

These working materials are part of the toolkit

# Climate beyond Classism

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transformative educational resources  
on classism in the context of the  
environmental and climate crisis

## Our Anger is political

Exploring Anger and Hate in the Face of Classism

**What:** Notes for the Input

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# Political Emotions, Anger and Hate

## Political emotions

- Emotions are often described as private or individual feelings. However, they are also shaped by social and political structures such as class, race, gender, and power relations.
- Emotions are not neutral. They reflect social hierarchies and political conditions.
- Some emotions are socially accepted while others are stigmatized or punished. This often depends on who expresses them.

## Emotional norms and power

- Emotional expectations reflect power relations in society.
- Many institutions expect people to perform emotional control and politeness, especially in workplaces, schools, or welfare systems.
- This “emotional discipline” is closely connected to capitalist ideals such as productivity, professionalism, and civility.
- People from marginalized backgrounds are often expected to stay calm, grateful, and respectful rather than angry.

## Who is allowed to express anger or hate?

- Different social groups are treated differently when they express strong emotions.
- Public anger expressed by politicians, CEOs, or media figures is often seen as legitimate or powerful.
- Similar emotions expressed by migrants, working-class people, or marginalized groups are often framed as dangerous or irrational.

## Reflection question for participants:

- What happens when a migrant single mother expresses anger or hate?
- How is a working-class teenager perceived when they express rage?

## The Politics of hate

- Hate is often described as the opposite of love, but it can also be understood as a refusal of harmful norms and systems.
- Liberal political discourse often rejects hate because it prioritizes politeness and civility rather than confronting structural injustice.
- As a result, hate is often portrayed as something abnormal, monstrous, or irrational rather than something that has social and political causes.

- Marginalized people expressing hate can disrupt expectations of respectability and emotional control.

### Historical and political context

- Hate has historically been projected onto colonized and racialized people.
- Colonial thinkers sometimes described colonized populations as “consumed by hate” or incapable of rationality. This narrative helped justify colonial domination and violence.
- In contemporary politics, complex conflicts, f.e. in Palestine, are sometimes explained as the result of “ancient hatred.” This framing hides structural causes such as colonial history, occupation, or systemic inequality.

### Classism and emotional discipline

- Classism often shapes how people are expected to regulate their emotions.
- Working-class people are frequently portrayed as emotional, uncivilized, or irrational.
- Institutions such as schools, welfare offices, and workplaces reward emotional control and discourage open expressions of anger.
- Because of these expectations, many people internalize emotional discipline and begin to censor themselves.

### Anger and hate in political struggles

- Anger and hate can be responses to injustice, oppression, and exclusion.
- These emotions can express refusal and resistance against systems such as colonialism, capitalism, fascism, or racism.
- Hate in this context does not mean random hostility toward people. It can mean rejecting harmful systems and structures.

### Important distinction:

- Anger often focuses on specific actions or situations and may demand reform.
- Hate can go deeper and question entire systems that produce injustice.

### Example:

- “I’m angry about what happened.”
- “I hate capitalism because the system itself produces exploitation.”

## Sources and References:

The reflections on anger, hate, and political emotions in this workshop draw on ideas from several feminist, anti-racist, and critical theory authors who have explored the political role of emotions in struggles against oppression.

- **Audre Lorde** (1977). *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action*. Lorde emphasizes the importance of speaking out against oppression and warns that silence does not protect those who are marginalized.
- **bell hooks** (1995). *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*. hooks explores rage as a political response to racism and injustice and argues that anger can be a necessary force for confronting systems of domination and creating social change.
- **Şeyda Kurt** (2023). *Hass: Von der Macht eines widerständigen Gefühls*. Kurt examines hate as a socially and politically meaningful emotion. She argues that hate expressed by marginalized people can challenge dominant norms of respectability and expose structural injustices that are often ignored.