


BOOK REVIEW ESSAY/COMPTE RENDU CRITIQUE

## Review of Sarah Marie Wiebe's *Hot Mess: Mothering Through a Code Red Climate Emergency*

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In *Hot Mess: Mothering Through a Code Red Climate Emergency*, Sarah Marie Wiebe delves into the important but often overlooked intersection of motherhood and the ongoing climate emergency. The book offers a thoughtful exploration of how new mothers experience the climate crisis and emphasizes the necessity of centring care in the discourse on environmental justice. Wiebe's main argument revolves around the need for pushing past individualism to truly centre care and community at the heart of climate crisis mitigation efforts. She draws from her own experiences as a new mother, as well as the experiences of other communities in Hawaii and rural settings across Canada, to illustrate the tangible impacts of climate change on maternal health and community well-being.

Wiebe's poignant reflection on the 2021 heat dome in British Columbia highlights how climate emergencies are deeply felt at both the personal and community level. As Wiebe writes, “the heat dome prompts critical reflection about the gradients of life between these extremes, about how people came together to care for one another and survive this highly consequential event for community and planetary health” (p. 7). Wiebe's argument is highly persuasive, bolstered by clear, relatable examples and a strong narrative voice. Her reflections on the “fragile days of motherhood” (p. 8) and the deeply personal nature of climate change highlight the intimate connection between individual experiences and broader environmental issues. *Hot Mess* incorporates discourse on ecofeminist and decolonial thought, environmental justice, Indigenous ways of knowing and anti-capitalist ideas to produce a book that challenges existing understandings of the climate emergency and couples that with the warmth and humanity of her personal experiences.

One of the key strengths of *Hot Mess* is its narrative structure, which seamlessly blends personal anecdotes with academic analysis, drawing readers into the urgent need to care about these issues. This book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in environmental justice, eco-feminism or the experiences of motherhood in the age of the climate emergency. The book is efficiently organized into chapters corresponding to different emergency codes—red, orange, pink, blue, green,

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black and grey—each reflecting a different aspect of the climate crisis and its impact on community and motherhood. Wiebe's work makes a significant contribution to ongoing dialogues of climate change, eco-feminism and the politics of care. Her discussions on the gendered impacts of climate change are particularly illuminating and reinforce the need for integrating care into policy and community planning.

While the personal narrative structure of the book is compelling, it also introduces some limitations in the range of perspectives represented. The chapters primarily reflect Wiebe's own experiences as a mother or her knowledge and experience working in a specific location, which, although powerful, could be broadened by further incorporating the voices of mothers from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels and geographic regions. Such inclusivity would enrich the book's arguments by providing a more comprehensive view of how climate change affects motherhood across different contexts. In addition, *Hot Mess* offers a wealth of insights, but it also reveals gaps that invite further research. Exploring the experiences of mothers raising children at different stages of life, for example, could showcase additional challenges posed by the climate crisis. Wiebe's personal account thus serves as a strong foundation, setting the stage for future studies on the intersection of climate change and motherhood.

*Hot Mess* is a timely addition to the literature and speaks firmly and truthfully about the lived experiences of those facing climate change impacts in Canada. With recurring forest fires continuing to blaze, communities burning to the ground, forced relocation, smoke-filled skies and temperatures well above the yearly average, Canadians are coming face-to-face with the new normal of what summer in Canada entails. Wiebe's diaristic and analytical account serves as a much-needed reminder of the real and present impacts of climate change. Wiebe makes it clear that the climate crisis is not a threat relegated to the far-off future but rather, it is happening now, and it is affecting all of us. Fortunately, *Hot Mess* does not invoke a sense of fear or panic but instead inspires readers with the desire to care about our collective future, to care about the planet, and ultimately, to care about one another.