



Just Transition Alliance

Frontline Workers and Fenceline Communities
United for Justice



WHAT IS CLIMATE AND ENERGY JUSTICE?

Energy and climate change are among the greatest challenges we face in the 21st century. **Climate and energy justice** demands that the voices of workers and communities on the frontlines - those most affected by the policies under consideration - be heard.

Our dependence on fossil fuels comes at a high price to our health, our atmosphere, and our economic and political strength. Workers and community residents are contaminated, injured, and killed in the processes of extracting and refining fossil fuels. In fact, more workers die in oil, gas and coal extraction than in all other industries combined. Low-income, people of color and Indigenous Peoples are affected even more than other populations by fossil fuel use. Governments are more likely to allow polluting facilities to be placed in or near people of color and poor neighborhoods and less likely to enforce laws against polluting these communities.

The impacts of climate change disproportionately target people of color and low-income communities. Economic hardships from rising oil prices, heat-related deaths, and higher air pollution concentrations all burden people of color, Indigenous, and low-income people more than other populations.

We must begin to wean ourselves off our fossil fuel addiction and invest in socially and environmentally sustainable energy sources, such as wind, solar, hydropower, and biomass.

Climate and Energy Justice

Just switching to alternative energy sources will not be enough. *How* the transition occurs is of equal importance. Fossil fuel pollution and climate change are direct results of economic policies that put profits before everything else and treat low-income, people of color, workers, and Indigenous communities as throw-aways. To achieve a sustainable future we must address this pattern of exploitation and compensate those who are most affected, both with regard to climate change and climate and energy policies.

What Will Justice Cost?

Successfully transitioning to alternative energy sources such as wind, hydropower, and biomass will cause positive ripple effects. On a large scale, these policies will help prevent some of the worst scenarios of future rapid global climate change and fossil fuel resource wars. Additionally, lowering carbon dioxide emissions will improve the health conditions of the millions of people who suffer the effects of air pollution. Overall, several studies find that the health benefits of reducing carbon emissions equal the economic costs of reducing emissions. Renewable energy industries have the potential to create millions of jobs, and will increase national economic output.

However, there are costs associated with making this transition.

THE TOTAL COST OF A JUST TRANSITION FROM THE CURRENT ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT TO A SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES THE COST OF:

Worker Compensation
+
Community Redevelopment
+
Transportation Justice
+
Cleanup Costs
+
Human Health Costs

Worker Compensation

Workers in the fossil fuel industries will lose jobs from any policy that lowers carbon emissions. Many people who lose their jobs will lack the skills and training to find well-paying jobs in other industries. To soften the blow for the most affected workers, compensation and training must be provided.

Community Redevelopment

It is not enough to compensate the workers who lose their jobs. Climate-related job losses affect entire communities. Entire communities - not just the workers - should be compensated for the loss of their local economy. Compensation includes economic development and job creation resources, the replacement of lost tax revenue, and the resources to rebuild community physical and social infrastructure such as public safety, roads, waterways, and bridges, schools and libraries, and social services.

Transportation justice is an important part of energy and climate justice. Currently, the nation's poorest families spend more than 40 percent of their take home pay on transportation. Transportation justice means putting money into effective equitable mass transit systems, investing in non-polluting technology for mass

transit systems, and changing the pattern of highway and bridge development. It is important that increased public transit does not mean more diesel buses, which are a significant health problem in inner-city areas. The process of a Just transportation system must include the participation of those who use it most. Bus riders participation should be a major factor in developing a sustainable transportation system.

In addition to public transit, low-emission private vehicles such as hybrid cars must also be affordable for low-income, Indigenous Peoples, and people of color communities through sliding-scale subsidies.

Cleanup Costs

The legacies of the fossil fuel economy will remain after we have switched to other energy sources. Contaminated structures, water, and soil will continue to cause health problems in disenfranchised communities long after the air has cleared. They must be cleaned before they can be converted to other uses.

Human Health Costs

Reducing air pollution will slow climate change, clean up the air we breathe, and improve overall health for all living things, saving billions in health costs. If implemented in all areas, general air pollution reductions will benefit low income, Indigenous Peoples, and people of color communities even more, since most polluting facilities are located in these areas.

However, even if we slow down our usage of fossil fuels and improve the immediate air quality, there still will be chronic health effects in people who have been exposed to pollutants either from the air or other means. As long as toxins remain in the land, water, and facilities, people who live and work in the area will be contaminated. Many of the health effects that result from fossil fuel contamination will take decades to address: the oil workers who have been hurt on the job, the residents outside refineries who have become ill from vapor releases, the children born with birth defects because of mercury from coal-fired power plants, and so on.

WHAT IS JUST TRANSITION?

"Just Transition" is a *principle*, a *process* and a *practice*. The principle of just transition is that a healthy economy and a clean environment can and should co-exist. The process for achieving this vision should be a fair one that should not cost workers or community residents their health, environment, jobs, or economic assets. Any losses should be fairly compensated. And the practice of just transition means that the people who are most affected by pollution – the frontline workers and the fenceline communities – should be in the leadership of crafting policy solutions.

The Just Transition Alliance was formed in 1997. We seek just transition of communities and workers from unsafe workplaces and environments to healthy, viable communities with a sustainable economy. We devote our primary resources to strengthening frontline and fenceline alliances with an eye toward building and creating alternatives to corporate globalization that work for people on-the-ground.

Just Transition Principles

1. Workers, community residents, and Indigenous Peoples around the world have a fundamental human right to clean air, water, land, and food in their workplaces, homes and environment.
2. There is no contradiction among simultaneously creating sustainable development, having a healthy economy and maintaining a clean and safe environment.
3. Liberalization of environmental, health and labor laws and corporate globalization -- know no borders. Therefore, solutions call for local, regional, national, and global solidarity.

4. The development of fair economic, trade, health and safety and environmental policies must include both the frontline workers and fenceline communities most affected by pollution, ecological damage and economic restructuring

5. The costs of achieving sustainable development, a healthy economy and clean environment should not be borne by current or future victims of environmental and economic injustices and unfair free trade policies.

6. Workers and community residents have the right to challenge any entity that commits economic and/or environmental injustices. These entities include governments, the military, corporations, international bodies, and mechanisms for securing corporate accountability.

JTA has developed a climate justice curriculum for workers and community organizations to educate and mobilize people around the issue of climate justice.

For more information contact:

Jose T. Bravo, Executive Director
Just Transition Alliance
2434 Southport Way, Suite D
National City, CA 91950
619-474-4001
justtransition@sbcglobal.net
www.jtalliance.org

Jenice L. View, Education and Training Director
Just Transition Alliance
1328 U Street, NW Suite 3E
Washington, DC 20009
202-588-1850
justtransition@aol.com
www.jtalliance.org

How You Can Support Just Transition and Climate Justice

- (1) Be an ally to organized labor, Indigenous Peoples, and people of color environmental justice organizations through your political work and financial contributions;
- (2) Demand that both workers and community residents participate in policy making boards, commissions, and coalitions, especially when the issues relate to energy, climate change, transportation, and environmental health; and
- (3) Include "just transition" language in all environmental and economic policies, as well as provisions for compensating for health, environmental, or job losses.