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Here Are The Women (2017): Lucille Chute (/index.php/en/actions/here-are-the-women/525-here-are-the-women-2017-lucille-chute)



by *Sulueti Waqa*



“I have seen how the tides are becoming higher, reaching out further inland, increase in coastal erosions and has gotten worse during the past 10 years from my own personal experiences,” reflected Lucille Chute on International Women’s Day.

Speaking at the Women in Fisheries Forum, the femLINKpacific Programme Assistant and Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality Management Collective member spoke boldly as to the threat of climate change on women who depend on the ocean to support their families and communities

“As a young woman who for 17 years goes fishing regularly with my father, I have also noticed clear changes with the rising sea level,” she continued. “Our marine life is dying away economic resources disappearing and damaged farms impact women’s safety with dignity, human security and development.”

A strong advocate for climate justice as well as women’s leadership, Chute was once a reserved and shy young woman

before affirming her voice after becoming a producer and broadcaster through the ‘Generation Next’ project in 2010.

"I have learnt and appreciate my own personal growth and achievement, knowledge and empowerment through my work experience with community media at femLINKpacific," she outlined. "What I like about the work that I'm doing is that I get to meet a lot of women and hear their stories, what they go through, it also helps me... in how I am growing, how I see things."

Like most young women in the organisation, it enables her to learn from older women.

"Through listening to women, communicating their stories, reading and researching policy documents and policy briefs of women, producing and documenting stories with women, for women, peace and security to enhance conflict prevention and peacebuilding," Chute continued. "Another (thing I enjoy) is the radio."

"Being able to share what you go through, getting the women to speak... you can see them more vocal now. So, that... that part is what I really like the most. When they come out and they start sharing - to see the changes in them."

She was brought up at the Coastal of Nakula Estate near the village and in the district of Tawake, province of Cakaudrove in Vanua Levu – and, like the remarks on International Women's Day, Chute draws deeply on her experiences as a rural young woman.

"Because we are going through climate change, the disasters are happening frequently now and a lot more larger than it is," she shared. "Women's Weather Watch help us especially at rural areas where we hardly get radio and then we are on the other side, at the second island, so most of our communication is cut off from Viti Levu."

"Personally, I appreciate the Women's Weather Watch first of all as a young woman growing up in Labasa and have experienced flooding and cyclones, it gives me a sense of being affirmed and solidarity in times of possible disaster."

For Chute, affirmation and solidarity is critical as a feminist as LBT activist.

"We need to continue to build on the existing women's movement," she stressed. "To be more inclusive, open minded in our diversities using our strengths and staying focused on women's priorities to build a stronger women's movement."

This is why she feels having a platform, namely the community radio network, enables intersectional and important discussions in a safe space.

"Women are able to speak wherever they are, from the comfort of their homes, on the mat or the community hall and with the availability of ICT their voices are reaching out wide and far across the globe," Chute explained, noting that it is often not easy to find a voice as a woman. "In Fiji, for example, some cultural systems and structures should be challenged to enable and improve women's participation."

"This hierarchy structure is still a challenge especially in rural villages. (So, having) good governance is being able promote, to have full participation, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive decision making."