accept pauses as generative
- Trust what is growing beyond sight



You may not see immediate results from embodied practices, collective care, or decolonial dreaming. That does not mean nothing is happening. Much of the most important work occurs beneath the surface.

Ask:
What am I cultivating that will not bloom for me alone?

Practice

These practices are not prescriptions. They are invitations. Use what feels supportive.

1. Rooting

Sit comfortably. Imagine roots extending below you finding their way through layers of soil. Roots don't rush. Ask: What nourishes me right now?

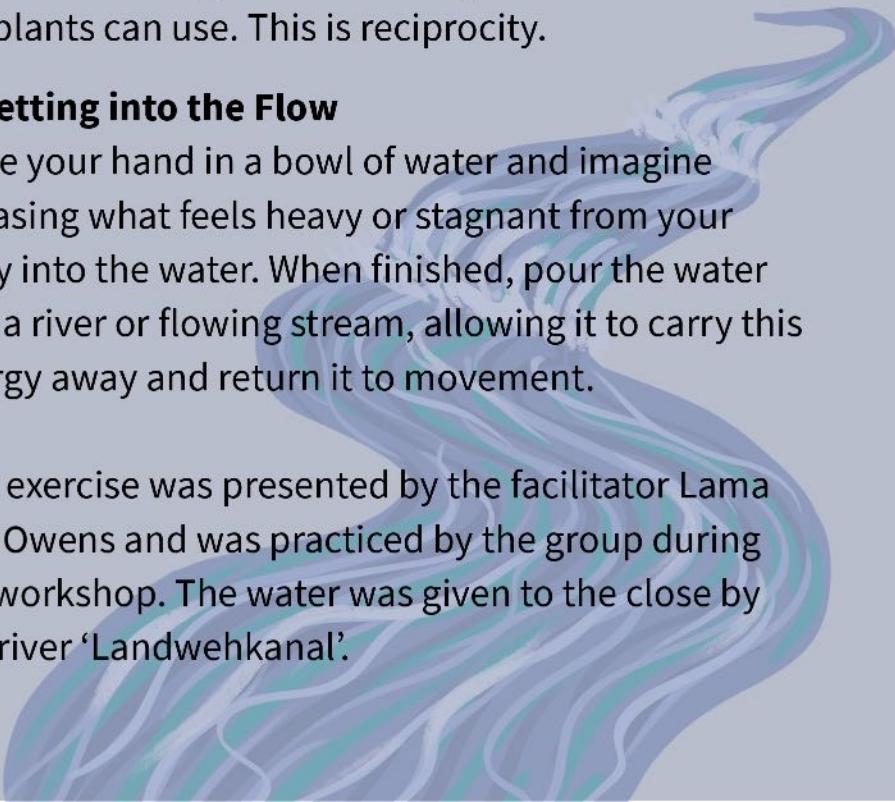
2. Breath as Exchange

Inhale: receiving what the world offers, knowing the oxygen comes from plants

Exhale: returning what is no longer needed and what the plants can use. This is reciprocity.

3. Getting into the Flow

Place your hand in a bowl of water and imagine releasing what feels heavy or stagnant from your body into the water. When finished, pour the water into a river or flowing stream, allowing it to carry this energy away and return it to movement.



This exercise was presented by the facilitator Lama Rod Owens and was practiced by the group during the workshop. The water was given to the close by city river 'Landwehkanal'.

Resources

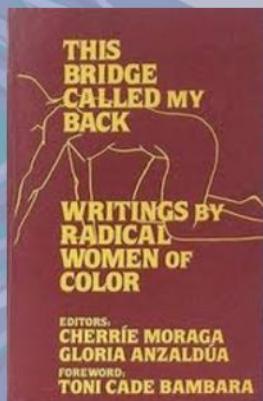
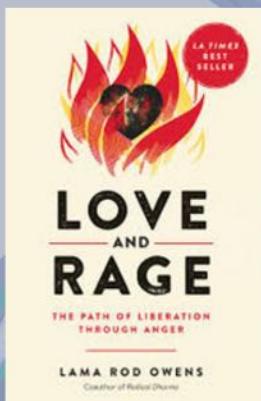
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