Change the Climate:
Building Power at the Intersection of Race, Economics, and Climate

POWER
PHILADELPHIANS ORGANIZED TO WITNESS, EMPOWER AND REBUILD

A Faithful Resistance Project

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We are in a moment: Philadelphia is the largest poor city in America, unemployment strikes 1 in 4 residents in North Philadelphia, people struggle to put food on the table or pay their utility bills. Yet, there is an opportunity to tackle these challenges by building out a just transition to a green and renewable energy economy.

A green economy is not just an imagination – it is emerging in real life. Take Serenity Soular, for example, one of the first projects developed in North Philly that provides clean energy, cuts the utility bill, and has trained and hired residents from North Philly.
Let’s look at Philadelphia Urban Creators: An urban farm just North of Temple University that trains youth and neighborhood residents to grow food and works with the community to provide healthy and affordable foods that are otherwise redlined out of neighborhoods.
Realizing environment, equity, and opportunity in green jobs is not a pipe dream. It can be a reality.

Can you picture 10,000 Urban Creators? Or 100,000 Serenity Soulars? How different would our city look?
We can realize this vision of environment, equity and opportunity right here in Philadelphia.

But to do this, we must take a step back and understand the deep inequities that we face today so we can build better solutions. We need to examine how the current economy fails Black and Brown residents, how the climate crisis will make it harder to survive, and why building out a green jobs strategy can create what Dr. King called the Beloved Community.

What does race, economics, and the climate have to do with building a just and beloved community?

We turn to moral leaders of our time...
We must choose community and care of the earth over chaos and greed.

Reverend William Barber, III
North Carolina NAACP: Moral Mondays
“Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”

Pope Francis

Laudato Sì

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“Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” - Pope Francis
Fossil fuels overheat the planet causing disruption in the climate: more natural disasters such as storms and flooding; less stability in food systems;
Our communities are paying the price of an out-of-control Fossil Fuel industry that is enriching the few, but causing harm to the many.
In an unequal society, those at the bottom of the economic ladder, often Black and Brown people, suffer most.

We see that the system is racially and economically unfair hurting poor people and Black and Brown people with toxins, unemployment and unhealthy jobs, even as we are told that our communities “don’t care about these issues.”

The drive for Fossil Fuels is leading to deeper destruction and violence in our communities locally (through pollution), nationally (like the Dakota pipeline) and globally (war over oil).
But this extraction and injustice is not recent history. It is a history rooted in the original sins of this nation: slavery and genocide. The wealth gap and racism that we see today have roots in a broken story.
Cheap energy extracted from the earth and from humans drove industrialization. Wastes and toxins polluted the air, water and land of the poorest communities.
Cheap energy with exploited and forced labor produced the huge wealth the “developed” world controls today.
The United States’ continued this original sin by displacing and murdering Native Americans for their land and later coal, oil and natural gas.
The plantation system is seen in our mass incarceration systems. And even like those enslaved before who lived in horrid working conditions, people in prison face similar toxic realities from penal labor, to inadequate food, and unhealthy environments.
The Fossil Fuel industry has left its dirty footprint all over the globe in a trail of ruined local economies, fouled air, polluted rivers and streams, decimated farmland and broken communities.

We have more in common than we realize: Black Lung, asthma, mass incarceration, a climate catastrophe - these are all condemnations of death by big business through the extraction of fossil fuels, labor, and life.
As people of faith, we know the face of injustice. We inherit a three thousand year-old freedom story, first told in the Biblical Book of Exodus. This story starts with oppression.
Let’s take a look at the Pyramid of Fossil Fuel Oppression, with a small, ruling few that is propped up by the ramrods of inequity. The ramrods propping the pyramid are: Racism, Extreme Wealth Gap, Money in Politics, and Corporate Greed. Without these inequities the Pyramid of Fossil Fuel Oppression could not stay standing.
On this map the red dots represent the sites and routes of Fossil Fuel infrastructure. The map is divided into neighborhoods. Using census data we have color-coded our map to reflect the percentage of Black people who live in each neighborhood. The darker the shade on the map, the higher the percentage of Black residents. This alone tells a shameful story about who gets to enjoy the benefits and who gets to “enjoy” toxic air, toxic water, declining property values, disinvestment and triple the asthma rate of the general population.

These are all costs that the Fossil Fuel industry does not take into account when it considers the cost of energy. We are paying the price for their profits!

There is a term for what we are seeing, “Sacrifice Zone.”
A sacrifice zone is a geographic area that has been permanently impaired by environmental damage or economic disinvestment. These zones are most commonly found in low-income and communities of color.[1],[2][3][4]

The concept of sacrifice zones was first discussed during the Cold War, as a likely result of nuclear fallout.[1]

Not just sacrifice as in we all have to sacrifice by turning off lights and driving less, but sacrifice as in ground zero for obliteration. The ultimate definition of whose life doesn’t matter.

According to a publication from the National Institute of Health:

“Sacrifice zones are often “fence-line communities” of low-income and people of color, or “hot spots” of chemical pollution where residents live immediately adjacent to heavily polluted industries or military bases. Quite often, this pattern of unequal protection constitutes environmental racism...”.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3114843/
This is what poor health outcomes look like in Philadelphia. Your health outcome is determined by your race and where you live. In Philadelphia, Black and Brown people have shorter life expectancies because of where one lives.

In the majority Black neighborhood Strawberry Mansion, life expectancy is 68 years. In the majority White neighborhood of Old City, life expectancy is 88 years. A twenty year gap!

This gap can be traced to higher rates of pollution that correlates with diseases such as asthma, lung disease and cancer. In the health community, the sources of poorer health outcomes in Black and Brown communities are knowns as HONDAs: Hypertension, Obesity, Non-Compliance, Diabetes, Asthma.
Witnessing Environmental Racism

Black Americans suffer from an unfair share of toxic burden compared to the Middle Class.

Majority Black communities suffer from more pollution and sickness compared to predominantly White communities living in deep poverty.

Black Americans suffer from a disproportionate share of the toxic burden compared to the middle class. Majority Black communities fare worse even than predominantly White communities living in deep poverty. This is environmental racism.
Who gets Hurt when Race, Economics and Climate Crisis Collide?

These plagues feed each other and fuel other problems. As climate change continues it will make essential needs more insecure.

Without intervention, rising seas, rivers and water threaten to subsume 21% of Philadelphia’s land mass, which will hasten land displacement and spread water contamination and lead to water insecurity.

Loss of land and more intense weather and droughts will impact food supply and increase prices creating food insecurity. Increasing days of oppressive heat and pollution will threaten air quality and expose health vulnerabilities like asthma.

More intense weather will place higher demand on energy and drive up rates to heat or cool their homes, leading to energy insecurity.

Climate Crisis makes life a lot worse for people who are already having a hard time.
As we look at the slides, take a moment to note any patterns that you observe.

This is what water insecurity looks like in Philadelphia.

[pause 10 seconds]

Yet, water insecurity and scarcity are changing, because of people power. **Organized efforts** pressured City Council to create water as a human right and instill an income-based payment plan.

- In 2014 over 15,000 households had their water shut-off (data from Public Utility Commission)

- In 2015, Philadelphia City Council recognized human right to water and passed a national leading income-based water affordability plan to tackle this issue.

- Yet, despite making water affordable – the potential drilling for natural gas in the Delaware River Basin threatens the viability of the region’s entire water supply.
This is what land loss looks like and could look like in Philadelphia.

Not only does land loss from flooding threaten the lives of communities -- mostly Eastwick and the Riverwards. Flooding also threatens major job centers that many of our constituents work in -- hospitality and service sector -- the airport for example, would be under-water. Flooding also threatens migration inward to higher elevation -- North and Northwest Philly -- driving people out who can’t afford increasing rents.
This is what food insecurity looks like in Philadelphia

Locally, people of color are more likely to experience food apartheid -- where access and affordability to healthy foods are absent, compared to more affluent and white areas. The yellow lines in the map show these neighborhoods. As the climate crisis grows, so will the price and quality of our food -- leaving those without access now, worse off.
This is what housing insecurity looks like in Philadelphia

[pause 10 seconds]

There are only 35 affordable units for every 100 extremely low-income ($23,000) households.

Worse, the combination of utility bills, rent and low wages is a toxic mix for the majority of the city’s population of color and low-income that contributes to the increased risk of eviction or foreclosure.
This is what energy insecurity looks like in Philadelphia -- which communities bear the brunt of people not being able to heat or cool their homes.

[pause 10 seconds]

What does this mean for families? Many families and social workers have cited utility shut-offs as the leading cause for Child Protective Services to remove children from homes.

Now, what did you see in each of these slides? From pollution to the insecurities we face, we see the same neighborhoods.

These insecurities hit our city’s Black and low-income residents the hardest. As climate crisis worsens, those of us in these communities will be the first to feel the pain.
First, Worst, and All of Us

“It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr

Martin Luther King famously said:

“It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

While climate chaos disrupts and impacts Black and Brown communities first and hardest, we are ultimately all tied in this together.

Back to the Bible: Who remembers the Tenth Plague that befell the people of Egypt, the plague that finally, finally broke into Pharaoh’s hard heart and forced him to let the people go?
It was the death of the firstborn, our own children paying the price, that woke even Pharoah up. We stood up to Pharaoh just as today we need to stand up to the Pharaohs of the Fossil Fuel Industry.
God parted the Red Sea back then, and we have the God-given imagination and commitment to build a clean energy economy that works for all today. Crossing today’s Red Sea means making a just transition to a clean energy economy that leaves no one behind.
As people of faith, we keep our eyes on the prize and head toward the Promised Land of renewable energy jobs, clean air and water and a healthy future for all of our families. We will not let the lies and divisiveness of the Fossil Fuel industry turn us back.

We don’t just want solar, wind or geothermal energy. We want all these forms of safe energy WITH inclusive, healthy jobs for all, and a fair transition for workers who now work in the fossil fuel industry but will need new jobs in order for life to continue on the planet.

We don’t want to repeat the past.

We claim this opportunity to truly build the Beloved Community.
In the words of Wangari (Wan - gar - ee) Maathai (Mah - tie), 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate and founder of the Green Belt Movement:

Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own - indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. Recognizing that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible is an idea whose time has come.
POWER’s Framework for Building Beloved Community
Racial and Economic Justice on a Livable Planet
We hold the intersection of race and economics as the key lens of the climate conversation.
We make **front and center** the voices of people most impacted by poverty, racism and climate crisis: **Black, Brown, poor and immigrant communities** and allies are building a multi-faith, multi-racial movement to transform the old energy economy into an inclusive, clean energy economy.

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We believe the rights and dignity of workers are essential to any transition from a fossil fuel economy to a renewable one.
We stand for healthy lives for all: pathways into green jobs, local and inclusive investment in green infrastructure, solutions that build economic opportunity, lift people out of poverty and challenge racism, as we work for a livable planet.
We build bridges between urban/rural communities and between the U.S. and Global communities to create a racially and economically just movement that is both very local and very universal, putting community and care of the earth over exploitation and greed.
We ask **who is at risk**, who is benefitting from new opportunities in clean energy and how do we put the most vulnerable humans at the center of solutions for climate disaster? How do we build a world of racial, economic and climate justice?
One way we aim to answer these questions is by listening to the call from community. The POWER community put forward a challenge – we must tackle poverty by create living-wage jobs.

Local renewable energy jobs and investment offer economic opportunity while supporting a healthy and viable planet.
We could lift at least 1 in 5 families out of poverty with strategic, smart and targeted investments in green jobs ranging from increased transit opportunities and building out local food systems to creating solar throughout the city.

For example, this chart shows just minimal investments that the city could do to create jobs for people in poverty.

If we invested in public transportation that connected people from North Philly to jobs across the region within a 30 minute commute, we could expand job opportunities.

If we invested in building out local food systems or zero-waste systems like recycling and composting, we could create over 1,000 long-term living wage jobs.
Even when state-level and national government is heavily influenced by the Fossil Fuel Industry (which has a powerful lobby and makes huge campaign donations,) we are finding local solutions at the city and regional levels.

The Power Local Green Jobs campaign, a faith-based campaign sponsored by POWER and the Earth Quaker Action Team, is a potent example of how to move forward even under difficult circumstances.

We call on our energy corporations to be leaders in addressing both climate crisis AND extreme inequality. PECO is the biggest electric utility in our area. We demand that PECO:
1. Increase the purchase of local solar power so that 20% of PECO's electricity comes from its local service area by 2025.

2. Spur solar installation and community ownership in high unemployment areas, starting in North Philadelphia.

3. Prioritize local wealth building by calling for energy produced by local workers, paid living wages, and by support low-income ownership of solar energy.

When PECO rises to meet these expectations, it will have the potential to create thousands of jobs from construction and installation to maintenance and the supply chain.

PECO executives say they care about cheap energy but they cannot take the lead on climate justice because they have to buy the least cost energy, even if it pollutes and destroys communities.
We Must Redefine “Costs”

What does PECO count when tallying the "cost" of energy?

We say, what does PECO count when tallying the "cost" of so-called cheap energy?
Does PECO Count These Costs to Us, Our Communities, and the Planet?

Does PECO count this cost to YOU?
Asthma and respiratory disease
Emergency room trips
Lost school and work days

Does PECO count this cost to neighborhoods/communities?
Lost economic opportunity and homelessness
Declining property values
Heat related deaths

Does PECO count this cost to our planet?
Rising sea levels, coastal flooding
Drought, crop failure and famine
Extreme weather events, superstorms
Wildfires
Climate refugees
If PECO purchased 20% of its electricity from Philadelphia rooftops, it could create 4,000 – 8,000 jobs in construction and installation – jobs that often average $20 - $26 per hour.

Renewable energy can generate two to three more times wealth in a community when jobs are local and ownership is maintained by the community compared to some outside entity. If focused in communities like North Philadelphia, this can help tackle racial wealth gap in this city.
Power Local Green Jobs Campaign
Power Local Green Jobs Campaign

You can join the movement for Climate Justice.

Every single person wherever you are and whoever you are is needed. Check these places for up-to-date information on next steps.

[Power logo]

[EQAT logo]

www.powerinterfaith.org

www.EQAT.org

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You can join the movement for Climate Justice. Every single person wherever you are and whoever you are is needed. Check these places for up-to-date information on next steps. Give POWER and EQAT websites and FB info.
POWER Green Jobs Group, Tami Burgle, Julie Greenberg, Fielding Goodlow, Anthony Caminito and Rosa Paul

Thanks to our partners at Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT) Kim Hyunk, Eileen Flanagan, George Lakey, Greg Holt, Sam Rubin and many more.

Thanks to Bishop Dwayne Royster, Rev. Greg Holtzen, Beulah Osuuke, POWER's Economic Dignity Team and many other POWER people.
Post Presentation Activities
If we want to achieve our vision, we need to shift political reality to be aligned with our vision, not the false promises and solutions presented by the fossil fuel industry or the utilities.

Activity:
Have rope. Mark “politically feasible” on the rope. And identify lines where real and false solutions are – tug of war.

Ask for 5 volunteers. Place two on “real solutions” (POWER member, EQAT member) and 3 on “False solutions” (PECO, Oil and Gas Lobbyist, Coal Industry)

Ask for volunteers to take the following: we want to have 6 Pros, 3 false, so the political reality shifts left.

Pros:
- Multi-racial alignment and coalition
- Labor and Community alignment
- City promises to procure local energy
- Energy Revolving Loan Fund is established for low-income communities
- Price of solar comes down
- We control the narrative in social and traditional media
Cons

- Koch brothers fund nonprofits to support PECO energy line
- Lack of diversity in trades
- State passes “right to work” legislation
- Trump ends Clean Power Plan
Guiding Questions

Think of people you know who suffer from asthma.

What do you notice about environmental factors that affect asthma? *(Pollution, temperature, air quality)*

Have you noticed other connections between environment and health?

In Small Groups, Pairs or Triads (depending on size) allow for 15 – 20 minutes of discussion and then popcorn out answers in large group.
Guiding Questions

What challenge or inequity struck you the most in this presentation? *(Energy insecurity, food insecurity, pollution, housing insecurity, land loss, water insecurity)*

How is that inequity likely to get worse in the face of climate crisis?

In Small Groups, Pairs or Triads (depending on size) allow for 15 – 20 minutes of discussion and then popcorn out answers in large group.
Guiding Questions

- How does the POWER Framework for Building the Beloved Community resonate with you? (Intersection of race and economics; holding front and center Black, Brown, and low-income communities; rights and dignity of workers; local and inclusive investment in green infrastructure; and building urban-rural partnerships.

In Small Groups, Pairs or Triads (depending on size) allow for 15 – 20 minutes of discussion and then popcorn out answers in large group.