

Dare to Change:

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP FOR
CLIMATE JUSTICE, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
AND A DEEP GREEN ECONOMY

By Kristen Zimmerman



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Movement Strategy Center
1611 Telegraph Ave., Suite 510
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: 510-444-0640
Fax: 510-251-9810
info@movementstrategy.org

Dare to Change:

**Environmental Justice Leadership for Climate Justice,
Sustainable Communities and a Deep Green Economy**

By Kristen Zimmerman, Movement Strategy Center

IN MEMORY OF

Luke Cole

1962 – 2009

Co-Founder and Director of Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment

Innovative and groundbreaking environmental attorney

Ally to environmental justice communities everywhere

Adventurous life-filled spirit

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FORWARD: The Post Copenhagen Moment

By Diana Pei Wu

I write this in January 2010. The earthquake and various aftershocks in Haiti/Ayiti have left hundreds of thousands of people in Port-au-Prince without access to clean water, food, basic shelter. While cruise liners still dock in some ports of call, the airport is overflowing with planes carrying food, medicines, and military service members that make their way to the city with excruciating slowness. Community members who work on issues of self-sufficiency are providing medical care, food, and shelter to the people in their neighborhoods as best they can. Here in the US, our friends and family of Haitian descent have won Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for those Haitians already here. Some hope to bring family members into the US under TPS as well. Many of us are reminded of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and throughout the Gulf Coast: climate refugees, human-induced disaster.

One month ago, a delegation of grassroots community organizers from climate change-impacted communities in the United States arrived in Copenhagen for the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties, dubbed COP15. The month before, a series of typhoons, earthquakes, and tsunamis struck coastal regions and islands in Asia and the Pacific. Our Pacific

The Indigenous contingent leading the People's Climate March, on December 12, 2009 at the Copenhagen climate summit. An estimated 100,000 people took part in the march. Photo: Ben Powless.



Islander brothers and sisters in the US scrambled to get food, money, relief, and medical supplies to families and villages in the Philippines and Vietnam, and to get information out from loved ones in Samoa and Indonesia.

We went to Copenhagen to educate ourselves on climate change issues and the United Nations policy arena, to build connections with social movement allies from the Global South, and to advance a global analysis of climate change that includes impacted communities in the Global North. We also met many wonderful individuals, media makers, and activists, who come from and are connected to grassroots communities. Fundamentally, we went to push for a human rights and climate justice policy framework that honors the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and that represents strong and binding commitments to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. We also hoped for solutions that would help incentivize a global transition to a lower-carbon economy and systems of production.

In media coverage during and after COP15 a few climate justice concerns made the international media, like the youth and Indigenous people's action inside the Bella Center during the first week. However, most portrayed the Copenhagen Accord as a solution brokered by US President Obama. For a large portion of the Global South countries that participated, as well as the majority of civil society and climate justice organizations, Copenhagen provided several important lessons for our organizing and analysis.

We must first ask the crucial questions: In this new decade, what is the post-Copenhagen moment? What does it mean for US-based movements for environmental justice, economic justice, and global sustainability, and for our leadership for the next period?

One month after Copenhagen we know:

- **Copenhagen and COP15 represented a shift from international diplomacy to the privatization of environmental policymaking.** This conference was a departure from normal United Nations negotiation and conference processes, as problematic as those might be. For folks who have been to the World Conference on Racism or World Summits on Sustainable Development and previous COPs, this COP was a move toward the WTO-ization of climate change talks. While the UN negotiation and treaty-making processes have always been a combination of private deals and public process, the negotiation process at COP15 marked a decisive move toward increasing business influence and decreasing input from international civil society. This meant formal negotiations happened in privately called meetings, with drastically limited civil society participation, especially in the final days of the COP. The US played a pivotal role in legitimating this situation.
- **The scale of solutions proposed by northern governments fail to meet the global need for climate protection.** The major solutions proposed (or railroaded) at the summits are not yet strong enough to meet the ecological need. A global rise of 1.5-degrees Celsius will mean a 4 to 6 degree rise for some areas of sub-Saharan Africa. Areas of coastal Asia and the island nations of the world are facing their own imminent submersion regardless of the negotiated agreement, and climate change-related environmental events are already creating thousands of climate refugees. Environmental justice advocates understand the need for deep and fundamental change. We know what politicians suggest is usually the equivalent of offering a Band-Aid to a burn victim, and this type of insufficient response is what we saw repeatedly from northern governments in

Copenhagen. Thus, for Bolivian President Evo Morales to stake out a principled limit of 1-degree Celsius temperature rise is to put human survival and dignity at the forefront of the political debate.

- **The rest of the world needs a strong, integrated, multi-sector progressive social movement within the US to push for a just transition.** As a nation, we are the largest consumer of global resources and also house the corporations that are causing the greatest damage on a global scale. US policies and practices disproportionately impact our sister communities in the Arctic and the Global South. Environmental justice communities know that much of this consumption is due to corporate and industrial practices, and the burden of these polluting and wasteful practices

falls on our communities. We in the US need a strong progressive movement that integrates racial, economic, and environmental justice with environmental sustainability and peace issues. We also know that solutions in the North must address the root causes of environmental destruction and social inequality, or else the burden of mitigating and adapting to climate change will continue to fall on already-impacted and vulnerable communities, while those who have caused the damage will continue to profit. This is what we call a just transition — that the transition to an environmentally, ecologically sound economic system and way of life must also right the wrongs created by the development of the current system. Green jobs are part of this solution, but not sufficient to meet the scale of necessary change.



Signs from a demonstration at the Copenhagen climate summit.

The meaning of the Copenhagen moment depends on what we make it. The time to act is now. Immediate opportunities for collective action and alignment include the Bolivian World Conference of Social Movements on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in April

2010; the US Social Forum in Detroit, Michigan, in June 2010; and, of course, the next COP, to be held in Cancún, México, in October 2010. We must fill the huge gap in climate change agendas that have failed to incorporate human wellbeing and deep ecological sustainability.

As this report shows, in the United States, the social justice movement including environmental justice, economic justice, Indigenous movements, and youth organizing are strategically poised to help us collectively understand the crisis and activate solutions that advance climate justice and human rights in this new decade and millennium.

¡Adelante!

THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

One plus one can equal five, ten or twenty, depending on collaboration and how we think about our work. Our challenge is to step back and look at what we are doing and can do. The country has yet to feel the power we do have.

— Robby Rodriguez, Southwest Organizing Project

As a world community, we are sitting on the edge of one of the most important and frightening moments in history. Climate change and the search for ecological, cultural, and economic sustainability are driving the world community to make fundamental changes in the way our societies and economies operate. Collectively we face the biggest cultural shift since the industrial revolution — whether we choose to engage or not. This historic moment represents a rare opening for the most threatened communities to take proactive leadership on a large scale.

Awareness of climate destabilization and the need for ecological sustainability has been gaining momentum in the public sphere, creating an unprecedented opportunity to transform our culture and

Gopal Dayaneni of Movement Generation speaks at an August 2009 rally to protest Chevron's oil refinery expansion in Richmond, CA. Photo: Movement Generation.



the ways we live, work, and produce. There is a growing openness to examine our way of life, our responsibility to each other and to future generations, and even our core values. Everyday people are making the links between the large-scale patterns of climate change and conditions in our own lives and communities. In a relatively short amount of time, these issues have gone from the fringe to the center of public debate.

At the same time a recent (January 2010) Pew Research Center poll¹ shows that global warming has slipped from one of America's leading national concerns to the bottom. It is clear that the mainstream environmental movement has failed make a compelling link between ecological instability and the economic and political upheavals foremost in the public mind.

At this moment, the environmental justice movement has a unique opportunity – and responsibility – to assert leadership in framing the climate justice debate and setting forth the kind of transformative agenda this complex situation requires.

For decades, the environmental justice (EJ) movement has been at the forefront of defining and addressing environmental issues as they relate to people and the places we live, work, play, and worship. Environmental justice has played a unique and essential role in centralizing the experiences of the most vulnerable communities – low-income communities of color – within the broader environmental debate. Through this work, EJ has fundamentally shifted the nature of the environmental movement in the United States by linking racial justice to environmental issues. While the EJ movement has highlighted the role that race and racism play in generating environmental injustice, it has also illuminated the critical role that racial justice plays in achieving ecological sustainability. This role has been critical in the pursuit of equity and ecological justice – guaranteeing that all communities are protected from environmental harm and benefit from environmental wellbeing. By focusing attention on “frontline” communities, the environmental justice movement has exposed the true cost of many mainstream “solutions” to the energy crisis, climate change, and green economic transition, while proposing an alternate agenda.

Whether the issue is climate change, the impact of toxins, or the changing economy, environmental justice communities are generally hit first and hardest.² From this frontline position, the environmental justice movement has been able to speak to both the universal – how issues of environmental toxicity and instability impact everyone – as well as the specific – how these issues affect particular communities in much deeper, disproportionate, and devastating ways.

Today, leaders in business, government, and science are working in a destabilized environment. Many are clear that they do not yet know how solve the problems ahead of us, and they are searching for answers. In the private sector, business leaders are split between those considering radically different

1. See, Pew Research Center for People and the Press website: <http://people-press.org/report/584/policy-priorities-2010> (accessed February 12, 2010).

2. For a discussion of the health and economic disparities that communities of color and poor communities face because of climate change, along with policy proposals to address these gaps, see Rachel Morello-Frosch, Manuel Pastor, James Sadd, and Seth Shonkoff. *The Climate Gap: Inequalities in How Climate Change Hurts Americans & How to Close the Gap*. Los Angeles: Univ. of Southern California, May 2009; and Michelle Chen. “Falling Through the Climate Gap,” *In These Times*, July 27, 2009, http://inthesetimes.com/article/4553/falling_through_the_climate_gap (accessed February 15, 2010)

economic and social models and those deeply vested in the oil-based economy. Still others are invested in promoting and benefiting from “alternative technologies” like natural gas, which is not truly renewable or sustainable. The current economic crisis only emphasizes the need to shift our priorities and how we create value. This atmosphere of uncertainty is breaking up old patterns of power and decision-making and creating the conditions for innovative new alliances to emerge.

From the environmental justice perspective we cannot solve the problems ahead of us using the same economic, political, and social models that brought us to this point. We need to think outside of the box we have constructed and challenge our most basic assumptions. In the words of former California Resources Secretary Doug Wheeler, “To halt the decline of an ecosystem, it is necessary to think like an ecosystem.”³

At the city, regional, and state levels, elected officials are making plans and setting benchmarks to usher in an unknown world. Mayors across the country need to develop green city plans and set green transition benchmarks. Yet, these leaders are often at a loss for how to do this. They need the vision

3. The Dirt [electronic newsletter] from DIG IN, February 2010.

Family at an Earth Day gathering organized by Communities for a Better Environment in 2009. Photo: Communities for a Better Environment.



and pragmatic experience that the environmental justice movement has to offer. While some legislation has moved in Congress,⁴ there are still tremendous opportunities to shape local and national policy.

Similarly, while the “emerging green economy” has been promoted as a solution to our economic and environmental problems, there is little agreement as to what constitutes a truly “green” economy. For some it may mean the production and installation of solar panels, for others it includes criteria for drastically reducing our carbon footprint, for others still it means transforming our basic economic model. To date, most efforts are based within a free-market framework, with business investment driving the agenda. Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the Obama Administration has made significant public commitments to green economic development, on scale with the New Deal, as a way to turn the economy and our environment around.⁵ This may provide an opening for environmental justice advocates to move a unifying framework and criteria for a “deep green” economy as an alternative to mainstream free-market proposals.

As we navigate our way between the old and the new, EJ offers a vision for moving from our current system of winners and losers to a new sustainable and just economy and society. The challenge to environmental justice will be scaling up and building enough strategic alignment to take advantage of the moment.

Fortunately, and remarkably, the environmental justice movement has been preparing for this moment. One important milestone was the series of convenings organized by the Ford Foundation in November 2007 and June 2008. These gatherings convened leaders from Ford’s environmental justice initiative to discuss opportunities in the current political context; chief on their agenda was building the environmental justice movement to scale. The first three-day convening focused on opportunities at the intersection of environmental justice, climate justice, and community development. This included building new types of alliances and unconventional resource streams to support the work. The second two-day convening focused on opportunities for environmental justice organizing in the emerging green economy. At both events, participants examined ways to tap into the value and core strength of their work and create greater change at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

4. H.R. 2454, The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (ACES) is an energy bill in the 111th Congress that would establish a variant of a cap-and-trade plan for greenhouse gases to address climate change. The bill was approved by the House of Representatives on June 26, 2009, by a vote of 219–212, but at the time of this writing has not yet been approved by the Senate.[1][2] The House vote was the “first time either house of Congress had approved a bill meant to curb the heat-trapping gases scientists have linked to climate change,” according to the New York Times (June 26, 2009). The bill is also known as the Waxman-Markey Bill, after its authors, Reps. Henry A. Waxman (D-CA) and Edward J. Markey (D-MA). Waxman is the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and Markey is the chairman of that committee’s Energy and Environment Subcommittee.

5. In May 2009 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Energy (DOE) announced details of their fiscal year 2010 budget that focus on creating new “green” jobs, a clean energy economy, and a “green” environment. In 2010 the DOE’s \$38.7 billion budget, as part of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, will expand the use of clean, renewable energy sources, while improving the energy transmission infrastructure and supporting the administration’s goal to develop a secure and smart grid. The EPA’s \$10.5 billion budget focuses on providing solutions to the economic crisis, while making significant strides to ensure that air, land, and water are safe and clean. Among other highlights, the EPA’s 2010 budget includes \$1.1 billion for environmental program grants to states and tribes, \$3.9 billion for clean water infrastructure, \$175 million for its brownfields program, \$1.3 billion for hazardous waste site cleanup, and \$17 million for greenhouse gas registry investment. (Source: <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2009/05/08/epa-doe-release-environmental-and-energy-budgets>)

In these convenings, two fundamental questions emerged: Given the political moment, what are the strategic opportunities for the EJ movement to scale up and assert greater leadership in creating sustainable communities, systems, and cultures? How can the EJ movement leverage its work on climate change, sustainable community planning, and green economic development to achieve a broader national impact?

Building on the momentum of these convenings an unprecedented set of new discussions and alliances began to form. For example, the Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change (the EJ Leadership Forum) was launched by WE ACT for Environmental Justice (WE ACT) in January 2008 to build the alignment and influence of environmental justice advocates at the national level. With a current membership of more than thirty-five organizations, the Leadership Forum mobilizes environmental justice advocates to inform state and federal political and legislative action that produces more just policies and reduces carbon emissions in all communities. In March 2009 another working group of EJ organizations published *Stimulating Environmental Justice: How the States Can Use Federal Recovery Funds to Build a Just and Sustainable Economy*. The report included a vision statement and action plan to use federal stimulus funds to further environmental justice. In December 2009 a delegation of EJ leaders that included Indigenous Environmental Network, the EJ Leadership Forum, and Environmental Justice Climate Change Initiative went to COP15 in Copenhagen to press global leaders to adopt a climate justice framework. These are just a few of the alliance-building activities that have emerged over the last few years.

Environmental justice is now at a crossroads. The movement has a historic opportunity to assert leadership and influence on a large scale. This moment is forcing us to think deeply about our relationship to resources, the Earth, and to each other. Most of us long for something different, but we also fear transformation and the fundamental changes we will need to make. Ironically, the greatest obstacle to change is often our past success. It is in moments of profound crisis when we open ourselves to new ideas and find the courage to innovate.

The core question before us now is how we will develop the culture, economy and communities that can sustain life for all of us. Will we have the courage? The moment is here, if we dare to change.

A boy at a Green LA Coalition action for water access holds a water bucket. Photo: The Green LA Coalition.





Understanding Climate Change

Climate change is real. Across the globe this is evidenced by stronger and less predictable weather events. In the past decade, there have been some unexpected consequences: the drastic melting of the Arctic ice cap and the loss of glaciers in the high mountains all around the world; the actual and estimated extent of sea-level rise; the acidification of the oceans. One thing has changed: The models in the late 1990s predicted that the majority of impacts would be felt in the Northern Hemisphere, but the impacts are being seen and felt in the South in noticeable ways. The loss of the glaciers in the Andes was first brought to global attention by the Indigenous people who live there. The communities on the frontlines of climate change are also the ones who have long borne the brunt of toxic systems of production for energy and the global consumer economy.

Imminent ecosystem collapse will have disproportionate consequences on already vulnerable communities. These consequences will be social, economic, cultural, psychological, political, and physiological. When the ecosystems that sustain us radically change, already vulnerable communities will feel the impacts first. These communities already carry the disproportionate burden of health and economic problems from current, unsustainable systems of extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal.

WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE BRINGS TO THIS MOMENT

We cannot jump on the bandwagon of continuing the lifestyle we are accustomed to. We need to prepare our communities and all communities ... for a changing world.

— Chris Peters, Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development

As the global community wrestles with how to re-imagine and re-design a socially, environmentally, and politically sustainable world, the environmental justice movement brings critical leadership and perspective to this historic moment. EJ provides a holistic framework that can address multiple arenas simultaneously. By leading with a racial justice framework EJ works to ensure equitable policies and action for climate stabilization, green economic development, and sustainable community development. True solutions do not come at the expense of communities of color, the poor, or the planet.

The following section spells out what the environmental justice movement brings to this moment and these interconnected issues.

International Day of Action for Climate Justice in San Francisco, CA, November 30, 2009. Photo: Spaceman Cell.



The environmental justice movement holds critical insight into climate issues because of its work in the most vulnerable frontline communities.

EJ's unique contribution to the larger discussion of climate change is its perspective. From the vantage point of the most vulnerable and impacted communities EJ asks the question: How can we create a shared future where there are no winners or losers? EJ does not accept the assumption that climate change can be solved by sacrificing the health or wellbeing of some communities for the supposed good of others.

This perspective is born of experience. For decades, environmental justice leaders have defended frontline communities against harm, while cultivating a proactive vision for sustainability through their work on the ground. EJ organizers were among the first working to combat greenhouse emissions and to hold polluters accountable to their communities and the broader public. Their efforts have shut down some of the worst polluters, forced other corporations to retrofit their facilities, and established case law to reduce overall emissions and prevent hot spots. At the same time, EJ organizations have developed model programs and policies to promote energy independence and equitable, sustainable communities. In Los Angeles, the Bus Riders Union has promoted investment in green public transportation as a solution to reduce overall emissions and create a greener, more equitable city.



Honor the Earth and Solar Energy International install a solar panel on the Skull Valley Goshute Reservation. Photo: Honor the Earth.

EJ organizations have also been among the first to grapple with the direct impacts of climate change on local residents, especially communities in environmentally toxic or fragile areas. For instance, the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice has worked with communities in the Gulf Region in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and Native Action has supported just transitions for Indigenous communities losing their native ecosystems to climate change. EJ organizations have also focused on long-term issues exacerbated by climate change like water access and water policy. EJ organizations address the underbelly of proposed solutions to climate change and energy dependence, highlighting the impacts that “alternative” energy production (like uranium mining, solar, and nuclear energy) would have on vulnerable communities.

From this vantage point, environmental justice leaders often catch key gaps in mainstream policy proposals that others do not.⁶ For decades EJ organizations have monitored environmental quality

6. For a discussion of policy proposals that address the environmental health and economic disparities facing communities of color, see Rachel Morello-Frosch, et al. in note 2.

in frontline communities and tracked the short- and long-term health impacts of chemicals and pollutants on these communities and workers. They have analyzed the impact of pollutants on ozone production and global warming, and monitored the devastating changes they make to the environments of Native and urban communities. Now, moving forward they are analyzing the viability of mainstream proposals to address climate change and alternative energy sources.

For many EJ leaders the role of the movement is to plant a moral and ethical pole in the climate change debate. For example, the vast majority of EJ organizations oppose market-based approaches, such as cap-and-trade schemes. They argue these schemes are not only fundamentally inequitable but also very likely to be ineffective.⁷ Rather than addressing the political, cultural, and economic causes of climate instability, these schemes enable the current systems to continue at great cost to low-income communities, communities of color, and Indigenous peoples. For example, scientific evidence suggests that cap and trade is likely to generate toxic “hot spots” concentrating pollutants in low-income communities of color.⁸ As a market-based strategy, EJ leaders assert that these schemes create a “right to pollute” (which never existed before), rather than a responsibility not to pollute. In contrast, EJ organizations are using a climate justice framework to propose alternative policy platforms, which emphasize a cap on current carbon emissions, wean us off carbon-based energy sources, and support the transition to truly green, renewable energy.

Environmental justice communities experience the consequences of climate change first and most intensely. But they do not experience them alone. The issues they face negatively impact all communities, intensifying over time if unmitigated. In essence, EJ communities are “the canary in the coal mine,” alerting all of us to the issues that threaten our shared future together. The perspective that EJ brings to climate stabilization and energy policy is vital to all communities.

Through their local and regional campaigns, environmental justice groups have developed the core features of an expansive climate agenda.

Many EJ groups are working on similar issues in their local or regional communities. These efforts form the basis of an emerging “trans local” agenda – a national agenda that emerges from and leverages the local, regional, and state-level work of grassroots organizations. Key aspects of this new, holistic agenda might include:

- **Cap and Reduce:** An energy platform to phase out fossil fuels, reduce energy use, and replace cap and trade. Create a moratorium on all new fossil fuel extraction, production, and eventually. use.

7. For a fuller description of the operations of emissions trading, see Sheats, N., T. Onyenaka, S. Gupta, I. Walton, V. Caffee, K. Gaddy, F. Harper, T. Carrington, A. Goldsmith, and P. Montague. *An Environmental Justice Climate Change Policy for New Jersey* (2009); Morello-Frosch, R., et al. (in note 2); and Beyond, Chinn, L.N. “Can the Market Be Fair and Efficient? An Environmental Justice Critique of Emissions Trading,” 26 *Ecology L.Q.* 80 (1999): at 87-89; Burkett, M. “Just Solutions to Climate Change: A Climate Justice Proposal for a Domestic Clean Development Mechanism,” 56 *Buffalo Law Review* 169 (2008): at 178, at 200-206; Kaswan, A. “Environmental Justice and Domestic Climate Change Policy,” 38 *Environmental Law Reporter* (2008): at 10291-10293. Also, see The Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change. “Factsheet: Cap and Trade 101” and “The Truth about Cap and Trade” (2009).

8. Rachel Morello-Frosch, Manuel Pastor, James Sadd, and Seth Shonkoff draw heavily on the work of EJ organizations in their groundbreaking report *The Climate Gap* (see note 2). The paper analyses the increased environmental health and economic disparities low-income communities of color face with climate change and outlines policy priorities to address this gap while fighting global warming.

- **Beyond Renewable Energy:** Promote energy policies that are truly renewable and safe for all. Oppose energy plans that would harm vulnerable communities, particularly carbon and nuclear-based energy production. Provide alternative visions for reducing consumption.
- **Economic and Energy Independence:** Support efforts that promote local economic and energy independence and reduce the need for imports and exports in both rural and urban communities, such as local energy production and food security projects.
- **Clean Mass Transportation:** Support efforts that promote investment in green public transportation for all.
- **Equitable Green Economic Development:** Ensure that frontline communities benefit from green economic development, and that the “green” of the green economy is defined to promote equity, workers’ rights, and climate stabilization.
- **Zero Waste:** Integrate the zero waste framework into community development and climate change policies. Adopt policies for zero emissions and zero-waste manufacturing.
- **Transition and Emergency Response Planning:** Generate proactive plans to support frontline communities dealing with the devastating impacts of climate change.
- **Sustainable and Just Community Development:** Develop principles and models based in a justice framework. Promote green building and retrofitting for energy conservation and efficiency that promotes the wellbeing, sustainability, and longevity of existing communities.
- **Build Resiliency and Facilitate Culture Change:** Cultivate leadership within frontline communities and the broader public to guide the transition to a sustainable and equitable culture. Prepare frontline communities to live in a world with very different environmental conditions through food and water security projects.
- **Urban–Rural Alignment:** Support an overall agenda that links urban, rural, and Native communities.

Environmental justice groups are already participating in climate transition policy and planning efforts at the local, regional, and state levels.⁹ This emerging trans-local agenda will help environmental justice groups increase the power and impact of their work.

9. Environmental justice organizations have been participating in climate change policy discussions at various levels. For example, Communities for a Better Environment is a leader in the working group that sets climate justice goals and emissions standards for California. WE ACT and UPROSE have been central players in developing New York City’s green transition plan. Green for All is influencing the national agenda for the green economy by making equity a central issue; during the 2008 election cycle they actively shaped all of the major Democratic candidates’ platforms. Other groups, like Indigenous Environmental Network and Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, are working in the international arena reframing environmental and climate justice issues through the lens of universal human rights. Indigenous rural communities are working for economic and environmental sovereignty by replacing mining operations with wind farms and other energy- and revenue-generating projects.

Environmental justice organizations and allied groups are pioneering strategies that advance a “deep green” vision for our economic system, a crucial aspect of climate justice.

EJ leaders maintain that the roots of the environmental crisis are fundamentally tied to specific values embedded in our culture and economic system. Today, the dominant model for economic vitality is perpetual growth – the continual expansion of production and consumption. This model depends on a fundamentally unsustainable relationship to the Earth – extraction of natural resources, exploitation of labor, and output of energy. It is also built around a necessary divide between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” The globalization of this model has only exacerbated the problem. If we try to maintain our current lifestyle with only a slightly greener approach, we will fail to address the root problems of climate and economic instability. EJ leaders argue that only a dramatic shift in culture will avert environmental and social disaster. This cultural shift prioritizes the wellbeing of all communities, and values interdependence, local and renewable economies, and equitable distribution of resources. It requires us to radically reduce dependence on energy, as opposed to just replacing oil-generated energy with another source. Moreover, they observe, no one is immune. Frontline communities will also need to make this cultural transition.

EJ leaders see the present moment of economic and climate instability as an opportunity to fundamentally re-imagine our economic model. The vision for a new model stems from a “deep green” perspective – a belief that we can and must have an economy that is fundamentally equitable and in harmony with ecological systems. While some EJ leaders are primarily focused on the long-term goal

**Designing a Climate Justice Policy Agenda:
The New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance and the New
Jersey Environmental Federation**

The New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance and the New Jersey Environmental Federation are among the EJ groups that have taken on the challenge of climate justice. These organizations partnered with academics and allied groups to develop a climate policy agenda for New Jersey that can also be applied elsewhere.¹⁰ This agenda takes a comprehensive look at policies that can reduce current levels of pollution in EJ communities; ensure that any reductions and health benefits will benefit urban EJ communities; use renewable energy to improve environmental and economic conditions in EJ communities; develop climate change disaster plans that address the needs of frontline communities; and create opportunities for greater public oversight, especially from EJ communities, in climate change policy.

10. See Sheats, N., et al. in note 7.

of transitioning to a “deep green” economy, other EJ groups are trying to leverage “green economy” opportunities in the current system to support the immediate survival needs of poor communities. Most efforts fall somewhere in between.

For example, Green For All is dedicated to advocating a green economy that advances economic and environmental justice. Indigenous communities across North America are working to become energy and economically independent through alternative energy projects like wind farms. Other organizations, like Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice, are creating new, green jobs in conjunction with cleaning up brownfields, developing new housing stock, and retrofitting existing housing. Phillip Thompson, associate professor of Urban Politics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is helping groups nationwide advance green community and economic development by leveraging unconventional funding sources.

EJ leaders are making critical contributions to discussions about the green economy by focusing attention on the economic models needed to ensure a sustainable and just future for all. By setting a high bar for what constitutes a “green” economy, EJ organizations are helping other leaders to develop approaches that actually solve climate instability and environmental injustice.

Environmental justice organizations are successfully using community development and government planning processes as concrete arenas to manifest proactive policies for just, sustainable, green communities.

Many EJ organizations see land use and planning issues as a natural extension of environmental justice – as sister arenas where we can move beyond fighting direct harm, and begin planning and implementing sustainable solutions. Additionally, many organizers find that the history and underlying rationale for community planning is often more in line with their work than they originally thought. According to Diane Takvorian from Environmental Health Coalition, “The language, assumptions, and principles of community planners are generally more harmonious with EJ than environmental regulators.”

Many environmental justice organizations came to community planning after years of fighting and winning campaigns against polluters in their community. Once organizers have successfully removed environmental hazards from their communities, they must move on to develop a vision and a strategy for deeper transformation within their communities. Community development and planning provides this vehicle.

Land use planners don't think that industries, homes, and schools go together. Planning also allows us to be more comprehensive – to think about housing, health care, and toxics in one package, one framework.

— Diane Takvorian, Environmental Health Coalition

The community development and planning work led by environmental justice organizations links EJ's vision of social equity with green and sustainable practices, creating innovative models to transform our cities and communities. Through their work these groups are solving old problems some considered too big to tackle, and they are developing innovative solutions for community revival and sustainability. For example, Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice is tackling the overwhelming

problem of abandoned brownfields in their city by cleaning them up and transforming the land into affordable housing. In the process they are also developing green jobs, open space, and food security projects that help revitalize the city. In New York, both WE ACT and UPROSE have been actively involved in the development of New York's green city plan, and in their own neighborhood's green transition. WE ACT in upper Manhattan has used its own building and neighborhood work to model urban green development. (See WE ACT story in Section III).

Some EJ groups have successfully scaled their local work to develop model state and national policies. Through its work in the Barrio Logan neighborhood of San Diego, Environmental Health Coalition was able to create EJ-based land use and zoning recommendations that were adopted by the State of California EPA Environmental Justice Advisory Committee. In Los Angeles, the Labor/Community Strategy Center's Bus Riders Union has turned its work promoting green, equitable public transportation into a national campaign for climate and transportation justice. (See Scaling Up sidebar for more on both of these stories).

By forging new roles for their organizations and new relationships with allies, the EJ movement has opened new doors to influence the physical evolution and political landscape of our cities and communities. Opportunities to deepen EJ's influence are even more salient now as the Obama Administration centers a commitment to green infrastructure and economic development in its stimulus plan. Environmental justice communities are poised to play a transformative role in re-designing cities and neighborhoods with a proactive, coordinated vision. The EJ movement has the opportunity to advance a paradigm shift in community development based on EJ principles, innovative work, and true sustainability.

Members of Youth Build in New Bedford, MA, at a Green Jobs Now National Day of Action. Photo: Green For All.



Scaling Up: Using Local Community Planning Processes to Impact State and National Policy

For twenty-seven years the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) has demonstrated the power of using community planning for environmental justice on a neighborhood, citywide, and statewide level. For the past two years EHC has been developing a model for community planning that builds greater community power and self-determination. Barrio Logan is one of two immigrant communities that EHC organizes. It is one of the only places in San Diego where mixed-use zoning allows schools and industry, housing and heavy polluters, to sit side by side. The city is also currently out of compliance for not providing the minimal amount of green space in the community. When the city refused to include Barrio Logan in its thirty-year land use plan update, the neighborhood and EHC decided to create their own plan.

The vision of separating industrial and commercial use from residential areas was central to the community's plan. They proposed that industrial areas lying immediately across the street from housing should be transformed into parks, creating a buffer zone for residents from polluting areas like the Port of San Diego and busy streets. They also advocated replacing a toxic facility near an elementary school with affordable housing. At the same time, they successfully shut down the most toxic facility in the neighborhood, a chrome plating plant, and helped other small businesses relocate.

Ultimately, EHC's plan not only addressed community environmental health, but also affordable housing and climate change issues. EHC estimates that more than 1.5 million pounds of toxics will be removed from the neighborhood, including five tons of toxic air contaminants and 600 pounds of diesel emissions per year. They are looking ahead to the potential threat of gentrification and are creating a plan to preserve affordable housing and their community's culture and character. They have also used their local grassroots work to advance new state policy. After they shut down the chrome plating shop, EHC started working on a mandatory state air policy recommending air buffer zones. In 2003, the organization's land use and zoning recommendations were adopted by the State of California EPA Environmental Justice Advisory Committee.

The Labor/Community Strategy Center's Bus Riders Union (BRU) in Los Angeles is another example of a group that has taken its local work and scaled it up to drive a national campaign. BRU's innovative campaign for equitable and clean mass transit sits at the intersection of climate justice, community development, transportation justice, and green economic development. By advocating for increased funding to support sustainable transportation, the Labor/Community Strategy Center is leading a national campaign to shift federal funding to 80 percent mass transit and 20 percent highways. The campaign is framed around civil rights, stopping climate change, and improving community health by choosing the most sustainable, cost-efficient solution (e.g., funding for bus transit hubs, drivers, and mechanics to maintain buses). This would reduce the number of cars on the road, make buses an efficient and affordable alternative to driving, and reframe the idea of green jobs to include drivers and mechanics.

Building Community Development Expertise

Sometimes environmental justice groups find themselves leading projects and hiring experts to bring their vision to fruition. Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) in Oakland, California, hired their own planners and lawyers to assist in their “Oak to 9th” campaign, which generated an alternative plan for one of the largest city development projects since World War II. Roger Kim, APEN’s executive director explained that in community development projects, “Developing expertise and capacity is a huge issue for us; there can be a tension around who leads, who makes a final decision. The model that worked best for us [was hiring our own] experts.” APEN found that the individuals and groups they were able to build the deepest relationships with were those most interested in working on exclusionary zoning issues over the long term.

Other EJ organizations, like Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (DWEJ), found that certain sectors of the business community can be a surprisingly enthusiastic partner. The Detroit Sustainable Business Forum became an important partner in DWEJ’s effort to use brownfield cleanup as a vehicle to generate affordable housing, green jobs, and economic revitalization. Donele Wilkins of DWEJ explained that this group of business leaders appreciated EJ’s complementary expertise and commitment to revitalizing Detroit: “They said, ‘We bring the sustainable growth part, you bring the social justice perspective – we need you.’”

Still other EJ organizations have taken on a mentoring and development role with certain elected officials in their region. In working on the Richmond, California city plan, Urban Habitat began to think of their work with city officials as another level of leadership development and base building. Many local officials were born and raised in Richmond and shared EJ’s deep commitment to the city. Rather than seeing these officials as targets, Urban Habitat began to invest in them as probable allies. They used a strategy of targeted leadership development and education with these leaders, providing them with information and best practices from around the country. “Our hope is that they will then anchor and lead the process themselves,” says Juliet Ellis, Urban Habitat. This stance has allowed Urban Habitat and other EJ groups to develop a close working relationship with officials and to influence the city plan more deeply.



Environmental justice groups are creating innovative models for intergenerational organizing. These models offer important lessons for the sustainability of the environmental justice movement.

We are trying to train long distance runners who can follow in the legacy of those who came before us. My generation needs strategists, tacticians, revolutionaries to inform our organizing and campaigns, to help us hold it down. They are not stunting our leadership; they are guiding us and building us up with the lessons of decades of work.

— Francisca Porchas, Labor/Community Strategy Center

Environmental justice groups have pioneered new models for intergenerational organizing and organizations that hold important lessons for movement sustainability. These models are grounded in the EJ movement's core value of inclusive community and family, and they challenge the idea that a movement can or should be segmented by generation. They also respond to key questions about how to sustain and expand social movements: How do we share leadership across generations? How do we best facilitate leadership transitions? How can we heal conflicts that arise in and between generations? How do we learn from real generational differences and use them to strengthen our work? These models and the questions they raise, hold importance not just for the environmental justice movement, but for the social justice movement as a whole.

As EJ organizations develop intergenerational models, they wrestle with how to support life transitions for and relationships between all generations, from young people to elders. In essence, they are building a "movement ecology" that supports people to engage in social justice through all stages of their life. For example, the Bus Riders Union is known for its mentoring model where younger organizers are given opportunities to lead their own projects and, at the same time, benefit from a strong culture of "eldership." Veterans in the organization are respected for their experience and insight, while new organizers are valued for their fresh perspective and leadership.

EJ's commitment to leadership expansion and intergenerational organizing has helped the movement shift its stance and respond to the changing political climate. The visionary leadership emerging from EJ now has resulted from intergenerational collaboration and dialogue over the last ten years. Younger generations have pushed for new organizing strategies, while EJ elders have played a tremendously important role in maintaining movement continuity, lessons, and values, while providing respectful leadership as they mentor the next generation.

Through intergenerational organizing, EJ organizers have helped to shift thinking in the broader social justice movement. Robby Rodriguez of Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) recently completed the book *Working Across Generations: Defining the Future of Nonprofit Leadership*, with co-authors Frances Kunreuther and Helen Kim. Drawing on Rodriguez's experience at SWOP and experiences among numerous leaders interviewed for the book, the authors present a model to support intergenerational understanding and change within social justice organizations.

Intergenerational Models of Environmental Justice

Environmental justice groups have invested in and developed models for intergenerational organizing and leadership expansion. Over the last decade, many EJ groups have explicitly focused on developing such models to support young people's leadership, while also promoting intergenerational community. In *Regeneration: Young People Shaping Environmental Justice* (2005), a report commissioned by the Ford Foundation, the Movement Strategy Center chronicled how leaders across environmental justice were developing new models based in this framework. The leadership expansion framework prioritizes developing more leaders of all ages as a way to grow a more powerful movement. Based on the findings of this report, the Ford Foundation helped establish the ReGenerations: Leadership Expansion for Environmental Justice Initiative (ReGen EJ), housed and developed at the Funders' Collaborative for Youth Organizing, with additional support from Hill-Snowdon Foundation and Surdna Foundation.

The Funders' Collaborative for Youth Organizing created the ReGen EJ Initiative, to support a cohort of EJ organizations committed to developing intergenerational leadership expansion model. The cohort included PODER in Austin, Texas; Labor Community Strategy Center in Los Angeles, California; SouthWest Organizing Project in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Southwest Workers Union in San Antonio, Texas; and Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice in Detroit, Michigan. Many of these groups also had direct support from Ford Foundation.

For some, the process has been an opportunity to implement long-held ideas about inclusive social change and leadership development. PODER transitioned from an elder leadership model to an intergenerational leadership model with youth-elder co-directors. The elder director, Susana Almanza, hired and trained a youth co-director to be her partner in running the organization. For others the cohort has been an opportunity to reflect on their legacies and choose what they will leave behind. Donele Wilkins from DWEJ reflects, "I entered organizing in the youth stage, and then by accident I became a bridge between generations in the work. Now, as a part of the FCYO cohort, I have the opportunity to think intentionally about [my role]. I'm asking, 'Who is going to follow me?'"

Ultimately, leadership expansion strengthens the whole organization by supporting a greater number of people to play different leadership roles. This is a model that environmental justice is positioned to share with other sectors of the social justice movement.

For the last several years, the ReGen EJ Initiative of the Funders' Collaborative for Youth Organizing has been nurturing grassroots models for intergenerational organizing in the EJ movement. The grassroots groups funded by ReGen EJ have built and tested models for intergenerational leadership "to move information in different directions and build a sustainable movement," says Brinda Maira, FCYO board member and program officer at Merck Family Fund. Many of these organizations, including SWOP, Southwest Workers Union, and Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice, are developing structures to consciously integrate new and younger leaders into decision-making and campaign leadership.

STORIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

Environmental justice organizations are tackling some of the hardest environmental and economic conditions in the country. Leaders in communities of color and Indigenous communities around North America are often the first to see the impact of environmental and economic injustice, and often the first to envision true solutions to these problems. In the process, they are emerging as visionary leaders.

The following six stories demonstrate the innovation and leadership of EJ locally and nationally. In these stories we see leaders turning crisis into opportunity and using that opportunity to catalyze the transformation of our political, cultural, and economic systems.

Detroit: Building a Model Equitable Green City

We want to create a model of doing business with EJ principles at the core.

— Donele Wilkins, Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice

Sometimes incredible opportunities come from tackling the harshest situations. That is the story of Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (DWEJ) and its efforts to transform the brownfields of Detroit into vibrant, sustainable city spaces where residents can thrive. Through their efforts, DWEJ is creating a city for all and a model for equitable green development everywhere.



The Challenge: The Legacy of Centralized Industry

Detroit, especially for those who have never been there, conjures up vivid images of a city and a way of life in decline. Once the booming hub of the US auto industry, Detroit has been struggling economically for decades. Its population is shrinking; less than 900 thousand people live in a city built for 2 million. Heavy industry has left a toxic imprint on the city. Thousands of brownfield sites – abandoned land and buildings that are so polluted they cannot be developed without rigorous cleanup – blight the landscape. In fact, Detroit has so many of these sites – over 40,000 – that the city itself has been designated a brownfield. In many ways Detroit symbolizes everything that is unsustainable about centralized industry, car culture, and a carbon-based economy.

Yet, it is also a city of hope. If Detroit can turn around, we all can. Detroit can be our symbol of transformation.

The Solution: Prioritize the Leadership of Impacted Communities and Transform Liabilities into Assets

After sixteen years of fighting environmental injustice, DWEJ decided it was time to advance a new paradigm for economic and community development. In 1997 the organization launched Build Up Detroit (BUD) and the Green Jobs Training Program to catalyze sustainable development that prioritizes lasting health and prosperity for all people. “We decided we needed to get beyond ‘fighting against’ to ‘fighting for.’ We couldn’t wait for people to do this for us; we had to take it into our own hands,” says Donele Wilkins, cofounder and director of DWEJ. Through Build Up Detroit, DWEJ began to reframe what many saw as liabilities – vacant land, empty housing stock, and a shortage of skilled workers – as valuable opportunities.

Before the official launch, DWEJ used participatory research and organizing to guide their planning process. They trained youth to use GIS mapping to survey their communities and identify sites like illegal dumps and warehouses. As the youth organizers identified problems, they also talked about national trends and potential solutions for their community. Soon, they crystallized a vision and coined the motto “you have to clean up before you green up” to guide their work and link local revitalization to opportunities in the emerging green economy. Ultimately, this process led DWEJ organizers to think, lead, and collaborate in critical new ways.

Build Up Detroit uses a coordinated strategy of green job creation, civic engagement and education, and sustainable development to accomplish their goals. In 2008 DWEJ took a big leap and sponsored the national Creative Cities Summit that was being hosted in Detroit. By sponsoring at the highest level they positioned DWEJ as a serious player in the future of Detroit. They used this opportunity to formally launch a BUD Advisory Council, gain national attention, and engage key players. The Southwest Business Forum, young professionals, and policymakers all became essential partners to realize their vision. The council is made up of four different workgroups that advance BUD’s work on the ground:

- **The Sustainable Economic Development working group** focuses on green economic development and green jobs. They support local entrepreneurs and companies to transition from a pollution-based model to a sustainable model.

- **The Outreach/Media working group** is responsible for framing and messaging the BUD vision. They work on a local and national level.
- **The Community-Based Policymaking working group** focuses on increasing civic engagement, especially among disenfranchised communities. They also focus on maintaining the diligence of and vision for the policymaking process.
- **The Model Neighborhood Project working group** focuses on building a model neighborhood in Detroit and using this model to leverage money for extensive sustainable, “deep green” development across the city. The goal, says Wilkins, “is to take a tough neighborhoods that have been written off... brownfield sites, vacant housing, poor housing, where residents are not engaged and turn them into healthy, livable communities.”

DWEJ’s Green Jobs Training Program is a critical component of their larger strategy. Through extensive training in green technologies, the program builds a local green collar workforce with the skills to transform brownfields into sustainable communities. In just a year and a half, the Green Jobs Training program has achieved phenomenal success:

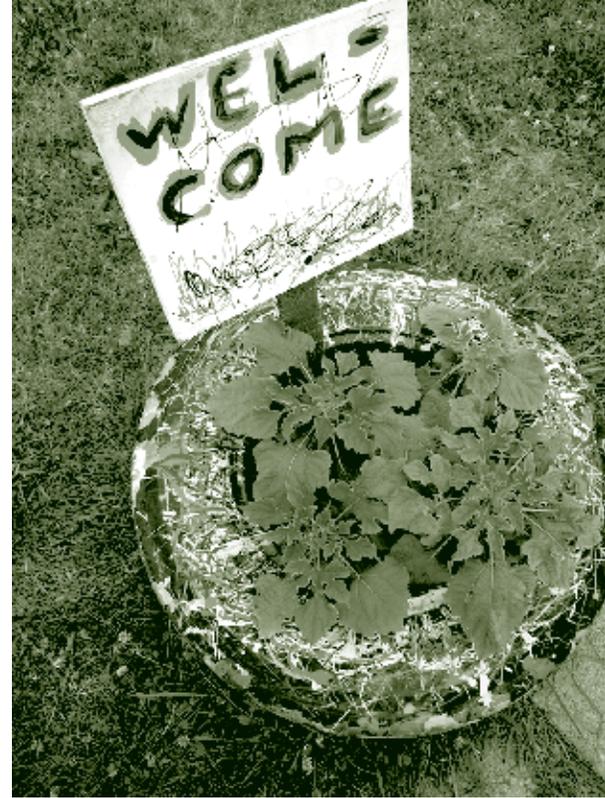
- In 2008, the program trained one cohort; more than 300 people applied for just 25 positions.
- The graduating class had 100 percent job placement, a rate that is virtually unheard of in Michigan.
- Major contractors are beginning to come to DWEJ. “Yesterday there was an employer who landed

Green For All table at a Green Jobs Now National Day of Action. Photo: Green For All.



a major contract to do energy retrofitting. He has 100 positions available. Yesterday, he was in my office, interviewing folks from last class, offering \$3 per hour more than other offers," said Wilkins.

- With the stimulus package there is more demand for workers than the program could ever meet. HUD and Enterprise Foundation have money for greening and weatherizing 1 million public housing units, but they do not have the workforce to do it. Build Up Detroit is trying to scale up to meet some of this demand.
- In 2009, BUD began holding two training classes per year, and they are currently looking at other options to expand their reach.
- DWEJ and BUD are developing a Green Building Institute and working to establish a land trust. They have a partnership with Dillard University to rebuild 123 homes and plan to train 500 impacted people for green jobs.



Community gardens transform underutilized land in urban communities. Photo: Jessica Reeder

The Future: Leadership for a Vibrant, Green, Equitable Detroit

DWEJ's leadership and vision has captured the imagination of the entire city and helped to heal old divisions. "We live in the most segregated community in the most segregated state as of the last Census," said Wilkins. "I am humbled by the diversity of stakeholders we have at our table. They see Detroit as a comeback place. They all want to get [the city] to a place where people would want to live and to bring a new economy forward."

Every day new opportunities and partnerships are emerging. DWEJ's work has attracted the attention of the mayor who recently dedicated \$1.3 million to their green jobs effort, as well as a venture investment firm that approached DWEJ with more than \$400 million to fund the model neighborhood project. They are connecting to the urban farm movement and helping to guide the city's neighborhood stabilization dollars.

Wilkins describes how this work has shifted her and other organizers' perspective on their role and capacity to make change. "What this meant was we needed to think and talk in different ways. We are stepping out of our comfort zones, doing new things, building new capacity. It's about realizing ... we can be in front of this thing and take control."

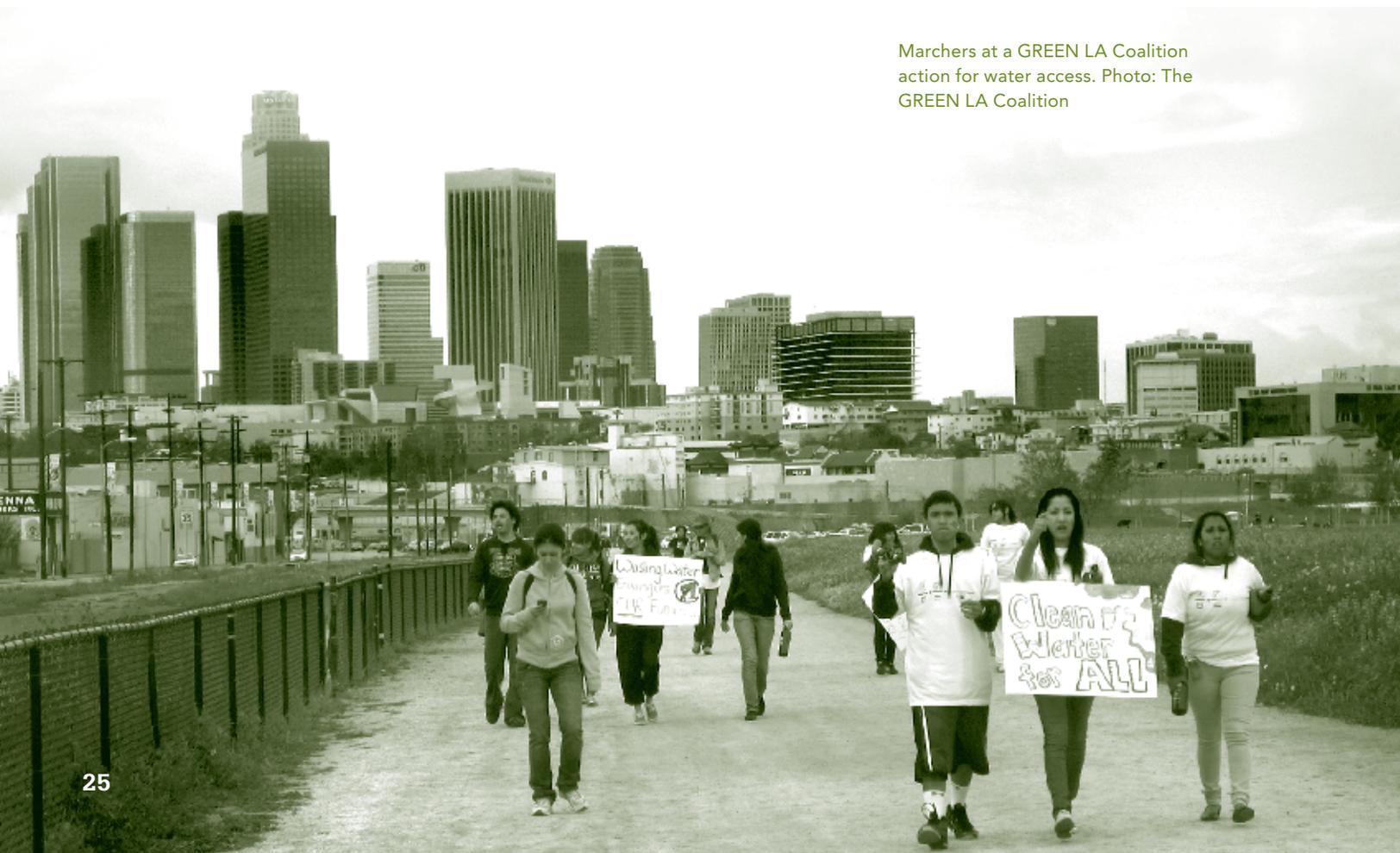
By creating opportunity out of crisis, Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice provides an exciting model within the environmental justice movement. Through a proactive stance and partnerships with unlikely allies DWEJ is playing a major leadership role in solving social and economic issues that have paralyzed their city.

Los Angeles: Moving a Deep Green Agenda

In 2005 the environmental and social justice community was gaining strength throughout Los Angeles County. Over two decades EJ organizations like Communities for a Better Environment, the Bus Riders Union, and allies like SCOPE had created an environment ripe for change. Collectively these groups fought against freeway expansion; lead and other toxins in homes; and environmental pollution from oil refineries, industrial facilities, and the ports of LA and Long Beach. They were also beginning to propose real alternatives to business as usual. Many were engaged in local efforts to create a green, accessible transportation system. Others were addressing concerns with AB32 – California’s signature legislation to address global warming – and linking it to the concerns of low-income communities. A number of them worked collectively around issues of cumulative impact. At the same time, they also faced a challenge; Los Angeles County is vast, making it difficult to build a unified movement. When the mayoral campaign of Antonio Villaraigosa first hit the ground in Los Angeles, environmental and social justice leaders saw an opportunity to shift the political dynamics of the city and create a shared purpose within the movement. A coalition of labor, immigrant rights, environment, economic justice, and housing rights advocates came together to back the campaign and move a bold new agenda in the city. The campaign energized the progressive community across Los Angeles and throughout the state. “In some sense there was the same energy as with the Obama campaign,” said Michele Prichard of Liberty Hill Foundation. “The same sense of mission and commonality.”

Building on their strong community ties, these organizers gave shape to the green vision that Villaraigosa would come to promote as mayor – a more livable, healthy, equitable, and sustainable Los Angeles. Villaraigosa’s successful campaign created a new opening for broader progressive

Marchers at a GREEN LA Coalition action for water access. Photo: The GREEN LA Coalition





Bus Riders Union member at an action for transportation justice. Photo: The Bus Riders Union

leadership at the same time it created a challenge: How would groups transition from their familiar role of external watchdog to one of leading and governing? Were they ready to move from opposing to proposing?

The Challenge: Making the Green Economy Work for Communities Most Devastated by Environmental Injustice

Cumulative impact is a term that describes how multiple environmental hazards and toxins can impact a particular community; it can also encompass the affect of social and economic stressors. The communities that suffer most from environmental hazards in Los Angeles also struggle with serious social and economic disadvantages. These communities are almost always poor or working-poor communities of color. In addition to poverty, these communities often face a lack of basic services like transportation, health care, and quality schools. Together, these conditions seriously and disproportionately impact the health of these communities – physically, socially, and spiritually. Too often, cities address these issues through reactive and

piecemeal approaches, treating each problem in isolation. Any plan to green-up LA would need to put these communities in the center of the conversation and deal with these conditions holistically.

While the election of Villaraigosa marked a major shift in the political landscape, the progressive coalition that had backed the mayor did not yet have a clear citywide agenda or a vehicle to continue their work together. As a group they needed to transition into a new role and maintain relationships with city leaders, while continuing to set progressive policy standards and hold leaders accountable.

The Solution: Build a Vehicle to Move a Deep Green Agenda in LA

After the election, many environmental groups recognized Los Angeles had a historic opportunity to become a leader in urban environmental health, justice, and sustainability. Environmental justice organizations established the GREEN LA Coalition to craft a shared agenda and build necessary partnerships. The GREEN LA Coalition now convenes environmental and EJ organizations as well as other progressive leaders in the city, linking environmental, economic, and social issues together. The GREEN LA Coalition includes more than eighty organizations organized around five work groups:

- **Transportation:** Focuses on helping the city move from cars to clean, green, and accessible modes of transportation.
- **Water:** Focuses on ensuring high-quality and sustainable water access.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** Focuses on improving health outcomes in communities of color.
- **The Port:** Focuses on greening the Port of LA and creating a healthy, sustainable quality of life for residents and workers around the port.

- **Urban Ecosystems:** Works on the use of natural processes to improve the environment and conserve resources.

The GREEN LA Coalition also works to integrate broader themes of social and economic justice into all environmental policies by promoting:

- **Public participation and decision-making** to increase the knowledge, cooperation, and commitment of all residents in city decisions impacting their lives.
- **The green economy** as a model to expand economic development, while improving health, social equity, and environmental conditions.

After Villaraigosa's election, the GREEN LA Coalition worked closely with an advisory committee of mayoral appointees to develop a set of specific policy recommendations. Since the development of this policy agenda, the GREEN LA Coalition has worked to move several policies forward including converting the Department of Water and Power to clean energy and using this process to build an apprenticeship path for green jobs. The coalition is also promoting the campaign for clean trucks at the Port of Los Angeles, creating a more equitable water pricing system among residents, promoting

Members of the Bus Riders Union at a 2009 anti-war protest. Photo: Joel Carranza.



green building and affordable housing, and creating the city's green business certification program. In addition, some of GREEN LA's most exciting work with communities on-the-ground is happening within the Cumulative Impacts working group.

Some of GREEN LA's most exciting work is emerging from the Cumulative Impacts working group. Soon after the coalition was launched, Communities for a Better Environment and other environmental justice groups decided to concentrate their energy here in order to have a direct, transformative impact on EJ communities in the city. While the coalition as a whole is charged with creating a holistic and comprehensive vision for the city, the Cumulative Impacts working group is focused on transforming communities overburdened by environmental impacts into models of equitable and sustainable green development. Using this approach, EJ communities can and should become the locus for deep green economic growth in LA. In many ways their work embodies the heart of the EJ vision. The group is developing a community planning and land use strategy to address the cumulative impacts that poor communities of color face, while working to strengthen the social, economic, political, and environmental vitality of these neighborhoods.

To this end, the working group has started to lay groundwork for an innovative policy framework. Members began by researching and mapping the specific conditions in impacted communities in Los Angeles. The working group's approach included:

Measuring all impacts on public health and establishing healthy baseline standards: Using both scientific and community-based research teams, the Cumulative Impacts working group establishes an accurate baseline picture of conditions in low-income communities. A university-based research team has developed a sophisticated screening tool to identify hot spots in the city by layering data that is not usually mapped together. This data included health risks related to chemical exposure as well as socioeconomic vulnerabilities like poverty, unemployment, and non-English speaking communities. According to Michele Prichard of Liberty Hill Foundation, this process has provided "the science to back up what community people have been saying all along." The working group also supported a process of participatory action research, or "groundtruthing," where residents in eight communities walked their neighborhood to confirm and add data to the official agency databases. This included confirming the locations of facilities in the databases, like industrial plants, and identifying those that were missing, like auto body shops, family-owned daycares, places with toddlers or seniors, health clinics, and churches.

Establishing a policy framework that can help transform impacted neighborhoods into thriving deep green communities: This framework will focus on cleaning up existing negative impacts; preventing the growth of any new polluters; and restoring the social, economic, and physical environment of the community. On a practical level, they are working to identify financing such as weatherization dollars and other sources to advance green initiatives and industries in the neighborhood. This work uses a comprehensive approach to community planning. While still under development, the range of potential issues covered by the framework is broad and includes:

- **Developing green jobs and energy efficient, affordable housing** in partnership with others in the field.
- **Greening business and industry** by targeting polluting industries to be cleaned and greened up, as well as supporting new, green industries coming in. The GREEN LA Coalition has helped

the city establish a Green Business Certification program, which sets standards for becoming a green business. These standards are grounded in the work that the GREEN LA Coalition and the Cumulative Impacts working group have done with the scientific research team.

- **Expanding LA's "Complete Streets" initiative** that will connect all neighborhoods in the city, while reducing private auto use, through expanded bus and mass transit, pedestrian, and bike-friendly street infrastructure.
- **Creating environmental amenities** in overburdened neighborhoods through projects that restore the natural environment. This includes creating parks and green space that use native landscaping, and recycling water rather than polluting the Santa Monica Bay.

Building relationships and influence: The GREEN LA Coalition overall, and this working group specifically, has continued to build influence by establishing strategic relationships with local, state, and national representatives. The GREEN LA Coalition is connected to the California Green Stimulus Coalition that is organizing to use stimulus dollars for "green, not grey infrastructure."

The Future: Advance social justice leadership, governance, and innovation in LA

The GREEN LA Coalition has created an innovative infrastructure for environmental and social justice groups to play a governance role in their city. The coalition is helping these organizations balance two delicate roles: a proactive governance role where they partner and problem solve with city leaders, and a critical advocacy role where they set standards, ensure government and corporate accountability, and advance new ideas. In the process they are creating a model for sustainable governance that is connected to the communities most impacted by environmental and social inequity.

Oakland: Carving Out Political Power

At its best, community planning is an opportunity to build deep community power, capacity, and engagement. The community planning work of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) in Oakland, California, models what we can achieve when we harness this opportunity.

The Challenge: The Impact of Urban Development on Low-Income Communities

Many low-income communities in the Bay Area have been severely impacted by fluctuations in the housing market – first, by the enormous rise in prices, then by the sub-prime mortgage crisis, and now by the recession. In Oakland, housing development was promoted as a way to turn the city into a bedroom community for San Francisco. "The city could not approve projects fast enough," says Roger Kim, APEN's executive director. One of those projects was dubbed "Oak to 9th," named for the streets connecting Chinatown and other API neighborhoods





Above and opposite page: Members of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network participating in the Oak to 9th campaign. Photo: Asian Pacific Environmental Network.

near Oakland's downtown. As the largest development project in Oakland since World War II, the project was set to build three thousand units of market-rate condos with studio apartments selling for \$300,000.

The Solution: Link Grassroots Involvement in Community Planning to Community Organizing

APEN formed a coalition to ensure that the surrounding communities would benefit from the development through affordable housing and jobs. In a process that combined community planning and grassroots organizing, APEN won guarantees that:

- 465 units will be reserved for families that make less than \$50,000 a year
- Half the units will be family-sized
- One quarter will be reserved for seniors
- 300 entry-level construction jobs will go to Oakland residents
- \$1.65 million will be allocated for training programs (including training for immigrants and people coming out of prison)
- Open space cleanup and mitigation will create parkland open to everyone
- Built-in enforcement mechanisms will assure follow through on the points above

The Future: Lessons for Environmental Justice Community Development

Through this process, APEN learned three lessons about the intersection between EJ and community development:

- **Centralize a justice framework in community development.** Environmental justice brings an economic and racial justice analysis to community development, and centralizes an equity frame. “At its core, EJ addresses the need for structural change to dismantle the systems that generate toxins and poison and displace our communities,” says Kim.
- **Make community development bottom-up and base-led.** “We will never have equitable development without the sustained participation of those most impacted,” says Kim. For APEN, this required coalition building with other membership organizations and partnering with technical assistance providers who respected their base. At the same time, it required them to be pragmatic. “You also need to understand and work the community development process; you can have an inclusive process, etc., but if don’t have the votes, you lose the process.”
- **Build cross-movement coalitions and engage in electoral organizing.** APEN integrated electoral organizing into its organizing and community development work in order to build power and influence. “We trained our membership base and leaders and ... coordinated with like-minded organizations. We worked on local and state-level ballot initiatives that made people take notice. This coincided with key elections in the Oakland mayoral race ... [where we] were able to make accountable development a key issue,” says Kim.

In the end, APEN also learned that a plan is only as good as the enforcement measures that give it teeth. By building enforcement measures into the Oak to 9th plan and coordinating their work with others, APEN helped shift the power between community planners, city and regional government, and the community.

APEN’s work provides the environmental justice movement with a great model for combining community planning with community organizing, electoral organizing, and coalition building.

■ Minnesota: Energy Justice and Community Resilience

For a long time [traditional knowledge] went underground. Now it is coming back. Now we have names for sustainable development, we call it it appropriate technology, but it’s really the restoration of Indigenous knowledge. ... This work is a decolonizing effort at the same time it’s a restoration effort.

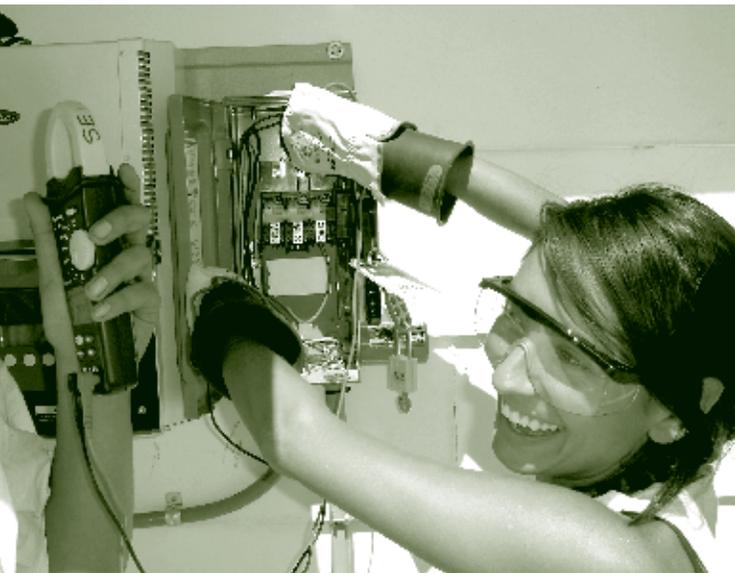
— Faye Brown, Honor the Earth

Across Indian Country a cultural renaissance is transforming Indigenous communities’ relationship to energy. Using the power of sun and wind these communities are helping foster economic and energy independence among tribes at the same time they help all of us adapt to climate change. The following story from Honor the Earth shows how localizing energy production can help to create a new economic infrastructure for Native America and solve the climate crisis.

The Problem: Centralized Energy and Energy Colonization

The legacy of centralized energy reverberates throughout the US and its economic, cultural, environmental, and political systems. Nowhere is this truer than in Indian Country, where energy centralization leaves tribes with little control or benefits from the vast natural resources on their own land.¹¹ Over the last five centuries, corporations have built mines, refineries, and power plants to extract raw materials like coal and uranium. Little of the energy or wealth stays on the land; the majority goes into centralized grids that benefit cities and energy corporations. Tribes have become economically dependent on these corporations for jobs and some initial payments, while the corporations own the rights and means to extract, produce, and profit. Today, most communities continue to live in poverty and only a few even have electricity. In this system, tribes often have to choose between their economic survival (selling off mining rights for small sums) and their ecosystem and culture. Because Indigenous communities are land-based cultures, the process of extracting conventional energy wreaks havoc not only on the environment but also on the culture and health of the tribe.

Few of us know where our energy actually comes from, what it is made of, and how its production impacts Native communities. In this sense, we are literally and figuratively disconnected from our power source. Unfortunately, this dynamic can happen even with so-called renewable energy, as the story of New Deal hydroelectric projects illustrates.



Honor the Earth Intern Yana Garcia helps set up a solar installation on the Skull Valley Reservation. Photo by Tom Reed.

When President Roosevelt signed the New Deal legislation in 1944, authorizing the construction of six new dams on the Missouri River, he also signed away the fate of hundreds of Indigenous communities and a vast bio-cultural ecosystem. As the dams were erected, hundreds of villages were literally flooded out of existence. While many of the people were relocated, they, like other Native people, had a land-based culture and an Earth-based spirituality that was tied to the specific place they lived. With the flooding their way of life was destroyed and they became refugees.

From the government’s perspective, the dams were a way to provide jobs, flood control, irrigation, and renewable centralized power for millions through the Western Grid. Tragically, they failed to provide the energy promised. Over time, climate change and drought made the river smaller and less powerful. Now, rather than hydroelectric power, the grid runs on 80 percent coal; it is the dirtiest in the nation, boasting a devastating carbon footprint.

11. While tribes hold only 4% of the land base in the United States, they are still the largest landholders after the US government; this land contains vast resources of conventional energy, including coal, uranium, oil, and natural gas.

Recently, with the growing focus on renewable energy, Native activists realized that a stretch of land held by tribes along the Missouri River and farther out to the southwest could provide the energy needed to replace coal by generating wind and solar energy. Many of these tribes are among the most impoverished in the nation. If done right, these projects could be a way to create cultural, political, and economic sovereignty, while generating clean energy for the entire region.

The Solution: Localized Energy and Resilient Communities

Honor the Earth's Building Resiliency program is working to transform the current paradigm of centralized energy and colonization into one of localized energy and community resilience. Currently, Peabody Energy Corporation (formerly Peabody Western Coal) owns the rights and infrastructure to mine coal from Hopi and Navajo lands in the Southwest. In the new model, tribes would own the means of producing and harnessing energy from clean, renewable resources like wind and solar. Localizing energy production creates energy and economic independence for tribes, and it helps solve the climate crisis by creating truly clean, renewable energy. This work is fundamentally rooted in the principle of resilience and our capacity to regenerate, even after multi-generational trauma.

Honor the Earth focuses its work in the Great Lakes/Plains and the Southwest regions because these communities experience the greatest poverty, the most disproportionate impacts from fossil fuel and uranium extraction, and the promise of incredible renewable energy resources. **These tribes hold the greatest wind regime possible and the greatest solar regime possible. They could generate 450 times the amount of power the US currently needs through solar, and 14 percent through wind. It's the basis for a new economic infrastructure for Native America.**



The Future: Building Capacity and Scaling Up

The key challenge for tribes is building the capacity and infrastructure needed to harness these resources, while maintaining local control of the resources once they are in place. Honor the Earth supports communities to create demonstration or small-scale renewable energy projects that “generate creativity, dignity, and direct benefit for Indigenous communities.” The goal of these projects is to start the energy localization process and create a model that can be scaled up over time. Rather than creating a centralized power structure, this model creates a network of wind and solar energy projects that can power Indigenous nations and the country as a whole.

For example, on the Pine Ridge Reservation the recently completed Kili Radio Wind Turbine now powers the radio station that services the broader reservation. By engaging the community in the installation, with the support of Native trainers, they sparked the enthusiasm and imagination of tribal members and laid the groundwork for future projects. Ultimately, these green energy projects will provide clean, renewable energy to the reservation, jobs, job training, and income through energy exports. While tribes have made a huge impact fighting the negative impacts of conventional energy, this work provides a path to the future.

The 2009 stimulus package provides a tremendous opportunity to bring this work to scale through resources dedicated specifically to energy infrastructure projects on tribal lands. Honor the Earth is supporting tribes with the technical assistance needed to apply for federal funds. If enough resources were dedicated to these projects, the US could solve its energy needs, while meeting key goals to mitigate climate change.

■ National: Opportunities in Economic Transition

How do environmental and economic justice leaders take advantage of the openings created by a shifting economy? As the US grapples with the implications of climate change and peak oil, public and private leaders are scrambling to define what a new, green economic model looks like within the current economy.

The changes under consideration are comprehensive, ranging from the large scale – how to reduce and eliminate carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions; how to create safe and secure food streams; how to achieve energy independence – to the pragmatic – how to retrofit cities and create a labor pool with new skill sets. The economic potential is enormous, but also threatens to further divide our country if a racial justice analysis is not central to the changes put forward. In this context, Green For All has played an important leadership role by inserting equity into the national debate and related policy decisions.

Green For All grew out of the Green Jobs Not Jails campaign launched by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in 2005. Since then, Green For All has played a major role in leveraging new funds for equitable green development and shaping policy discussions. In the 2008 election season, Green For All worked with all three Democratic presidential candidates to shape their platforms around green jobs. Green For All has worked with mayors from across the country to define green job characteristics and formed a partnership with the AFL-CIO to move legislation through Congress. As a result,



Community members participate in a Green Jobs Now National Day of Action. Photo: Green For All.

President Obama's economic stimulus package alone had \$80 billion for green and clean energy initiatives. States, cities, philanthropists, and the private sector are also generating funding and incentives that ultimately translate into thousands of contracts and millions of jobs. "The green economy is no longer a speculative notion," argues Van Jones, author of *The Green Collar Economy* and founder of Green For All, "nor are the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities associated with it. Money, contracts, and jobs are moving right now."

Under the current leadership of Green for All's Chief Operating Officer Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, Green For All is continuing this important work by creating a Green Job Corps that will train young people of color for the developing green collar job pipeline.

Jones acknowledges that the process of restructuring our economy around sustainability and racial justice is complex, but maintains that the ultimate goal is clear

and simple. "In the last century, our forebears worked to advance a simple ideal: Equal opportunity for all. In the new century's dynamic economic sector we must carry forward that same ideal."

In the process of re-imagining the economy, organizers need to find the right mix of specific policies, politics, and projects that can benefit poor and marginalized communities, while contributing to a sustainable ecosystem and economy. While there is a healthy debate around how to achieve this balance, Green For All offers one important piece in the puzzle. A strategic challenge in moving forward will be how to align the immediate economic needs of communities and workers with the long-term goal of developing a "deep green" economy and society.

■ National: Building Influence Through Building Alliances

In January 2008, the country was completely enraptured with the presidential primaries. For the first time ever, it was clear that either a woman or person of color would lead the Democratic ticket for president. It was also clear that the environment and climate change would be among the central issues facing the next administration. In the little Northern California town of Bolinas, thirty environmental justice leaders gathered to start creating a new climate agenda rooted in EJ principles. It was the first gathering of its size and type in the US since the Second People of Color Environmental Justice Summit (or Summit II) in 2001.

In many ways the 2008 gathering was picking up where that summit left off. Summit II had been hard; it had surfaced the biggest challenges and growing pains of the movement. Since then it had been unclear if and when there would be another national summit. Seven years later, the Bolinas gathering



WE ACT youth organizers in East Harlem.
Photo: WE ACT for Environmental Justice.

offered a chance at regeneration and renewal – an opportunity to test what a coordinated local-to-national EJ movement could look like and what a new generation of leaders could do.

Out of this gathering WE ACT for Environmental Justice (WE ACT) organized the EJ Leadership Forum on Climate Change (the Forum) to help EJ leaders build on the strength of their local work and create a shared national agenda on climate issues. At this first meeting, the leaders gathered spent three and a half days combing through national climate policy proposals, debating how each position related to and impacted vulnerable communities. They also looked at the strategic benefit of supporting or shaping the policies. At the same time, the gathering emphasized sustainability – leaders were encouraged to take care of themselves and each other as they engaged in the hard work. They came away with a process to build trust, alignment, and direction with each other moving forward. Ultimately, the gathering built on groups’ work fostering a new era of intergenerational leadership in the movement.

The Challenge: Building Capacity to Take Advantage of the Political Moment

With the growing public concern around climate change and a sea change in the political landscape, the EJ movement had a tremendous opportunity to set a new climate agenda at the national level. Yet, environmental justice had no national vehicle to coordinate its work or exert leadership as a movement. Individual organizations have long been advancing innovative and important work in their communities at the local and regional level. This work is, of course, essential to addressing the issue on a national scale. At the same time, the lack of shared platform and message meant that the movement as a whole was unorganized and had a limited ability to frame a national climate agenda. During this time mainstream environmental groups were advancing a framework that was neither deep nor holistic enough to address the root problems of climate change, and in fact continued to harm impacted communities. While the EJ movement had the makings of a new climate agenda, it did not have the capacity or infrastructure to take its local work to the national level.

The Solution: Use the Momentum Surrounding Climate Change to Build a New, National Alliance of EJ Groups

Recognizing this opportunity, WE ACT used the momentum surrounding climate issues to build a new environmental justice alliance. They understood that in order to build the power and influence of the EJ movement, they needed a vehicle that would allow the alliance to leverage individual members’

work, while advancing a shared message and policy agenda. The Forum filled a gap in EJ movement building and helped prepare the movement to take proactive leadership on climate issues.

The Future: A Stronger, More Influential EJ Movement

After the first meeting in Bolinas, the Forum continued to meet in person and work together virtually. Since 2008 they have met four times in person to strengthen their relationships, deepen their analysis, and build a shared strategy. As a group they have used the Forum as a vehicle to do local-to-national organizing, reframe the public debate around climate change, advance climate policy rooted in EJ communities, and build influence with decision makers. While the Forum is still evolving, they already have made a significant impact. The following section outlines the key impacts of their work.

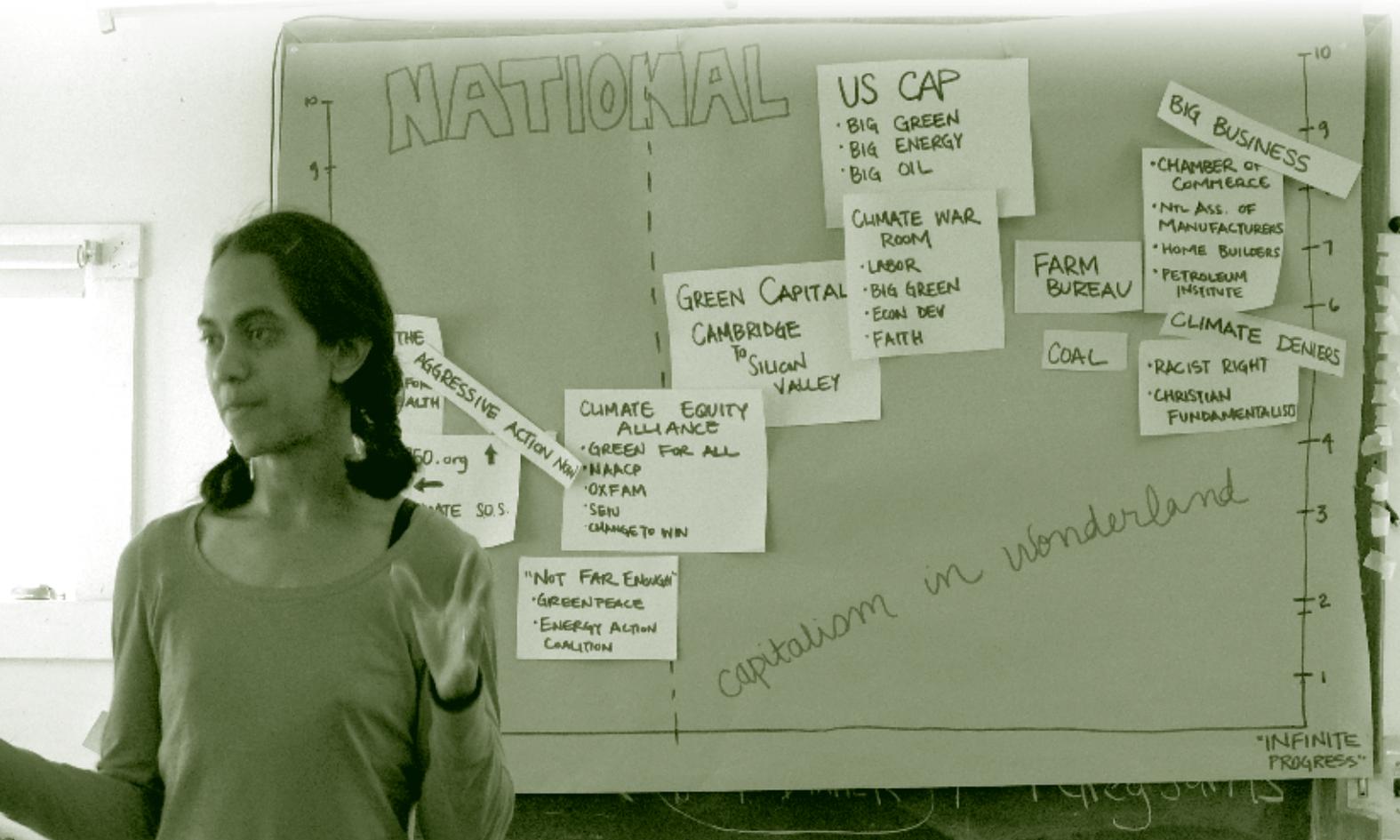
- **Increasing power and influence of EJ leaders:** Through their work together, the Forum has created a vehicle to grow the influence and power of EJ leaders at the local, state, and national level. They have also helped shift EJ's relationship to and dynamic with mainstream environmental groups. The Forum has met several times with the Obama Administration and meets regularly with key legislators. Additionally, the Forum brokered a historic relationship with "The Green Group," an organization of thirty-plus large environmental groups, in an effort to develop an ongoing strategic relationship. Many of the Forum's member organizations, like WE ACT, are engaged in leadership roles allowing them to shape state and local environmental and climate policy. They are using the Forum as a vehicle to share information and leverage the lessons of this work. While the Forum is still building its influence and credibility, EJ leaders are using these relationships to influence issues, even when the dominant position is not the same as the Forum's. For example, WE ACT is supporting a congestion pricing initiative; even though it has some negative impacts they are concerned about. According to WE ACT, the initiative is important "because of its benefits on climate and funding for public transit. For us the link to public transit is critical, because if we support public transit effectively, we will also create an effective mechanism for low-income communities to get to places they need to be to lead their lives."
- **Proposing a new national climate agenda/platform:** Member groups are using the Forum as a vehicle to advance a broad policy agenda rooted in EJ communities. At the in-person meetings members review all national climate policy proposals and legislation on the table. They have created a set of climate principles that are EJ specific, and have published several policy papers, including one on carbon charge policy (see Glossary) as an alternative to cap and trade. This work collectively helps to leverage the local, regional, and state work of the Forum's member groups and link their efforts to national policy making. (See Bibliography for a listing of related policy papers and EJ Climate Principles).
- **Engaging new constituencies:** The Forum's member groups are rooted in the communities most impacted by climate change. Many of these communities do not connect with the dominant messages about climate change in the media: that widespread environmental disaster is imminent unless we reduce our carbon footprint. While this message uses scientific facts to stress the urgency of the situation, it leaves little room for people to connect climate change to their own lives and see how they can help. The Forum's member groups are developing an alternative framework organized around public health to speak about climate change. This approach grounds climate

change in concrete concerns – like heat islands¹², increased asthma, and food access – and provides clear avenues for communities to take action. As a result, Forum members are beginning to see new constituencies engaged with the debate around climate change and committed to addressing it in their communities.

- **Surfacing key issues that otherwise fall through the cracks:** Using their policy positions and relationships, members of the Forum are surfacing key perspectives that have been missing from the debate. This includes highlighting the impact that cap-and-trade policies will have on the most impacted communities, emphasizing the importance of public transportation strategies to fight climate change, while supporting the basic needs of frontline communities, and highlighting related public health issues.

12. From Wikipedia: An **urban heat island** (UHI) is a metropolitan area which is significantly warmer than its surrounding rural areas. The temperature difference usually is larger at night than during the day, and is most apparent when winds are weak. Seasonally, UHI is seen during both summer and winter. The main cause of the urban heat island is modification of the land surface by urban development which uses materials which effectively retain heat. Waste heat generated by energy usage is a secondary contributor. As population centers grow they tend to modify a greater and greater area of land and have a corresponding increase in average temperature. Monthly rainfall is greater downwind of cities, partially due to the UHI. Increases in heat within urban centers increases the length of growing seasons, and decreases the occurrence of weak tornadoes. Increases in the death rate during heat waves has been shown to increase by latitude due to the urban heat island effect. The UHI decreases air quality by increasing the production of pollutants such as ozone, and decreases water quality as warmer waters flow into area streams, which stresses their ecosystems. Source: www.wikipedia.org.

Michelle Mascarenhas-Swan at the 2009 Movement Generation retreat. Movement Generation is playing a leadership role in defining the next level of alliance building for ecological and environmental justice. Photo: Movement Generation.



- **Creating a climate for collaboration:** The Forum has also increased the climate for collaboration, both between environmental justice leaders and with a broad range of other allies. Within the EJ movement, the Forum process has strengthened and repaired relationships. Through the Forum, the member groups have also created an expanded sense of the EJ movement's role and its relationship to other players. As mentioned above, this includes building strategic relationships with the Obama Administration, Congress, mainstream environmental leaders, other social justice sectors, and the faith community.
- **Leveraging new resources:** Forum members are creating strategies to apply for and leverage stimulus funding in their states. As they sharpen their strategy and influence they may also be able to increase the funding for EJ through climate change, public health, and other resources.

The Forum provides an exciting model for how EJ groups can scale up, while maintaining their base and connection to frontline communities. By creating an alliance and shared platform, the Forum enables local and regional groups to leverage their work and have a larger impact. With this new capacity, EJ leaders are better positioned to take advantage of the political moment and provide leadership on climate issues.

FIVE STRATEGIC QUESTIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

The environmental justice movement needs to get together and assert our collective power and vision. I'm not arguing for any political party. I am asking us to wake up.

— Deeohn Ferris, Sustainable Community Development Group

This section outlines five strategic questions for the environmental justice movement. These questions highlight the opportunities before us and ask how the movement will build the alignment, synergy, and momentum it needs to play a broader leadership role.

Question 1: How can the EJ movement develop a shared platform that groups can use to leverage, coordinate, and amplify their local work?

The potential power of convergence and working across regions is that we can share history, stories, and work. We can build a solid foundation to work from. We can share who we are as people, share food, build understanding, faith, and trust.

— Kim Gaddy, New Jersey Environmental Federation and New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance

Drawing on their local and regional work, the environmental justice movement is uniquely positioned to develop and advance a shared climate agenda rooted in the deep, on-the-ground efforts of environmental justice organizations. Rather than fighting for a “seat at the table,” EJ organizers have the opportunity to build the vision, strategy, and framework that others use to make their decisions.

To do this, the environmental justice movement will need to develop a shared agenda and the leadership and infrastructure to advance it together. The EJ movement already has a shared set of principles, put forth after the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991.¹³ This groundbreaking document helped align the movement **around a shared identity and set of values.** As a next step, a shared agenda would lay out core goals and priorities for what the movement wants to accomplish together. While The Forum has begun this process, there is still much work to do. From a movement building perspective, a shared agenda would enable the EJ movement do three important things. First, by developing a platform based in human rights and the needs of frontline communities, the movement has an opportunity to align and leverage the local and regional work of organizations. This “trans-local” or local-to-national approach would maintain the centrality and leadership of frontline organizations, while allowing the movement as a whole to impact state and national politics. Second, a shared agenda allows the EJ movement to better utilize and align all of its assets. At a recent Ford Foundation gathering facilitated by the National Community Development Institute, participants noted the many powerful assets located within the EJ movement, including groups like the Environmental Justice Coalition on Water that have successfully taken on major corporations, and

13. The Principles of Environmental Justice drafted by delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 is available at <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>.

individual specialists like Monique Harden of Advocates for Environmental Human Rights who work on regulation and environmental policy. A shared agenda allows a movement to really use and leverage these assets toward a common vision where different players perform distinct, complementary roles. Finally, a shared agenda will enable the different players to align their work around a long-term vision the movement really wants. Without coordination, short-term campaigns and policy proposals run the risk of undermining the long-term goals of the movement. Alignment around a shared agenda will allow different leaders to design short-, medium- and long-term strategies that advance their common long-term vision and goals. This ultimately makes for a movement that is greater than the sum of its parts.

In order for the environmental justice movement to develop and advance a shared agenda, it will need to reach a new level of alignment, coordination, and leadership.¹⁴ How can the environmental justice movement create more alignment and momentum while retaining its core culture and principles? In what ways is the movement already there? How will it need to grow and shift?

A critical mass of EJ leaders say they are ready to take their local and regional work to the next level. Leaders at the Ford Foundation's 2007-2008 convenings expressed a specific desire to strengthen existing regional networks in Southwest and western states and build new regional networks in the East, Midwest and South. They were also eager to hold joint strategy sessions, strengthen cross-movement communication systems, develop a shared platform, and identify model local campaigns that could be amplified to the national level.

Question 2: How will the EJ movement use the present opportunity to frame and usher in a new "deep green" economy?

As environmental justice leaders grapple with the opportunities of this political moment, they are confronted with a paradox: How do they take advantage of pragmatic opportunities in the current economy, while envisioning a brand new system and supporting that culture to emerge?

On the one hand, this moment presents an opportunity to radically re-imagine our future. Environmental, economic, and social systems are all in a state of flux. There is an increasing sense of urgency and openness to change in the general public. On the other hand, this moment offers opportunities to meet the immediate health, housing, economic, and transportation needs of impacted communities as various green economic initiatives are rolled out. In order to align short- and long-term strategies, environmental justice leaders will need to coordinate their strategies internally and with other sectors of the social justice movement.

Goods and services are seen as the engine of economic growth. How do we push a new paradigm? How do we go from fighting to proactive visioning?

— Bill Gallegos, Communities for a Better Environment

14. For more than twenty years the EJ movement has been building regional, state, and national infrastructure. Most EJ networks are regional or community-specific (e.g., the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, and Indigenous Environmental Network, as well as smaller networks like the California Environmental Justice Coalition on Water).

The environmental justice sector must support the culture shift and resiliency needed to realize the long-term vision of a “deep green” economy. At the Ford foundation’s 2008 gathering at MIT, movement leaders discussed the very real possibility of creating an economy and culture that moves us beyond a system of winners and losers. This moment is filled with potential, but it is also deeply frightening. As our political, social, and economic systems are destabilized by the realities of climate change, global economic recession, and the probability of peak oil, the movement has a huge opportunity to frame the questions, values, and vision that we use to reorganize ourselves. At the same time, EJ must help communities as they transition through this crisis and into a new reality. Environmental justice groups are currently developing strategic alliances in partnership with allies in other sectors to address these issues. These alliances include the Right to the City Environmental Justice Working Group, Grassroots Global Justice, Indigenous Environmental Network, Green For All, and Environmental Justice Climate Change Initiative. Movement Generation is playing a critical role in strengthening and linking EJ alliances with those focused on racial and economic justice. If coordinated, these alliances have the potential to create a shared long-term vision and strategy that links the green economy, climate justice, and sustainable communities. Such alliances can amplify the communications and organizing strategies groups are using to support broad culture-change and community resilience, such as food, water, and energy security projects. They can also play the important role of bridging work in the United States with that in the Global South, especially given the global nature of economic and ecological crises.



Participant in the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit demonstrations. Photo: Ben Powless

The environmental justice sector will need to promote this culture shift and long-term vision, while addressing immediate needs. Environmental and economic justice groups are more than aware of the real needs their communities now face. From affordable housing to jobs and economic development, to transportation, food, and water, communities’ survival depends on taking advantage of opportunities in the present economy. As mentioned above, environmental, racial, and economic justice groups are already developing the partnerships needed to develop these policy and campaign priorities. Through cross-sector dialogue and strategy sessions economic and environmental justice groups can begin to develop a short-term agenda that will also advance their long-term goals.

We are told there’s a profit threshold we need to meet or else the project will go nowhere. How can injustice be the threshold? We need a paradigm shift where justice is the line.
— Diane Takvorian, Environmental Health Coalition

EJ will need to align and embrace different roles and strategies. Some groups, like Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice, are leveraging short-term opportunities in their regions to develop new jobs, new housing, green space, and meet other basic needs. Others, like Green For All, are focused on inserting an equity frame into all decisions about green development. Their focus is on the

all – making sure that every community has equal access to the benefits generated by the green economy in addition to equal protection from any of the negative impacts. Still others, like Communities for a Better Environment, are committed to defining and framing what “green” or “deep green” looks like from an environmental justice and climate justice perspective. This focus helps to ensure that the evolution of the green economy includes both a commitment to social and economic equity and a commitment to deep ecological sustainability. All of these perspectives are essential if environmental justice groups are going to help communities change their current conditions and still work toward long-term structural and cultural change.

The EJ movement must define its role in relation to other social justice movements that are promoting a new “deep green” economy. In the absence of a cross-sectoral, long-term plan for transition to the new economy, environmental justice, economic justice, and green economy groups risk undermining each other’s work. Leaders within these sectors each contribute a different perspective to the big vision for a “deep green economy.” A cross-sector strategy would help groups with different priorities coordinate their work to advance a common agenda. It would include a long-term vision for a just transition to a new economy, an assessment of the current reality, and a strategy to get there over time. The ultimate goal is to build on these movements’ collective strengths in order to amplify the breadth and depth of EJ’s influence.

Question 3: How will EJ organizations harness regional community development and planning opportunities to achieve environmental, climate, and economic justice outcomes?

A development-by-development approach can suck your energy. We want to set the rules of the game for the long term.

— Juliet Ellis, Urban Habitat

When environmental justice organizations win struggles to clean up their communities, they are often faced with the question: “What’s next?” As they work to assure healthier and safer communities they must also step in to confront the risk of gentrification and displacement. This challenges EJ to go beyond protecting communities from harm to creating and implementing a positive vision for the future. Around the country, EJ leaders have found that community planning and development processes offer a proactive vehicle to manifest their vision and maintain the stability of their communities. Through this work they are establishing the standards and practice of *environmental justice community development*.

From the EJ movement perspective community development is a strategic tool rather than an end in itself. Community development can frustrate organizers if approached on a project-to-project basis. Generally speaking, it is a highly technical and bureaucratic field that takes years to move from the visioning and input stage to implementation and enforcement. Yet, environmental justice community development views this process as part of a broader and longer-term strategy to build alliances and vision across regions. This work ultimately requires communities to partner and even build alliances with technical experts, government leaders and staff, community developers, business leaders, architects, and other professionals. These relationships often differ from those that EJ has cultivated in the

past. In these new partnerships EJ organizations are not only watchdogs, they are often designing and driving planning processes. In the context of green community development, EJ organizations offer critical expertise by inserting an equity lens into sustainable community plans. Shifting power dynamics in this way is both an opportunity and a challenge.

Fortunately, EJ organizations have identified numerous opportunities to advance movement building through community development. These include:

- **Environmental justice is poised to play a transformative role in redesigning cities and neighborhoods.** In many ways environmental justice is truer to the original vision of community development than current practice. The EJ movement has the opportunity to shift paradigms in community development based on EJ principles, innovative work, and a sustainability lens.
- **Environmental justice community development needs to be based in a proactive, coordinated vision, rather than reactive fights.** Approaching community development project-to-project will burn groups out. Organizations need to operate from a bigger vision and platform, form alliances, and link their work across regions.
- **Community development in rural and tribal communities is vastly different from urban development.** In rural areas, this work often requires developing whole zoning plans. In Native communities, community development is tied up in the relationship between tribal governments and the US government. The environmental justice movement has an opportunity to develop a framework for sustainable and just rural and Native community development.
- **Communities need to share resources, tools, and strategies for engaging in community development processes and fighting gentrification.**

Through its work in community planning, EJ has developed new capacities including an ability to work with unlikely partners and go beyond an “us vs. them” stance. Environmental justice organizations are developing a sharper awareness of their strengths and unique role in the big picture of planning and development. As a result, they are better able to take risks and develop partnerships with people as diverse as elected officials, city planners, policymakers, universities, clinics, and business people.

The key question is: How can environmental justice leverage the work of organizations on the ground to create broader regional and national change? By linking environmental justice, green economic and community development, EJ is poised to expand its influence and set a broader agenda that will prioritize the needs of frontline communities.

Question 4: How will EJ continue to expand leadership and create a sustainable, intergenerational movement culture, and a multigenerational agenda?

Part of regeneration and sustainability is that we need to step outside of our comfort zone as leaders. If there isn't any support mechanism people won't continue to stretch and take leadership. What practical things are we putting in place to support leaders as they stretch?
— Marco Montenegro, National Community Development Institute

Leadership comes from all parts of the movement and all parts of the organization. We need to develop strategies so that not only one person is expected to be "the leader."
— Roger Kim, Asian Pacific Environmental Network

Intergenerational healing, organizing, and leadership are important components of a strong movement. Over the last ten years many environmental justice organizations have developed models to expand leadership in their organizations and campaigns. These models have infused the movement with new leadership and energy from all generations. They have also raised questions about how to take this work to the next level.

Environmental justice leaders are grappling with how to build a strong intergenerational movement over the long term. Within the movement, organizers still need to develop a shared understanding of intergenerational models that truly support the leadership of youth and elders. Organizers are seeking a more resilient movement culture that supports them to work with and through conflict, fosters healing, and promotes long-term involvement; this includes developing the capacity to discuss and heal old rifts within and across generations. Finally, intergenerational movement building (as opposed to organization building) requires another level of organization and thoughtfulness.

Participants at the Global South Youth Meeting at the Copenhagen climate summit. Photo: Ben Powless



On a movement level, how will organizers use the lessons of their organizations to guide their work as they scale up? What vision, opportunities, and infrastructure can the movement put in place so that it nurtures and builds intergenerational leadership over the long term? Such leadership expansion will need to provide: 1) leadership opportunities for emerging leaders, 2) ongoing training/capacity building, and 3) a space to transition into new roles. Additionally, alliances will need to provide mechanisms to engage veteran, established, and youth organizers in strategy development, communications, and network and alliance building in different ways.

On a very basic level, the success of intergenerational organizing comes down to trust



Participants sample locally-grown fruit at Movement Generation's 2009 retreat. Photo: Movement Generation.

and sharing control. Donele Wilkins of Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice spoke about embracing a culture of generosity and learning so that “we have space for mistakes, and are wise about how we share responsibility for these mistakes.” She asks, “Can we love each other enough to allow people the space to fail?”

Question 5: How will EJ find resources to support the work?

The current economic crisis is forcing all social justice organizations and foundations to think outside the box for how to resource their work. With the pool of EJ-specific money shrinking in philanthropy, environmental justice organizations have been looking for ways to expand their resources beyond traditional foundation funding. Harnessing a new wave of investment for the movement – and not just for individual organizations – will require a new kind of strategy where EJ organizations approach foundation funding

and other resources differently. How can the environmental justice movement position its work to bring a new wave of investment into the movement? How can EJ move away from the model of individual competition, to funding the movement as a whole? What kind of coordination and clarity will this take?

The environmental justice movement has the opportunity to leverage its intersectional framework to attract new money from foundations as well as from the public sector. Even while the pool of EJ-specific money is shrinking, new important opportunities are emerging. Climate change, green economic development, smart growth, and environmental health are just some of the philanthropic funding areas that EJ could tap for its work. Regional funders are also a promising source of funding. EJ's innovative community and green economic development work positions the movement to harness new public money available under initiatives like the stimulus package. The public and private sectors are investing in efforts to curb climate change, green the economy, and develop sustainable communities at an unprecedented rate. Opportunities at the federal, local, and regional levels offer up new models for creative funding. Environmental justice leaders also have the opportunity to think strategically about how they want to influence the development and allocation of new funds created by climate change policies, such as carbon tax measures.

EJ will need to innovate radically different investment strategies to resources its work. These strategies could help move EJ beyond some of the limitations of 501(c)3 structures. Inspiring models exist to help communities “use their own assets,” such as pension funds, for sustainable development. In these models, nontraditional funds are tapped to spearhead green community development including housing, transportation, community energy trusts, green workforce development, and health care

initiatives.¹⁶ For example, professor Phillip Thompson points to the Western Massachusetts Health Clinic, which has developed an innovative model to fund their work through a partnership with the state Medicare system. Through a door-to-door survey organizers found that the majority of residents in their community were insured by Medicare. With this information, they developed an agreement with the state to give back 50 cents for every dollar saved through preventative care at their clinic. They just received their first \$1 million. Now, they are planning to expand their health care work with four prisons and have recruited other clinics as partners.

A shared field building strategy will help EJ leaders generate a new wave of investment for the movement as whole as well as individual organizations. This means EJ organizations will need to employ new movement building practices, as well as new framing and messaging, to strengthen their work. Alliances in other social justice sectors have successfully leveraged new resources by developing shared field building strategies. By aligning and coordinating their fundraising and communication ef-

Southwest Organizing Project members and organizers envisioning ideal health care reform. Photo: Southwest Organizing Project



orts, these groups have actually increased funding for the field as a whole, as well as their individual organizations and alliances. When approached in this way, field building becomes an opportunity to not only raise money, but to advance a shared platform that is aligned with grantmaking strategies. If environmental justice groups are able to build a shared platform for climate justice, community sustainability, and/or the green economy, they will also be well positioned to secure new investment strategies.

In other social justice sectors, strategic alliances have successfully created powerful new frameworks to influence the way funders think and direct resources in their field. By coordinating their efforts and positioning themselves as thought leaders, these alliances have been able to leverage new money for not only their alliance and the organizations in it, but for their sector as a whole. As such, their field building work is fundamentally tied to their movement building efforts. As environmental justice builds alliances and sharpens its shared platform,

16. Phillip Thompson, PhD, presented at the 2008 convening. He is an urban planner, political scientist, and an associate professor of Urban Politics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was the former deputy general manager of the New York Housing Authority and the director of the Mayor's Office of Housing Coordination in New York. His innovative urban planning work includes efforts to help trade unions partner with immigrant and community groups across the US. A number of his most recent efforts have focused on housing and workforce development initiatives to help rebuild the city of New Orleans.

Developing New Resource Strategies

At the second Ford Foundation convening in 2008, participants discussed several examples of new investment strategies. These included the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCo) in New York and their effort to develop green low-income housing through the adaptive reuse of an existing hospital. In Massachusetts, Co-Op Power's project to build a community-owned renewable energy grid for the Northeast region provided another example. A third was the AFL-CIO's effort to leverage money for a community partnership to introduce green steel-frame affordable housing and a pre-construction training program in post-Katrina New Orleans. These projects leverage the expertise and service that community organizations provide to pay for their work through non-traditional sources. In turn, they also position EJ groups as key experts and partners in relationship to community developers and public officials working on the project.

Since the two Ford gatherings, a working group of eight EJ organizations¹⁷ from six states crafted a statement for how states can use economic stimulus funds to build a more just and sustainable economy. The unprecedented American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA or "stimulus act") is a unique opportunity to promote change on a scale that has not been seen since the New Deal.¹⁸ The working group's March 16, 2009, statement, "Stimulating Environmental Justice: How the States Can Use Federal Recovery Funds to Build a Just and Sustainable Economy," provides a roadmap that public and environmental justice leaders can use for this historic investment in communities. In addition to advocacy, the stimulus package also provides a unique opportunity for environmental justice groups to further their work through direct community development and land use projects, energy retrofitting, mass transit, and other stimulus-funded projects. Some environmental justice groups have used the opportunity to further collaboration with other allies in their region and state.

Indigenous organizers are also developing new approaches, collectively advocating for federal investment in green energy technology in Indian Country as a way to meet the country's energy needs, solve the climate crisis, and empower this continent's First Nations Peoples through sustainable economic development. In the report "Energy Justice in Native America: A Policy Paper for Consideration by the Obama Administration and the 111th Congress," Honor the Earth, Indigenous Environmental Network, Intertribal Council on Utility Policy, and the International Treaty Council outline a comprehensive plan to promote tribally owned and operated renewable energy and green job development as a means to reduce fossil fuel dependence and build a sustainable low-carbon future.

17. Working Group Members: Bill Gallegos (Communities for a Better Environment, Los Angeles), Denise Perry (Power U, Miami), Kalila Barnett and Penn Loh (Alternatives for Community & Environment, Roxbury, MA), Diane Takvorian (Environmental Health Coalition, San Diego), Burt Lauderdale (Kentuckians for the Commonwealth), Peggy Shepard and Cecil Corbin-Mark (West Harlem Environmental Action, New York), Donele Wilkins (Detroit Working for Environmental Justice), Roger Kim (Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Oakland, CA).

18. ARRA dedicates \$787 billion in federal funds toward new spending and tax incentives to reinvigorate the economy. In the memo "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – Opportunities for Cities and States" (January 30, 2009), the Apollo Alliance concluded that ARRA offered significant "incentives for clean energy and/or green job creation — and more if investments in construction, highway maintenance, and other infrastructure projects are included." The memo outlines, "Clean energy investments fall into these broad categories: energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy infrastructure, transportation and transit, brownfield remediation, land and water conservation, research and development, [and] workforce development. The investments included in each of these areas clearly have the potential to spur significant development and large-scale deployment of clean, energy-efficient technologies."

it will also need to develop shared strategies to influence the flow of resources at the movement level. To leverage the opportunities of this moment, EJ will need to build leadership and alignment that brings this work to scale.

Environmental justice can use new and existing public sector money to resource its work. In the public sphere, EJ groups are seizing opportunities to shape the development of new funding pools related to climate change and the green economy. For example, Green For All is successfully advocating for broad public commitments to the green economy, through job training at the city, region, and national levels. Shalini Vajjhala of Resources for the Future highlights the opportunity to create criteria in the United Nations new Adaptation Fund, as well as any new carbon cap-and-trade policy funds. While environmental justice has a strong critique of the cap-and-trade framework, this may be an opportunity for EJ to both provide an alternative framework and assert criteria for the allocation of climate change funds.

A participant in the 2009 Movement Generation retreat takes a moment to reflect by the water. Photo: Movement Generation



SEIZING THE MOMENT: RECOMMENDATIONS

This historic moment demands new, innovative leadership that goes beyond instilling fear and offers instead a vision, hope, and grounded solutions. To provide this leadership, a critical mass of environmental justice organizations must tackle the five strategic questions outlined above. Together, EJ must work to advance a common agenda. Taking on issues at the intersection of climate change, sustainable community development, and green economic development provides an opportunity for the environmental justice movement to develop more alignment, synergy, and momentum. This momentum, if nurtured, will take environmental justice to the next level – building the movement’s capacity to be more strategic, collaborative, and sustainable. It will also support broad social change efforts by providing leaders in private and public sectors with the perspective, vision, and solutions they are urgently seeking.

For the environmental justice movement to play the leadership role needed at this crucial moment, it will need to:

- **Develop a shared strategy to align groups and leverage power.** The environmental justice movement is rooted in grassroots communities of color across the US and beyond. This position gives the movement a depth of perspective and practice necessary for the creation of a shared strategy and platform based in equity and sustainability. A successful shared strategy will not limit the work of individuals and local groups; rather it will align their collective work to build national, state, and regional power. This local-to-national model is a departure from the centralized models of many national advocacy groups. It will continue to support regional groups to build critical mass and capacity, while increasing effectiveness by identifying shared vision, values, and goals.
- **Convene movement leaders who are ready to answer strategic questions.** At the 2007–2008 Ford Foundation gatherings, a critical mass of leaders expressed interest in meeting as a think tank to strategize around these issues. In addition to talking about the issues themselves, leaders should address what forms of collaboration will be needed to advance the work. This could begin with a series of strategy sessions to map opportunities and leverage points, identify which organizations and individuals are ready to do more coordinated work, and plan a strategic alliance.
- **Strengthen movement infrastructure to increase collaboration and alignment among groups.** In order to coordinate and align groups across the country, the EJ movement will need to strengthen existing networks and build new infrastructure. In 1991, at the First National People of Color Environmental Justice Summit, EJ leaders created the vision and platform that is now a model for other social justice sectors. Several key networks came out of this summit and they have been critical for developing new leadership and coordinating campaigns across regions. Now, the environmental justice movement can move to the next level by developing strategic alliances to support collaboration, build power, and make change from the grassroots up. Several models of this kind of alliance exist in other sectors, including reproductive justice (EMERJ), economic justice (Right to the City), and media justice (MAG-Net).

- **Support organizations to take on new and complementary roles.** In order to effectively move a shared agenda from the local to national level, environmental justice organizations must increase their awareness and capacity to share leadership and divide labor in the movement. For example, some groups will continue to focus primarily on grassroots organizing, while others may focus on alliance building, communications, or grassroots research. Some organizations will focus on regional movement building, while others will deepen their work in local communities. By establishing a division of labor based on organizations' strengths and the movement's needs, EJ will be able to achieve an impact that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Similarly, environmental justice organizations will need increased capacity to build partnerships with leaders outside of the environmental justice movement. This will require groups to develop an ongoing awareness of their role in the bigger picture of climate justice, sustainable development, and green economic development.

Recommendations to Funders:

Funders play a unique and important role in the development of social justice sectors. As investors and organizers of other funders, they support organizations and collaborations that build momentum within the broader movement. Specifically, we offer the following recommendations:

- **Reinforce the foundations of our democracy by supporting grassroots civic participation.** In tough economic times we need to reinforce the foundation of our democracy. By engaging everyday people in solving the social, economic, and environmental problems we face, EJ organizations are strengthening our culture of vibrant, grassroots civic participation. This work is at the heart of efforts to revitalize our democracy. EJ groups now have an opportunity to make deeper impacts at the regional, state, and federal level; this work will only be possible if leaders and funders reinforce the foundation of that work: strong local organizing.

Organizer at a climate justice action in Richmond, CA. Photo: Mobilization for Climate Justice



- **Deepen investment in groups and collaborations offering proactive solutions to strategic questions.** These solutions are the basis for innovative organizing and national policy change. By supporting solution-focused leaders, funders will support national as well as local and regional efforts. In addition to the projects themselves, this innovative work requires thoughtful planning and analysis. Funders should invest resources in planning processes for those with promising solutions.
- **Support intersectional strategies, dialogues, and partnerships.** Many of the most pressing and intriguing issues facing EJ communities are intersectional by nature. Organizations around the country are developing innovative models to address issues at the nexus of EJ, climate change, sustainable development, and green economic development. Funders should invest in and connecting groups that are building these models.
- **Invest in groups and collaborations ready to align and leverage the EJ movement.** At both convenings, leaders overwhelmingly spoke to the need for increased coordination and alignment in the environmental justice movement. There is great interest in coming together to renew a national environmental justice platform and to create stronger infrastructure. Such an investment will help coordinate and align the work from the grassroots up to the national and international levels. By investing in individuals and groups that can build momentum and critical mass, funders will help the movement build to scale.
- **Continue to support leadership expansion and sustainable movement culture.** The environmental justice movement has developed an innovative framework and practical models for leadership expansion and movement regeneration. Funders and movement leaders can strengthen overall movement building work by investing in leadership development, particularly intergenerational dialogue and lesson-sharing across organizations and sectors.
- **Support peer exchanges.** Movement leaders and organizers need opportunities to learn from each other directly and build stronger relationships. Movement building and social change are fundamentally about relationships. Peer exchange supports movement building and increases effectiveness by building stronger networks and allowing organizers to share models that work. Given the global nature of these issues, this strategy should also connect EJ leaders with movement leaders internationally to share effective strategies and models.



GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Cap and Trade: Emissions trading is a market-based, administrative approach used to control pollution by providing economic incentives to achieve reductions in the emission of pollutants. It is sometimes called cap and trade. A central authority (usually a government or international body) sets a limit, or cap, on the amount of a pollutant that can be emitted. Companies or other groups are issued emission permits and are required to hold an equivalent number of allowances (or credits), which represent the right to emit a specific amount. The total amount of allowances and credits cannot exceed the cap, limiting total emissions to that level. Companies that need to increase their emission allowance must buy credits from those who pollute less. The transfer of allowances is referred to as a trade. In effect, the buyer is paying a charge for polluting, while the seller is being rewarded for having reduced emissions by more than was needed. Thus, in theory, those who can easily reduce emissions most cheaply will do so, achieving the pollution reduction at the lowest possible cost to society. Many EJ organizations object to cap and trade as a market-based policy that turns carbon emissions into a publicly traded commodity.

Carbon Charge: An alternative policy proposal to reduce and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions that is being advanced by The Environmental Justice Forum on Climate Change. A carbon charge regime would collect revenues by charging corporations and facilities for the emission of carbon in the form of a tax. These taxes would create a new revenue stream to support the necessary transients associated with climate destabilization. Among other components, the policy would charge companies rates high enough to encourage efficiency and investment in renewable energy options, as well as stringent environmental review. Applying charge revenue to projects would help wean the country off fossil fuels, prohibit offsets, and address the issue of co-pollutants and toxic hot spots.¹⁹

Climate Change: The long-term, significant changes in Earth's climate resulting from increased greenhouse gases. Over the last 200 years, the increased emission of greenhouse gases has been caused primarily by human industrial activities.²⁰

Climate Justice: An analysis of the impact of climate change on communities of color and low-income communities. An approach to organizing around climate change that centralizes the needs, experiences, and leadership of low-income communities and communities of color.

Frontline Organizations; Frontline Communities: Frontline organizations are groups based in communities most impacted by social and environmental injustice. These communities and organizations are called "frontline" because they experience the impacts of issues such as environmental pollution, climate change, and the economic crisis first and most severely. These communities are most often communities of color and low income. Frontline organizations have a major stake in questions about economic and ecological sustainability, but they are often excluded from mainstream discussions and

19. See, The Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change. *Carbon Charge and Environmental Review Emissions Reduction Strategy Policy Paper* (2008) for further discussion. Available on WE ACT's website: <http://www.weact.org>

20. From The Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change.

decision-making processes. Furthermore, these organizations have a unique and critical lens into the true solutions to these issues.

Green Economy; Green Economic Development: Definitions of the green economy vary widely. From an environmental justice point of view the green economy includes the development of new business and economic models and systems that support long-term social, environmental, cultural, and political systems rooted in sustainability and equity.

Sustainable Development: Community development that supports the long-term health and well-being of a community, including the physical, cultural, social, political, and economic health of its residents, as well as the health of the local ecosystem and environment.

Trans-Local Alliance Building: An alliance and movement building approach that builds the power and influence of grassroots organizations through bottom-up or local-to-national organizing. Trans-local alliances are coordinated, strategic, and often decentralized. They generate strategic agendas by leveraging and aligning the work of local and regional groups. This also supports the autonomy of local communities to develop place-based solutions built on shared frameworks. This approach enables leaders to build power and influence at the national or international level, while staying rooted in impacted communities. This term is being popularized through the work of Movement Generation Justice and Ecology Project.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, STRATEGIC QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What Environmental Justice Brings to This Moment

- The environmental justice movement holds critical insight into climate issues because of its work in the most impacted, frontline communities.
- Through local and regional campaigns, environmental justice groups have developed the core features of an expansive climate agenda.
- EJ organizations and allied groups are pioneering strategies that advance a “deep green” (not “green washing”) vision for our economic system, a crucial aspect of climate justice.
- Environmental justice successfully utilizes community development and government planning processes as concrete arenas to manifest proactive policies for sustainable and just green communities.
- Environmental justice groups are creating innovative models for intergenerational organizing. These models have important lessons for the sustainability of the environmental justice movement.

Five Strategic Questions for the EJ Movement

- How can the movement develop a shared platform that groups can use to leverage, coordinate, and amplify their local work?
- How will EJ use the present opportunity to frame and usher in a new “deep green” economy?
- How will EJ organizations harness regional community development and planning opportunities to achieve environmental, climate, and economic justice outcomes?
- How will EJ continue to expand leadership and create a sustainable, intergenerational movement culture, and a multigenerational agenda?
- How will EJ find resources to support the work?

Seizing the Moment: Recommendations

Movement Leaders:

- Develop a shared strategy to align groups and leverage power.
- Convene movement leaders who are ready to answer strategic questions.
- Strengthen movement infrastructure to increase collaboration and alignment among groups.
- Support organizations to take on new and complementary roles.

Funders:

- Reinforce the foundations of our democracy by supporting grassroots civic participation.
- Deepen investment in groups and collaborations offering proactive solutions to strategic questions.
- Support intersectional strategies, dialogues, and partnerships.
- Invest in groups and collaborations ready to align and leverage the EJ movement.
- Continue to support leadership expansion and sustainable movement culture.
- Support peer exchanges.

THREE CIRCLES STRATEGY CHART

Source: Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project, www.movementgeneration.org

Developed by Gopal Dayaneni, Dave Henson, Michelle Mascarenhas-Swan, Jason Negrón-Gonzales, Mateo Nube, Carla Perez.

This tool illustrates a theory of how change happens to help us draw out our visions and align our strategies. Given the current state of ecological crises, it can be used to help our organizations, alliances, and movements identify what we believe is materially and culturally necessary (top circle), assess what is currently politically realistic (middle circle), and identify the false solutions that are being put forth by forces with an interest in maintaining the current system (bottom circle). The arrows indicate strategies for impacting the state of affairs – winning space to advance our agenda, pushing false solutions off the table, etc.

Using the tool:

1. We must identify what is materially and culturally necessary to ensure climate justice. If social movements don't define our visions, we will be stuck in a defensive/reactive posture. Our vision should not be limited by what is politically realistic even if we can't yet win the totality of that vision. Still, some components of what is materially and culturally necessary do overlap with what is politically realistic.
2. The location of the politically realistic circle is fluid. It is influenced by the political climate which is influenced by social movements, the power of corporations, the current state of the world, etc. It is the role of social movements to move more of what is materially and culturally necessary down into the politically realistic circle. And to push the false solutions out of what is politically realistic.
3. Just because there is overlap between politically realistic and what we really need doesn't mean that we will get it. And if we only focus on that narrow space, we don't inherently extend our influence to bring in more of our agenda into that space. We have to engage in a variety of spaces to advance that agenda. If we don't say what we really want, we will never get it. So, for example, a total moratorium on all new fossil fuels exploration and exploitation is not at all politically realistic in 2012, but we don't want to wait until material conditions become so bad that it becomes viable (because at that point, the false solutions will have colonized all the space for what is politically realistic). We have to find ways to advance that agenda now, so that it can become politically realistic. For example, employing strategies that target Tar Sands as a vulnerable link in the fossil fuels chain; or fighting for protection of pristine ecosystems from new exploration.
4. What we really need and false solutions do not every overlap. What goes in each circle depends on your worldview, what you believe and the groups you are aligned with.
5. The top and bottom circles do not occupy the same amount of space and do not employ the same strategies. Aligning the circles is an important part of the exercise. It allows for a snapshot of the state of play. Then we can talk about what we might move from the top circle into the overlapping space.

When we use this tool as a group, we can use hula-hoops and large strips of paper to brainstorm necessities and false solutions; then arrange them and discuss strategies to move the agenda forward.

THREE CIRCLES STRATEGY CHART

Source: Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project, www.movementgeneration.org

Developed by Gopal Dayaneni, Dave Henson, Michelle Mascarenhas-Swan, Jason Negrón-Gonzales, Mateo Nube, Carla Perez.



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CONTACT INFORMATION

ORGANIZATIONS

Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives (SCOPE/AGENDA)

1715 Florence Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90047
(323) 789-7920
www.scopela.org/agenda/index.html

Advocates for Environmental Human Rights

650 Poydras Street, Suite 2523
New Orleans, LA 70130
(504) 799-3060
www.ehumanrights.org

Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE)

2181 Washington Street, Suite 301
Roxbury, MA 02119
(617) 442-3343
www.ace-ej.org

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)

310 8th Street, Suite 309
Oakland, CA 94607
(510) 834-8920
www.apen4ej.org

Center on Race Poverty and the Environment

47 Kearny Street, Suite 804
San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 346-4179

Clean Water Fund

559 Bloomfield Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042
(347) 742-3465
www.cleanwateraction.org/njef

Communities for a Better Environment

1440 Broadway, Suite 701
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 302-0430
www.cbecal.org

Community Innovators Lab (MIT CoLab)

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
147 Clark Road
Brookline, MA 02445
<http://web.mit.edu/cilab>

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

Dillard University
2601 Gentilly Boulevard
New Orleans, LA 70122
(504) 816-4005
www.dscej.org

Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (DWEJ)

P.O. Box 14944
Detroit, MI 48214
(313) 833-3935
www.dwej.org

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

344 40th Street
Oakland, CA 94609
(510) 428-3939
<http://ellabakercenter.org>

Environmental Health Coalition

401 Mile of Cars Way, Suite 310
National City, CA 91950
(619) 474-0220
www.environmentalhealth.org

Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative

1904 Franklin Street, 6th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 444-3041
www.ejcc.org

Environmental Justice Coalition for Water

2515 Wilshire Boulevard
Santa Monica, CA, 90403
(310) 829-1229 ext. 221

Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FYCO)

20 Jay Street, Suite 210B
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(212) 725-3386
www.fcyo.org

Futurecity, Inc.

1045 East Jersey Street, Suite 204
Elizabeth, NJ 07201
(908) 659-0689
www.futurecityinc.org

Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)

1958 University Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94704
(510) 883-9490
www.no-burn.org

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice

1095 Market Street, Suite 712
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 248-5010
www.greenaction.org

Green For All

1611 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 600
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 663-6500
www.greenforall.org

Harambee House

1115 Habersham Street
Savannah, GA 31401
(912) 233-0907
www.theharambeehouse.com

Honor the Earth

2104 Stevens Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
(612) 879-7529
www.honorearth.org

Indigenous Environmental Network

P.O. Box 485
Bemidji, MN 56619
(218) 751-4967
www.ienearth.org

Indigenous Women's Network

13621 FM 2769
Austin, TX 78726
(512) 258-3880

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth

P.O. Box 1450
London, KY 40743
(606) 878-2161
www.kftc.org/our-work

The Labor/Community Strategy Center

3780 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1200
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(213) 387-2800
www.thestrategycenter.org

The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

1401 New York Avenue NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 662-8600
www.lawyerscommittee.org

Miami Workers Center

6127 NW 7th Avenue
Miami, FL 33127
(305) 759-8717
www.miamiworkerscenter.org

National Community Development Institute (NCDI)

900 Alice Street, Suite 300
Oakland, CA 94607
(510) 763-4120
www.ncdinet.org

Native Action

P.O. Box 409
Lame Deer, MT 59043
(406) 477-6390
www.nativeaction.org

The New Jersey Environmental Federation

559 Bloomfield Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042
(973) 744-3005
www.cleanwateraction.org

New Mexico Environmental Law Center

1405 Luisa Street, Suite 5
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 989-9022
www.nmenv.state.nm.us

New Partners for Community Revitalization, Inc.

11 Penn Plaza, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10001
(718) 448-7916
www.npcr.net

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

151 West 30th Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10001
(212) 244-4664
www.nylpi.org

North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers

Land Loss Prevention Project
411 West Chapel Hill Street, Suite 1104
Durham, NC 27701
(919) 682-5969
www.landloss.org

North Gulfport Community Land Trust

8208 Ohio Street
Gulfport, MS 39501
(337) 321-2427
www.ngclt.org

People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources (PODER)

2604 East Cesar Chavez
Austin, TX 78702
(512) 472-9921
www.poder-texas.org

Resources for the Future

1616 P Street, NW
Washington, DC 20010
(202) 328-5129
www.rff.org

Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development

P.O. Box 4569
Arcata, CA 95518
(707) 825-7640
www.7genfund.org

Smart Growth America

1707 L Street NW, Suite 1050
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 207-3356
www.smartgrowthamerica.org

South Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance

112 N. 7th Street, 3rd Floor
Camden, NJ 08102
(856) 365-9038
www.sjenvironmentaljustice.org

Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ)

804 Park Avenue SW
Albuquerque, NM 87194
(505) 242-0416
www.sneej.org

Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP)

211 10th Street SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 247-8832
www.swop.net

Southwest Workers' Union (SWU)

P.O. Box 830706
San Antonio, TX 78283
(210) 299-2666
www.swunion.org

Sustainable Community Development Group

P.O. Box 15395
Washington, DC 20003
(202) 637-2467
www.sustainablecommunitydevelopmentgroup.org

United Puerto Rican Organization of Sunset Park (UPROSE)

166A 22nd Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232
www.uprose.org

University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources and Environment

Dana Building
440 Church Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
(734) 615-2602
www.umich.edu/~meldi

University of California, Davis Environmental Justice Project

Hart Hall, One Shields Avenue
Davis, CA 95616
(530) 754-5479
http://ej.ucdavis.edu

Urban Habitat

436 14th Street, Suite 1205
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 839-9510
www.urbanhabitat.org

West County Toxics Coalition

305 Chesley Avenue
 Richmond, CA 94801
 (510) 232-3427
www.stratsolve.net/West_home.htm

WE ACT for Environmental Justice (WE ACT)

271 West 125th Street, Suite 308
 New York, NY 10027
 (212) 961-1000
www.weact.org

New Jersey Work Environment Council

142 West State Street, 3rd Floor
 Trenton, NJ 08608
 (609) 695-7100
www.njwec.org

FOUNDATION PARTICIPANTS**Ford Foundation**

320 East 43rd Street
 New York, NY 10017
 (212) 573-5000
www.fordfound.org

Garfield Foundation

89 North Water Street
 New Bedford, MA 02740
 (508) 997-3122
www.garfieldfoundation.org

Liberty Hill Foundation

2121 Cloverfield Boulevard
 Santa Monica, CA 90404
 (310) 453-3611
www.libertyhill.org

Panta Rhea Foundation

1505 Bridgeway #127
 Sausalito, CA 94965
 (415) 331-3737

Solidago Foundation

150 Main Street, 3rd Floor
 Northampton, MA 01060
 (413) 587-0174
www.solidago.org

ACADEMIC PARTICIPANTS**Luz Claudio, PhD.**

Mount Sinai School of Medicine
 One Gustave L. Levy Place, Box 1057
 New York, NY 10029

Nicky Sheats, Esq, PhD.

Center for the Urban Environment
 John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy
 Thomas Edison State College
 101 W. State Street
 Trenton, NJ 08608
 (888) 442-8372

Julie Sze, PhD.

University of California, Davis
 Environmental Justice Project
 Hart Hall, One Shields Avenue
 Davis, CA 95616
 (530) 754-5479

Dorceta Taylor, PhD.

University of Michigan
 School of Natural Resources and Environment
 Minority Environmental Leadership Development
 Initiative (MELDI)
 School of Natural Resources and Environment
 Dana Building
 440 Church Street
 Ann Arbor, MI 48109
 (734) 615-2602

Phillip Thompson, PhD.

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
 Massachusetts Institute of Technology
 147 Clark Road
 Brookline, MA 02445

Beverly Wright, PhD. & Myra M. Lewis, PhD.

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice
 Dillard University
 2601 Gentilly Boulevard
 New Orleans, LA 70122
 (504) 816-4005
www.dscej.org

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ABOUT THE MOVEMENT STRATEGY CENTER

The Movement Strategy Center strengthens the movement for social and racial justice by increasing the capacity of individuals, organizations, alliances, and sectors to be more strategic, collaborative, and sustainable. For more information on our programs and publications visit:

Movement Strategy Center
1611 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 510
Oakland, CA 94612
P: 510.444.0640
F: 510.251.9810
www.movementstrategy.org

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Oakland, CA 94612
510.444.0640
www.movementstrategy.org

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