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Diversifying Power: Why We Need Antiracist, Feminist Leadership on Climate and Energy

Abstract: The climate crisis is a crisis of leadership. For too long too many leaders have prioritized corporate profits over the public good, exacerbating climate vulnerabilities while reinforcing economic and racial injustice. Transformation to a just, sustainable renewable-based society requires leaders who connect social justice and antiracist, feminist principles to climate and energy. During the Trump era, connections among white supremacy; environmental destruction; and fossil fuel dependence have become more conspicuous. The inadequate and ineffective male-dominated framing of climate change as a narrow, isolated, discrete problem to be “solved” by technical solutions has inhibited investments in social change and social innovations. But inspiring leaders who are connecting climate and energy with job creation and economic justice, health and nutrition, housing and transportation, are advancing exciting transformative change. Bold diverse leaders are resisting the “the polluter elite” to restructure society by catalyzing a shift to a just, sustainable, regenerative, and healthy future.

Bio: **Jennie C. Stephens**, PhD, is the Director of the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs and the Dean's Professor of Sustainability Science & Policy at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. She is also the Director for Strategic Research Collaborations at Northeastern University's Global Resilience Institute, and is affiliated with the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, the department of Civil & Environmental Engineering and the department of Cultures, Societies & Global Studies.

Her research, teaching, and community engagement focus on integrating social justice, feminist, and anti-racist perspectives into climate and energy resilience, social and political aspects of the renewable energy transition, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, energy democracy, gender in energy and climate, and climate and energy justice. Her unique transdisciplinary approach integrates innovations in social science and public policy with science and engineering to promote social justice, reduce inequalities and redistribute power (electric power, economic power and political power). In her forthcoming book, **Diversifying Power: Why We Need Antiracist, Feminist Leadership on Climate and Energy** to be published by Island Press in 2020, she argues that effectively addressing climate change requires diversifying leadership, redistributing wealth and power, and moving beyond mainstream male-dominated technocratic solutions to climate change. Throughout her career she has explored institutional and cultural innovation in the energy sector, including gender diversity, energy democracy, and technological optimism as well as the “usability” of climate science in climate resilience efforts.

Professor Stephens was a 2015-2016 Leopold Leadership fellow, and her book [“Smart Grid \(R\)Evolution: Electric Power Struggles”](#) (Cambridge University Press, 2015) explores social and cultural debates about energy system change (co-authored with Wilson & Peterson). Before coming to Northeastern, Professor Stephens was on the faculty at the University of Vermont (2014-2016) and Clark University (2005-2014). She did post-doctoral research at Harvard’s Kennedy School and she has taught courses at Tufts, Boston University, and MIT. She earned her PhD at the California Institute of Technology in Environmental Science & Engineering and her BA at Harvard University in Environmental Science and Policy.