

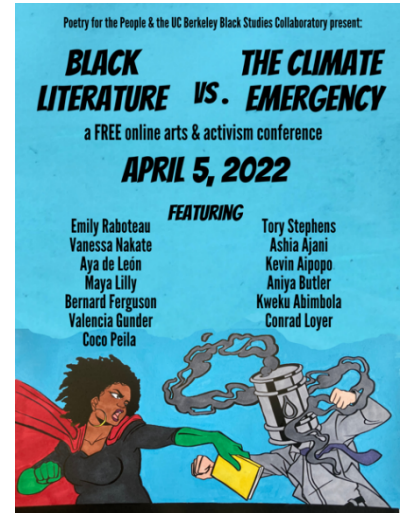
For immediate release

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**Words as Weapons: Black Literature vs. The Climate Emergency
a free online conference via UC Berkeley on April 5, 2022**

March 15, 2022: **Black Literature vs. The Climate Emergency** is a one-day, virtual conference celebrating the power of Afro-Diasporic fiction, non-fiction and poetry at the forefront of addressing the climate emergency by featuring contemporary Black authors from the US, Africa and throughout the African Diaspora whose work directly addresses these issues. Streamed via YouTube on **Tuesday, April 5th**, from **12PM-6PM Pacific Time/3PM-9PM Eastern Time**, the event invites an escalation of literary efforts to document and imagine a successful movement for climate justice, as well as encouraging the engagement of Black communities.

Although the African continent and Black communities throughout the world are often hit “first and worst” by the climate crisis, Black leaders and authors are often sidelined in public dialogue about strategies and solutions. Black authors have a rich tradition of writing about nature, environmental justice, and more recently, the climate crisis. The authors participating in **Black Literature vs. The Climate Emergency** are building a collective narrative that Black people are needed to win this fight. **The conference is free and open to everyone.**



Since 2006, Aya de Leon has directed the Poetry for the People program in the African Diaspora Studies department, teaching creative writing at UC Berkeley and is the conference’s Creative Director. According to de Leon, “in a literary landscape dominated by bad news and fiction dystopias, I decided to organize this conference to change the narrative. Scientists are absolutely clear that we DO have time to avert the worst of climate disaster. But truly sustainable solutions at scale will require dismantling an extractive economic system that sacrifices Black people and frontline communities to the climate crisis. We need new stories to build the movement that can shift our global priorities to meeting human needs—stories that put people of color in the center. In facing humanity’s greatest threat, we owe it to ourselves to tell stories about winning, that create a path to a habitable planet.”



(Featured authors, clockwise from upper left: Emily Raboteau, Ashia Ajani, Vanessa Nakate, Maya Lilly, Kevin Aipopo, Aniya Butler, Conrad Loyer, Bernard Ferguson, Valencia Gunder, Coco Peila, Kweku Abimbola, Aya de Leon, and Tory Stephens).

For interview requests, review copies, or other publicity-related queries, please contact:
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Black Literature vs. The Climate Emergency will feature the following authors:

- **Aya de Leon**, conference creative director, UC Berkeley faculty, climate organizer with the Movement for Black Lives' Black Hive, and author of award-winning climate novels including the "Justice Hustlers" series
- **Emily Raboteau**, one of the nation's leading African American literary voices on the climate crisis and author of the upcoming book *Caution: Lessons for Survival*
- **Vanessa Nakate**, Ugandan climate justice activist and author of *A Bigger Picture*. She fought back after the Associated Press erased her and all African activism in their international climate reporting.
- **Maya Lilly**, film & tv producer (*The Big Fix*, *Generation Wealth*, *The Fifth Sacred Thing*) climate activist
- **Bernard Ferguson**, Bahamian poet, essayist, and author of upcoming book *The Climate Sirens*
- **Valencia Gunder**, National Organizing lead of the Black Hive at the Movement for Black Lives
- **Tory Stephens**, Creative Manager of *Imagine 2200*, the climate-fiction initiative from Grist Magazine's *Fix Solution Labs* website
- **Coco Peila**, Hip Hop & Alt-R&B/Soul performing and recording artist and Cultural Organizer
- **Kweku Abimbola**, poet and author of upcoming book *Birth Elegies*
- **Ashia Ajani**, environmental justice educator and co-poetry editor of *The Hopper Literary Magazine*
- **Kevin Aipopo**, community advocate, storyteller, and student leader
- **Aniya Butler**, 15-year-old poet with the Bay Area's *Youth Vs. Apocalypse* climate activism group
- **Conrad Loyer**, author of short-stories about magic on the margins and queer, Black adventure

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvb25Kp-YVyCGsdiyflpQaw/live>

Conference web page: <https://www.ayadeleon.com/BLvCE>

Black Literature vs. The Climate Emergency is an arts and activism conference to activate Black authors and communities to tell new stories about winning the global fight for climate justice. This conference is made possible by a grant from the UC Berkeley Black Studies Collaboratory via the Mellon Foundation, as well as the UC Berkeley Creative Discovery Grant program and individual donations.