

The Portrayal of African Woman’s Struggle Reflected in the Novel “How Beautiful We Were” By Imbolo Mbue (2021)

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ABSTRACT

Ecofeminism is an understanding of the relationship between women and the universe that approaches issues of environmental degradation and social injustice from the premise that how we treat nature and how we treat each other are inseparable. This research discusses the character of a woman in the novel How Beautiful We Were which aims to find out the depiction of the struggle of African women in protecting their environment. This research uses the theory of ecofeminism from Greta Gaard and Murphy with descriptive qualitative research methods and note-taking as an instrument. This research was conducted to add and give awareness to readers about the importance of preserving and protecting the environment around us. The results found in this novel that the female character named Thula fulfills the three aspects of women's struggle in the theory of ecofeminism. The researcher concluded that in this novel, the most visible struggle of women leads to the community, so that the movement carried out by the main character is able to realize that it is important to fight for and protect our nature from the threat of companies that come to destroy it.

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1. Introduction

The environment and humans are intrinsically linked and mutually dependent, forming a symbiotic relationship. The environment provides essential resources for human survival, such as food, water, and shelter, which are fundamental for sustaining life. In turn, humans play a crucial role in maintaining and protecting the environment to ensure its sustainability (Sari et al., 2019; Dalyan et al., 2024). However, human activities can also significantly impact the environment, often leading to degradation and pollution. This delicate balance highlights the need for responsible stewardship and sustainable practices to preserve the natural world for future generations.

Human interaction with the environment is evident in various practices and behaviors aimed at conservation and sustainability. Among these, the role of women has been recognized as particularly significant. Women often engage in activities that directly affect environmental health, such as managing household resources, farming, and gathering food (Aftab & Veneziani, 2024; Rahman et al., 2019; Junaid et al., 2023). They are frequently seen as primary caregivers and nurturers of both their families and the environment. This dual role underscores the importance of empowering women in environmental decision-making processes and recognizing their contributions to ecological preservation.

Taylor-Wiseman (2019) emphasizes the critical position of indigenous and African-descended women in environmental and social discourses. These women have historically been at the forefront of efforts to protect and sustain their natural surroundings, drawing from deep-rooted cultural knowledge and practices. Their involvement is not just limited to physical labor but extends to intellectual and strategic contributions in environmental conservation. This highlights the intersection of gender, race, and environmentalism, acknowledging that marginalized groups often bear the brunt of environmental degradation while also leading the charge in innovative conservation efforts (Alharbi, 2022; Rahim et al., 2024; Youngsun et al., 2024).

In the African context, the role of women in environmental stewardship is particularly pronounced. African women often serve as custodians of biodiversity, overseeing the preservation of diverse ecosystems, water resources, and agricultural land. They engage in practices that promote sustainability and resilience, such as agroforestry, soil

conservation, and water management. Despite their significant contributions, these women frequently face systemic barriers that limit their ability to fully participate in environmental governance. This includes a lack of access to resources, education, and decision-making platforms.

The recognition of women's pivotal role in environmental conservation calls for greater support and inclusion in environmental policies and programs. It is essential to create opportunities that enable women to leverage their knowledge and skills in safeguarding the environment. This involves addressing gender inequalities, providing education and training, and ensuring that women's voices are heard in policy-making arenas. By doing so, we can harness the full potential of women's contributions to environmental sustainability, ensuring a healthier planet for all.

Moreover, this researcher discovered the issue addressed in this research is how the portrayal of the struggle of an African woman in preserving their environment reflected in the novel.

1.1. Feminism

The etymological meaning of feminism comes from the Latin word *femina* and when translated into English as feminine, it means female or having female characteristics. Feminism is a category of political movements, social movements, and ideologies that share the goal of defining, establishing, and achieving economic, political, social equality and personal between men and women (Yusuf & Susilo, 2020). Feminism focuses on analyzing gender inequality and issues related to equality in society. It can also be defined as women's struggle for rights and equality in society.

There are several subgroups of feminism, each with its own viewpoints on important social and political concerns. Here are some types of feminism including liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism, psychoanalytic and gender feminism, existentialist feminism, postmodern feminism, multicultural and global feminism, and ecofeminism (Tong, 2014).

1.2. Ecocriticism

The term ecocriticism comes from the English language from the formation of the words ecology and criticism. Ecocriticism in literature is a critical approach to literature that focuses on environmental and ecological issues. Ecocriticism also addresses how literary works reflect and shape society's view of nature and how humans and the environment are interconnected. According to Garrad (2004), ecocriticism explores how we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and the environment in all areas of cultural production.

The multidisciplinary study of the relationship between literature and the environment is known as ecocriticism. The contributions of naturalists, writers, literary critics, anthropologists, and historians are used to investigate the contrasts between nature and its cultural creation (Nahdhiyah et al., 2023; Mathieu, 2022). Ecocriticism began in the 1960s, with the birth of the environmental movement and the publishing of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" in 1962, but it really took off in the 1980s. There have previously been two waves of ecocriticism, one in the 1980s and one in the 1990s.

The word ecofeminism, there will be two roots that can be highlighted, because the word ecofeminism itself is taken from two words namely ecocriticism and feminism. Although feminism and ecocriticism are two different critical theoretical perspectives in literary studies, they can complement each other in literary and cultural studies. A feminist ecocritical perspective traces the branches of the environmental injustices of the death-dealing slow violence inherent in child slavery, workplace injuries, and economic injustice; down through the material facts of environmental toxins, through the human-animal studies' recognition of multiple species' injuries and deaths, down to the root of multiple and linked toxic narratives celebrating hyper separation and dominance (Garrad et al., 2013, pp. 272–273).

Feminism focuses on analyzing gender inequality and issues related to equality in society. It can also be defined as women's struggle for rights and equality in society (Widanti, 2023). Furthermore, Ecocriticism in literature is a critical approach to literature that focuses on environmental and ecological issues. Ecocriticism also addresses how literary works reflect and shape society's view of nature and how humans and the environment are interconnected.

1.3. African Context in Ecology

The African context recognizes the complex links between the environment and human life in Africa, as well as the important role played by women in maintaining nature and the environment. African women have a huge capacity in showing how nature is cared for and preserved. In line with the opinion of Rebekah Taylor-Wiseman (In Vakocho, 2023)

which argues that women of indigenous and African descent have been at the forefront of speculative and thoughtful discourses on race, women and the natural environment, and argues that the ideas of her creative and ideological texts, as well as her activism, make a critical contribution to the thinking of minds. African women are often the guardians of biodiversity and protected areas, and play an important role in protecting land and water. Although women play an important role in protecting the environment, they are often treated as objects and do not have full access to natural resources.

Based on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Africa has significant environmental concerns such as land degradation, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and acute susceptibility to climate change. Africa is rich in natural resources, ranging from agricultural land, water, oil, natural gas, minerals, forests and wildlife. This continent has most of the world's natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable. Consequently, the importance of women's empowerment in the African environment is widely recognized.

Women have extensive knowledge of the environment, which we thought we could incorporate into our teaching to contribute to environmental education, and ancient African belief systems are relevant to how many African societies today understand and conceptualize ecosystems, environmental change, and conservation (Wane & Chandler, 2002). Involving women in decision-making about natural resource management, giving them access to education, and encouraging their participation in sustainable development projects can increase the resilience of nature, strengthen communities and improve well-being.

2. Methodology

2.1. Types of Research

In this research, a descriptive qualitative research method was used to discover the forms of African women's struggles depicted in the novel "How Beautiful We Were. The results of qualitative research are primarily presented in words, most commonly by interviewing people or observing settings and analyzing the data by reviewing interview transcripts or notes (Patten & Newhart, 2018).

2.2. Technique of data

In collecting the data, researchers focused on the portrayal of African women in the novel as a form of women struggle for the environment in which they live. In collecting data, researchers used the theory of ecofeminism proposed by Garrard and Murphy (1998) about Ecofeminism is a practical movement towards social change that begins with women's struggle to defend themselves, their families, and their communities.

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the theory of ecofeminism as proposed by Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy, ecofeminism is a practical movement aimed at social change, rooted in women's struggles to protect themselves, their families, and their communities. This concept is vividly illustrated in the novel "How Beautiful We Were," where women fight to safeguard their village from the environmental devastation caused by the oil company Pexton. The novel highlights the women's efforts to maintain their community's health and wellbeing in the face of corporate pollution. In presenting this data, researchers use the abbreviation HBWW, which stands for the title of the novel, followed by the year of publication and the page number. According to Gaard and Murphy's theory (1998), women's ecofeminist struggles can be categorized into three areas: defending themselves, defending their families, and defending their community. This framework helps in analyzing the collected data, which supports the critical role women play in ecofeminist movements by highlighting their multifaceted efforts to protect their environment and society.

3.1. Women's Struggle to defend themselves

In this context, women's struggles can be seen in how they fight for their rights, improve their quality of life starting from increasing knowledge, fighting for women's rights and so on. In this novel, it is seen that one character named Thula is a woman whose body grows up in an area that has a polluted environment due to the presence of oil companies. The ecological disaster that befell the Kosawa area due to the presence of an American oil company named Pexton in their rural area.

The first form of Thula's struggle for herself is seen when she decides to study in America after the age of seventeen.

Data 1

Have there been any births since I left? Marriages? My welcome in this place has been good, and while I won't stay here a day longer than I need to, I'm glad I'm here now. **Every day I learn new things. I don't know how, but I'm convinced this knowledge I'm acquiring will do something for our people.**

I'll always be one of us, Thula (HBWW,2021,P.192)

The above quote illustrates a letter from Thula to his friend, expressing his frustration over the lack of quality education in their village, Kosawa. Thula describes his decision to leave for America to gain the education he never received at home. His aim was to enhance his knowledge and value, ensuring he would not be underestimated by state officials who exploit their power for personal gain. Additionally, the narrative highlights another struggle, showcasing efforts to stop soldiers from treating women indecently, further emphasizing the community's fight for dignity and respect.

Data 2

When the newspaperman left, Thula wept while describing to us the face of a raped woman she'd visited, how it was still swollen from the punches she'd received, her eyes still shut. **Being raped was her worst fear, she confessed. "For the women's sake," she cried, "please, stop it. For the sake of your wives and daughters, I beg you to end it."**

We'd had the talk among ourselves already—for whom were we killing if our actions left our children motherless, our sisters childless, our parents daughterless? We hated our enemies even more for taking away from us this chance at blood reparations, but we knew we had to pause. We vowed to resume with new and better tactics (HBWW, 2021, P. 288)

In the quote above, the situation where a Thula visit in the surrounding area who accidentally saw a weak female victim due to the treatment of soldiers. The women here look injured and frightened as a result of being raped and beaten by soldiers. Thula was angry at the soldiers' treatment that resulted in the women being injured, their faces swollen from the soldiers who raped them.

3.2. Women's Struggle to defend the family

The family context includes support for women's role as equal partners in family decision-making, as well as education to promote equal roles between family members. Ecofeminist women fight to protect their families' health from the effects of pollution and environmental damage caused by corporations.

Illustrated in one of the chapters, it tells the view of a grandmother named Yaya. This chapter shows Thula's high determination, seen in the view of Yaya, Thula's grandmother, who tells the story of the day before Thula left for America to do the study.

Data 3

In the evening, Sahel brought the dining table from the parlor into my room and we all ate our dinner from the same bowls. Juba slept on the bed with me that night, and Sahel and Thula slept on a mat across from us. When the bus arrived the next afternoon, before leaving with Sahel and Juba for the airport, Thula came and knelt by my bed. She said, **"Yaya, when I come back I'll do everything to make sure Kosawa is back to the way it was in your childhood."**

My poor, sweet child.

I wanted to tell her, no, please, don't worry about Kosawa, we have to let Kosawa go. But I could see in her eyes that she wouldn't let it go. **Determination is her name; never have I seen her resolve broken.** (HBWW, 2021, P. 216-217)

In the quote above, the struggle to defend his family is illustrated through Thula's determination to restore Kosawa to the pristine condition of his grandmother's childhood, free from environmental pollution. Thula is deeply moved by the resignation of his grandmother's descendants to the deteriorating conditions of their village, which strengthens his resolve to make a change. Yaya, observing Thula, recognizes that his determination remains unbroken for the sake of their village. In another situation, Thula conceals the challenges he faces while fighting for his village to

avoid worrying his family. However, one of the characters, Sweet, reveals Thula's struggles to his grandmother, highlighting the deep concern and interconnectedness within the community.

Data 4

After clearing his throat, he told us that the young man had written to say that he was worried about Thula—**she wasn't eating well, she wasn't sleeping well, she was spending too much time helping organize fights against governments and corporations and not enough time thinking about her own well-being.**

The young man said Thula had recently traveled with some friends to another area of the country to be part of a human wall meant to prevent government workers from throwing poor people out of their homes and taking their land; the poor people and their supporters believed the money the government was offering for the land wasn't enough. Some days, he said, Thula did not go to class, instead spending long hours in one of the city's squares, chanting words of outrage. The young man said he admired Thula for what she was doing, there was nothing wrong with it, he had done some of it himself at Thula's age; he was actually the one who introduced Thula to the organizers of some protests. The problem was that Thula did not seem to have a sense of balance. She appeared to have forgotten that she came to America to go to school, not to involve herself in matters that might undermine her well-being. There were nights when she and her friends stayed out in the cold protesting. **She'd gotten sick once; right after she got well, she went back to doing it, to show her anger about the fact that a small group of people in the country had too much money while millions of families barely had enough food to eat and it just wasn't right. Once, the newspaperman said, Thula had spent a night in jail for her actions; he was the one who went to the jail and paid for her release.** (HBWW, 2021. P. 227-228)

The quote above highlights Thula's deep care for his family, as he goes to great lengths to shield them from worry about his own well-being. Despite falling ill and forgoing meals due to his relentless efforts to resist the government and corporations in defense of the villagers' welfare, Thula keeps his struggles hidden. However, the character Sweet informs Yaya and Thula's mother about his condition, revealing the extent of his sacrifices and the profound impact of his dedication on his health. This act of communication underscores the community's concern and the strong bonds that tie them together.

3.3. Women's Struggle to defend the community/society

In this context, this includes supporting women's role as equal partners in family decision-making, as well as education to promote equal roles between family members. Ecofeminist women fight to protect the health of their families from the effects of pollution and environmental damage caused by corporations.

Seeing the helplessness of the community to fight back and just stand by and watch the treatment carried out by them. As a result of this treatment, the steps taken by some children who grew up to protect the village of Kosawa were an extraordinary determination, and had the intention to improve and protect their village from the threat of the company, as seen in the quotation in the novel.

Data 5

Their gratitude for the hills between us was evident, the separation of our suffering from their new serenity. But nothing Pexton did could compel the parents of the rest of us to leave Kosawa. Most huts in Kosawa remained full and boisterous, and young women from other Now that we were getting closer to manhood, we could have left of our own accord, we could have fled for a poison-free life, **but we were determined never to give up our land, not then or ever, and the Restoration Movement and Sonni reminded us of this, that it was our land, come rainy season or dry season, it would always be ours.** (HBWW, 2021, P.182)

From the quote above, it illustrates how children who grow up who could have left their village to protect themselves from the air pollution that occurs in the area where they live, but because they have the determination to

never leave the land where they live, because in their minds this land is ours not theirs who deprive us of the preservation of our land. They also created a recovery movement for their Kosawa village.

The replies to Thula's letters to his friends were not much more than stating that birth and death celebrations were still the same. Even the attempt to evict the Pexton company is still being made and the nonsense from the company is conveyed by his friend to Thula. Thula's follow-up letter to her friend shows how excited she is to be taking classes in America and hearing about some of the same problems in small and large countries. In his letter he says

Data 6

I'd long thought that our problem was that we were weak, lack of knowledge our greatest incapacity. My father, my uncle, all those who stood up for Kosawa and lost their lives, I thought they failed because they were unschooled in the ways of the world. **I promised myself after the massacre that I would acquire knowledge and turn it into a machete that would destroy all those who treat us like vermin. I badly wanted to grow up so that I could protect Kosawa and ensure that children of the future never suffer like we did. Knowledge, I believed, would give Kosawa power.** But these Americans, with their abundance of knowledge, how could they be powerless too? How is it that their government, which is supposed to be their servant, is acting as their master? From the books I read in our last years at Lokunja, I'd come to believe that if we could design a democratic government, just as is the case in America, our country would be a wonderful place to live in. But now that I live here I'm realizing that something far more complex is going on all over the world, something that binds us to these beset Americans and others like us in villages and town and cities in nations big and small. Whatever it is, we'll figure it all out, and nothing will be the same after we do. (HBWW, 2021, P. 195-196)

The quote above reveals Thula's determination to study in America, motivated by a desire to gain knowledge, particularly in leadership and government. He believes that the primary weakness of their community is a lack of knowledge, which leads to incompetence. Thula's resolve to educate himself abroad is driven by the conviction that knowledge is power, and by acquiring it, he can return stronger and more capable of addressing the challenges facing his village. This pursuit of education underscores his commitment to improving his community's prospects and achieving meaningful change.

Data 7

Yesterday my friends and I were discussing Maxim's story in my bedroom. There were six of us, and only one person agreed with me that destroying our enemy's property could lead to anything good. It's just not effective, was the consensus. I argued that we can't decide based on the notion of effectiveness—how can we know that a strategy won't prove itself worthwhile generations after being deemed a failure? **Our duty is to do what we can now. That is what Sonni and the elders are too blinded by fear to see. Waiting for the Restoration Movement to free us is safe but cowardly. I admit that the more I think about it, the more the idea of damaging someone else's property leaves me uneasy. But my father used to say we can't do only what we're at ease with, we must do what we ought to do.** (HBWW, 2021, P.200)

The quote above is a continuation of Thula's letter to his friends in Kosawa, emphasizing the urgency of immediate action. Thula asserts that their primary task now is to liberate Kosawa from the threat posed by the oil companies by taking proactive steps rather than waiting for a broader restoration movement. He encourages his friends to focus on what they can do right now to protect their village, highlighting the importance of local, immediate efforts in driving larger-scale change. This message reflects Thula's pragmatic approach and his determination to inspire his community to take control of their future.

Data 8

Yes, if we are to be conquered, let it not be because we never fought. **Our fathers, brothers, uncles, friends—what did they die for? They died so that we could live peacefully in Kosawa, and if not us, then at least the next generation. No one has**

the right to make us prisoners on our land. No one has the right to take from us that which the Spirit gave our ancestors. Across America today are pockets of people who were made prisoners on their land. The land of their ancestors was taken from them, and now they live at the edge of society, a plight worse than ours. At least we still walk the paths our ancestors walked, but who's to say that one day all of our land won't be taken from us like it happened here? **The ancestors of these trampled people in America fought hard and they lost, but what's most important is that they fought.** Much as the story of their defeat saddens me, it heartens me also, because I realize that, like them, we're not weak, a ferocious creature gave us its blood. The government and Pexton have left us with no choice but to do what we must in order to be heard. They speak to us in the language of destruction—let's speak it to them too, since it's what they understand. (HBWW, 2021, P. 200-201)

The continuation of Thula's letter emphasizes to the children of Kosawa the importance of fighting for their land, urging them not to dwell on the possibility of defeat but to take action as a generation committed to defending their home. In the following chapter, the narrative shifts to the perspectives of Thula's friends, who have taken more aggressive measures against the workers by blocking buses, setting fires, and even resorting to violence. This escalation of conflict concerns Thula, as it diverges from her strategic plans and threatens to undermine the broader goals of their resistance movement.

Data 9

It must have been the Sweet One who told Thula about the attacks and threats on the laborers, for we made no mention of it in our letters. Zealous as she was, **she was still a woman incapable of inflicting bodily harm, and we'd worried that our going after the laborers would cause tension between us. And, as certain as sunrise, it did. Every time she heard about it, she wrote asking us to stop, saying that was not the plan, the plan was to get their attention, let them know that we mattered and we were angry, the plan was never to kill—what were we thinking?** We assured her that we'd kill no one; we merely wanted to instill fear in the laborers, cause panic in Gardens, make them think we'd stop at nothing. She would not be convinced. What if we'd killed the laborer we'd badly beaten? she said. Blood on its hands was the last thing Kosawa needed. The laborers are not our enemies, she argued, Pexton is. In some letters she threatened to withdraw her financial support from us. And there were indeed months when the Sweet One brought us no envelopes from her. Then, just as we were about to start wondering if she had changed her mind and was no longer one of us, we received an envelope, along with pleas to remember that the laborers were fathers like us, men with families for whom they were making hard sacrifices. (HBWW, 2021, P. 258)

The quote above is Thula's response to his friend's treatment of the workers. According to him, it should not be done because the main purpose is to draw their attention that we are angry at his treatment not to kill the workers because his biggest enemy is Pexton not the workers.

3.4. Discussion

Based on the data found above, that the environment in which we live needs to be taken care of and safe for the sake of survival later. At the beginning of the story in this novel tells how an oil company called Pexton caused air and water pollution in the village of Kosawa. Deaths have even become frequent news in the village, both children, teenagers and even parents who died as a result of pollution from the oil company.

Environmental pollution occurs in the community's fields which are the income of local residents also suffered damage due to infertile soil, water becomes polluted and dirty due to oil spills. This caused the community to lose money because of the damage to their fields. Seeing this, the parents took steps to stop the company, five community representatives and youths, one of whom was Thula's father, went to the capital with the aim of getting help, but they disappeared without a trace. As a result, a hostage-taking was carried out against the representatives of the Pexton Company in order to threaten the company leader to dismiss the company but failed because no action was taken by the company.

One of the representatives pleaded for his release, suggesting he consult his nephew Austin who was a journalist for a newspaper in America. But after writing an article about Kosawa, he arrived in the village and heard that his uncle had died of illness. This led to the army coming to the Kosawa and a massacre. This incident was a turning point for the Kosawa, and was seen by his children, and increased his determination to replace his parents to fight for the preservation of their rural environment.

As the children grow older, they think of strategies to uphold their land rights and preserve their village environment because they are fed up with the behavior of company and government officials who only care about themselves. With great determination they will not leave the village where they were born, they will hold firm that this land is ours not the land of the company that arbitrarily destroys the environment where they live. They will also organize a movement to fight for a safe village.

The main character in this novel, Thula, is a girl whose father died defending their village for a decent life. From here the determination of the girl named Thula to fight for the preservation of their village. Thula, who is already seventeen years old, begins to continue her education in America to learn many new things that she did not get in her village. The purpose of learning and adding new knowledge is to make useful changes later in their village. He believes that we cannot do anything against the oil companies due to our lack of knowledge, which is the biggest cause of our problems. Studying knowledge, according to him, is our first step to overcoming a problem.

The struggle to learn new things in a foreign country makes him even more convinced that he can change the state of their place of residence from environmental pollution. The depiction of a struggle is seen in how his task now is to free Kosawa from the threat of oil companies by doing what he can do first rather than waiting for a movement that might result in a long time without any movement. Thula also sees how his father, uncles, relatives and even children died fighting for their village. So according to him, fight first for our land, don't think too much about defeat, at least we fight first as a generation to defend our land. In addition, his departure to study in America with the aim for his grandmother, mother, sister and the community that he will restore the state of Kosawa that is clean from environmental pollution and people can move with healthy air.

Thula has gained a lot of knowledge and learning related to leadership, the restoration movement and government science while in America. In addition, Thula has spent her time in America taking action against the government for the welfare of the little people by helping to enforce justice which resulted in Thula's unkempt condition so that she often experienced illness, did not eat, and was even once a prisoner just because of the resistance. However, we can see that she is not thinking about her own welfare and interests but the welfare of the small people and her village who are oppressed by the government.

Thula is determined to make a change and fight back, she has a very good heart where her intention is to make a change not to kill and hurt people. Thula was very angry with her friends who were fighting back by arresting workers, setting fires and even hitting workers at Pexton. According to him, this is not good, our plan is only to make Pexton aware of its actions and make changes and the workers are not at fault, the oil company itself is at fault. Thula's heart is very concerned with human values, we can fight but not to kill.

The village of Kosawa, which was still breathing poisoned air due to an oil spill by the Pexton oil company, not only affected the village of Kosawa but spread to other villages through pipelines. Seeing the worsening condition of his area Thula was determined to make a change by encouraging people to raise their spirits by taking to the streets to protest against the government and the company. However, his belief in the movement had to be done using proper planning. With the determination and struggle that the people will see Kosawa Village become a village that finds light from darkness because it is the only way to fight and survive for the sake of survival.

Thula's Retoration Movement traveled to villages to make a call to join her vision to save villages polluted by corporations. People thought of her as how could a woman be so bold as to say that she will lead this movement for the sake of their lives and the children's lives will be brighter and become a leader with her mission to liberate the country. This proves that no matter where you come from, your gender, if our determination is strong to change the world women can lead men to do this movement. this movement shows a vision for revolution that they will call the day of liberation. Thula managed to gather men and women from all over the cities and villages. Thula fought for this revolution that may seem impossible to carry out, but with determination and belief to change the world. It is our generation that can start this struggle for our land to fight and die for peace.

4. Conclusion

The researcher concluded that the struggle of women in maintaining and caring for the environment, as depicted through the character Thula in the novel "How Beautiful We Were," is revealed through her actions and the perspectives of other characters. This analysis is grounded in Greta Gaard's and Patrick Murphy's ecofeminist theory. Thula's role as a revolutionary hero fighting to stop the oil company from polluting her village is highlighted by various supporting characters' testimonies. Her character exemplifies the three facets of women's struggle: defending themselves, their families, and their community. Thula's journey begins in her teenage years, when she seeks education to enhance her leadership skills. Over time, she spearheads a revolutionary movement, organizing community demonstrations to demand the cessation of the oil company's operations and the restoration of their land.

The novel also portrays Thula's humanitarian approach, as she fights against the company without resorting to violence. She supports her family financially and even helps her friends who assist in the struggle to reclaim their environment. Thula's character demonstrates the close relationship between women and the environment, underscoring the importance of caring for and protecting nature to ensure a safe and clean living space. The data gathered reflects the significant impact of Thula's struggle on her community, emphasizing the critical role women play in environmental preservation and social justice. This narrative serves as a reminder of the need for collective action in safeguarding the environment for future generations.

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