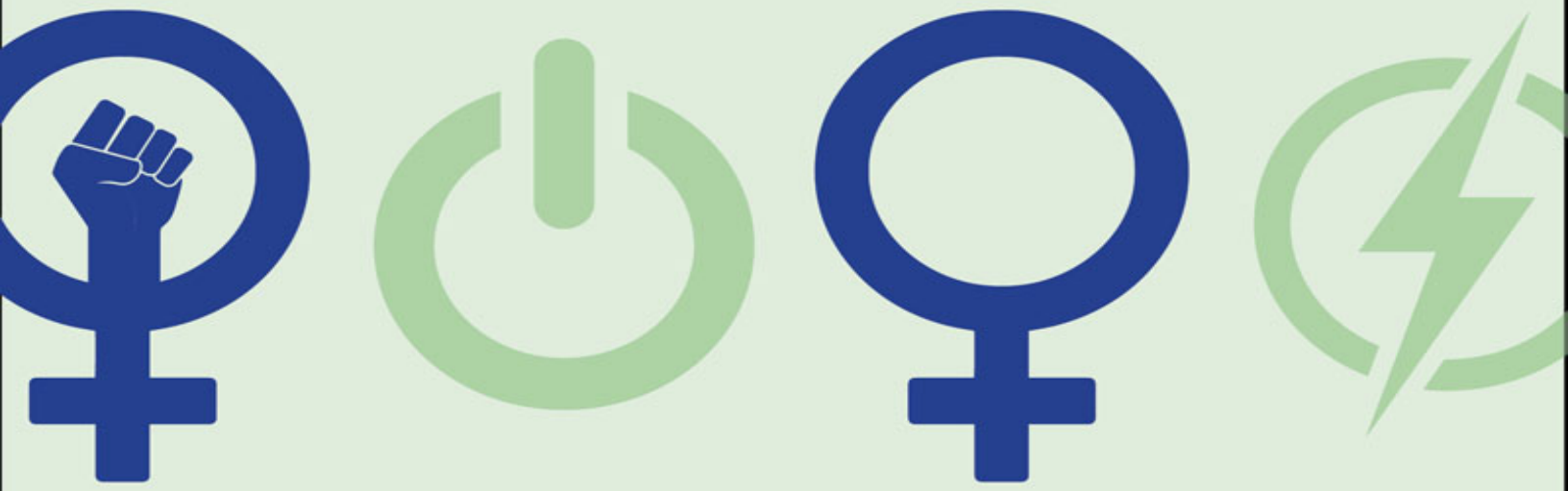
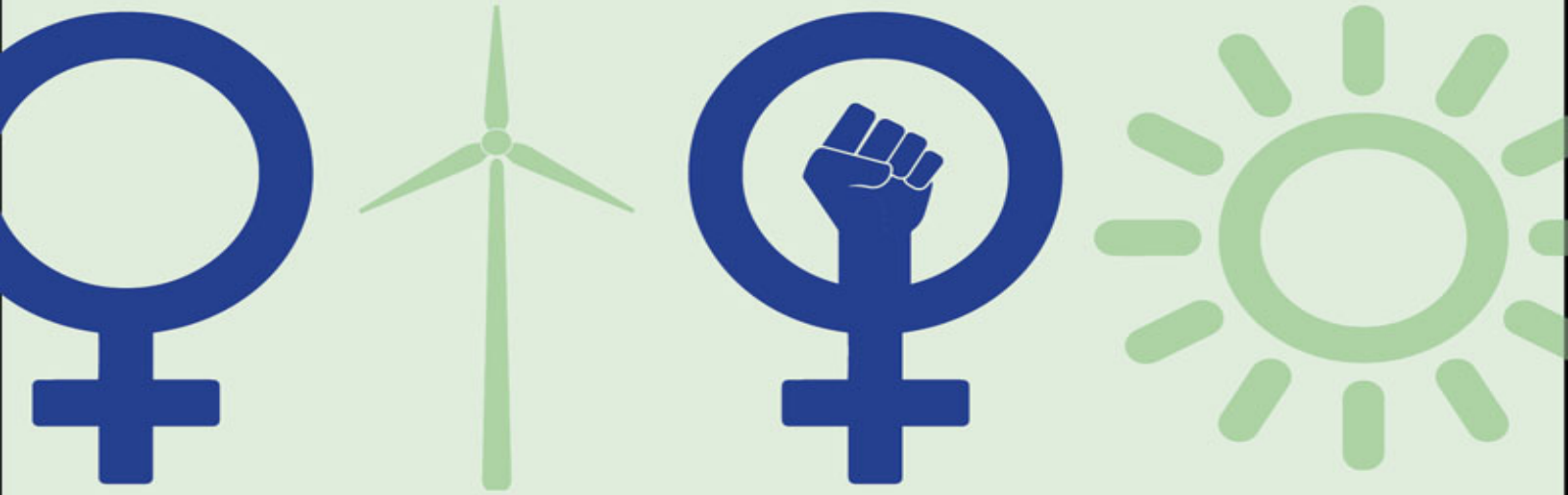


DIVERSIFYING POWER

WHY WE NEED ANTIRACIST, FEMINIST LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE AND ENERGY



JENNIE C. STEPHENS

FOREWORD BY TED LANDSMARK

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Diversifying Power

Diversifying Power

WHY WE NEED ANTIRACIST, FEMINIST LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE AND ENERGY

Jennie C. Stephens

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For my grandmothers

SARAH COAN ACHESON
1920–2010

ITA JOYCE STEPHENS
1925–2011

All author proceeds from sales of this book will be donated to the NAACP's Environmental and Climate Justice Program.

We must reject not only the stereotypes that others have of us but also those that we have of ourselves.

—Shirley Chisholm

Contents

Foreword by Dr. Ted Landsmark
Preface
Acknowledgments

1. Introduction: Growing the Squad
2. Resisting The Polluter Elite
3. Jobs and Economic Justice
4. Health, Well-Being, and Nutritious Food for All
5. Clean Transportation for All
6. Housing for All
7. Conclusion: Collective Power

Notes
Index

Foreword

Dr. Ted Landsmark

I grew up in the 1950s as a postpolio black son of a single parent in East Harlem's projects. My strong mother, a public health nurse, inspired me to have the vision, imagination, and resilience to survive the vicissitudes of growing up black in America and to build my life around my strengths, rather than on my needs.

Dr. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine had been developed too late for me to have avoided the viral pandemic that crippled millions of people around the world, including President Franklin Roosevelt. By the early 1960s, the March of Dimes' mobilization of community support for a shared approach to solving the polio public health crisis had begun to fade from memory. Urban life in New York's public housing for the poor also shielded me from the environmental concerns being expressed primarily by suburban and rural activists. As working-class urban baby boomers, we were largely oblivious to the policy links between public health, environmental resilience, institutional racism, and social justice. We were more concerned with building movements to address nuclear proliferation and civil rights.

When I encountered environmentalism as a college student, I pondered how the ecological ideas of landscape designer Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature* (1969) or the environmental degradation admonitions of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) might resonate among the people I'd grown up with. McHarg traced how parts of the New Jersey coast might disappear if struck by a devastating storm, while Carson revealed the negative health effects of chemical pesticides used in agriculture. The environmentalists' concerns had made almost no impression on my Harlem community. Few of the young African Americans I'd grown up with saw beyond their immediate needs for getting an education, finding a good job, and avoiding the bad effects of street life. "Environmental concerns" or global pandemic

responses were less important as social justice issues than avoiding the impacts of urban poverty.

Community-based perceptions of what constitutes social justice have expanded since then. Hurricane Katrina (2005), Superstorm Sandy (2012), California wildfires (2017, 2018), and Puerto Rican Hurricanes Maria (2017) and Dorian (2019) have all had devastating effects on poor communities of color. The failure of largely white policy makers to prepare for—and respond adequately to—global public health and environmental threats has worsened racial disparities and social injustices. This failure has reinforced the sense that "The Man" doesn't care about supporting impoverished communities of color, even as those communities have provided the cheap labor and exploitable resources that have supported American capitalism. Residents of the predominantly black Ninth Ward in New Orleans asked, "Why did white folks in the Historic French Quarter get recovery aid before we did, and why did this disaster hit us harder in the first place?" Communities across the United States asked why governmental responses to the COVID-19 pandemic failed to address the disparate impacts of that global disaster on poor, largely urban, and aging people of color.

As this urgent book makes clear, a new era of diverse leadership is rising up to resist climate injustices. Young activists and progressive politicians are now connecting the climate crisis with public health and social justice. They are resisting how fossil fuel energy companies have paid lobbyists and propogandists to spread falsehoods that oil and gas investments do not damage environments or add to pollution through offshore drilling and onshore fracking. They are resisting how the lure of "job creation" and corporate profits have been prioritized over public health and environmental quality. They are resisting how public officials have brazenly stripped terms like *climate change* from official government documents and dismissed concerns about growing economic inequities.

As communities most at risk and those with the fewest resources have begun to protest the effects of these environmental disruptions, diverse leadership is now calling for more transformative change. Women are increasingly assuming leadership roles in social justice movements, from environmentalism to #MeToo to Black Lives Matter. Among youths of color,

the climate crisis is now viewed as an existential threat that is directly linked to economic and racial justice.

In *Diversif ying Power*, Jennie Stephens acknowledges that we are at a culturally transformative moment in American history. From my perspective, this time seems equivalent to the years of antislavery sentiment leading up to the Civil War, or to the upheaval of 1968 when notable leaders were assassinated and the anti–Vietnam War movement disrupted national politics, or to 2008 when a market crash helped elect the first US president who was not a white male. Such movements inevitably leverage the mission-driven energies of young participants and the organizational skills of experienced elders.

Now at this transformative moment, we need to diversify power and prioritize a people-first approach to public policy. With optimism and compassion, Stephens makes this case and helps us see why diversity in leadership is essential. Through inspiring examples of innovative leaders, she also explains why antiracist and feminist priorities are essential for these turbulent times.

As director of the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University, I am acutely aware of the interconnectedness of different public policies. Addressing community-based economic development is linked to housing policy, educational resources, health services, and transportation needs of each city and region. Such integration is the foundation of this book and is one reason it is so timely and important. As the effects of climate change continue to devastate underserved urban communities, linking climate policy to jobs, economic justice, health, food, transportation, and housing is essential to any effective response.

Diversifying power is essential. Numerous business studies have pointed to the higher profitability of corporate firms with diverse leadership and staffing. Research also shows that diversity improves public policy making and enhances innovation. People of color in leadership roles in many US cities, and women of color in particular, have shown high empathy for their diverse residents and workers, economically and racially. Diverse leadership has been advocating for the creation of so-called green jobs that would provide employment for diverse and underserved populations. Although

white men constitute less than 30 percent of the US population, they control a disproportionate share of the nation's wealth and political influence, and they have resisted the creation of green jobs in an economic sector that they have long controlled. Renewable energy jobs for more diverse groups, including women, have been dismissed as a threat to the economy or a threat to the status quo. Cultural changes and transitional strategies are needed to simultaneously address economic justice, jobs, and future energy needs.

Stephens's provocative work inspires transformative leadership and urges for expanded civic engagement among us all. She brings attention to how emerging leadership and a transformation to renewable energy can mobilize and empower underserved communities and protect those who are most vulnerable to climate change. This book provides hope by showing us examples of how to resist the fossil fuel polluter elites and how to transform society by prioritizing an inclusive approach to climate and energy. Diversifying power means ensuring that underserved communities have a voice and agency in shaping responses to climate change, and Stephens's book is a creative call to action linking climate and energy policies to community-based social justice.

Diversifying Power explains why antiracist, feminist leadership is needed on climate and energy. More importantly perhaps, Stephens helps us understand why antiracist, feminist leadership is, in fact, needed in every policy area. My mother would have been proud of the arguments advanced in this timely book.

Preface

The climate crisis is a crisis in leadership. We know we need to end fossil fuel reliance and restructure a renewable-based society. We know we have the technologies to make this transformation happen. And we know there are many other reasons, in addition to climate, why investing in a renewable-powered future makes sense. Inadequate leadership has been exacerbating the climate crisis, however, reinforcing social, economic, and racial injustices and excluding marginalized voices and diverse perspectives. Many of the same leadership deficiencies that shaped the inadequate response by the United States to the coronavirus pandemic have also thwarted the US response to the growing climate crisis. For too long, US leadership has prioritized corporate profits over the public good, and decisions have been based on assumptions of domination and competition rather than on collaboration and collective action. The result has been worsening inequities in vulnerabilities and growing climate instability. But with a new wave of leaders and new investments for COVID-19 recovery, now is a time for hope and optimism about a better future. Powerful multiracial, intergenerational coalitions are bringing antiracist and feminist principles to mobilize transformative change on climate and energy. This book, *Diversifying Power: Why We Need Antiracist, Feminist Leadership on Climate and Energy*, makes the case that to effectively address the climate crisis and to accelerate a just transition to a renewable-based society, a diversification of who has power is needed. We need a new kind of leadership committed to social, economic, and racial justice.

During a memorable conversation toward the end of my nineteen-year marriage, I asked my soon-to-be-ex-husband whether he considered himself a feminist. As we stood side by side looking out at a cluster of immature trees behind a suburban strip-mall parking lot, he told me that he was a

humanist, not a feminist. I responded with measured but passionate disappointment. In return, he defended himself with hostility and indignation. In that moment, I felt an unsettling, palpable distance wedge itself between us.

I interpret his response to my question about feminism in the same way I understand the response of some white people to the Black Lives Matter movement who say that all lives matter. Of course all lives matter, and yes, it is noble to consider oneself a humanist concerned with all humanity. But both feminism and the Black Lives Matter movement are responses to the oppression of particular groups of people within humanity. Failing to identify with these social movements suggests a dismissive and defensive attitude toward that oppression.

We all have different levels of awareness of our place in these systems of oppression. As a forty-five-year-old white woman with training in science and engineering, I have benefited from many structural privileges in my life. Like many women, I have also experienced gender bias and sexual harassment. My own identity as an antiracist feminist continues to evolve with my accumulated personal and professional experiences. The more I talk about feminism, the more I realize how some men feel threatened by feminism in much the same way that many white people feel threatened when talking about racism. I am acutely aware of the unproductive consequences of triggering a defensive response among privileged majorities in discussions of past and current injustices. And I am also aware of the devastating effects of avoiding the acknowledgment of racial and gender injustices. With concern for the antagonism associated with feminist and antiracist movements, I wrote this book with the ambitious goal of de-escalating hostility toward feminism and antiracism by mainstreaming the connections between social justice and climate action. I hope to encourage compassionate, conciliatory, inclusive leadership that resonates broadly among men, women, those who identify with both or neither genders, and all races.

My own feminist journey involved a gradual transformation from a naive, optimistic, young woman who was blind to the privileged position of men to where I am now, a confidently resilient, independent mother of two young-adult daughters who is acutely aware of male dominance in all its

many forms (from the blatant to the hidden). When I married my high school sweetheart two weeks after my college graduation at the age of twenty-two, I had not yet recognized the patriarchal systems all around me. I had not yet identified the misogynistic roots of deep resentment that I had already experienced from several young men who had felt threatened by my strength. My feminist awakening began quite a few years later when, as a researcher at Harvard University, I dealt with the negative professional repercussions of refusing sexual advances from a famous, well-respected professor and subsequently filing a sexual harassment claim against him. Throughout my career at multiple different elite institutions of higher education, I have learned a lot about how those with power and privilege assert their dominance and perpetuate their ideas. Some of the most arrogant climate and energy experts with whom I have interacted are male scientists who act as if they genuinely believe that if the rest of the world were as smart as they were and knew all that they know, the climate crisis could be solved. I have seen firsthand how loud, confident white-male voices representing a narrow technocratic perspective on climate and energy often drown out other voices, particularly women's voices and the voices of frontline communities already suffering from the consequences of climate disruptions.

My antiracist journey has developed more gradually. I moved with my family from Dublin, Ireland, to the United States when I was eight years old, and as an Irish immigrant growing up in Boston, I lived in a predominantly white community largely unaware of the racist realities all around me. I remember hearing about the brutal murder of a pregnant white woman a few miles from our house and how her white husband falsely accused a black man for attacking them when in fact the husband himself had murdered his wife. It was not until years later that I understood how the police response to that false accusation by the murderous husband ripped apart black families and black communities throughout Boston. My acute awareness of my own role in perpetuating structural racism has humbled me as I continue to strive every day to expand my understanding through connection and learning.

My career has focused on energy and environment at the intersection of science, technology, and policy. I am currently the director of the School for

Public Policy and Urban Affairs at Northeastern University in Boston, and my graduate training focused on environmental science and engineering. From a very young age, I was interested in environmentalism, with a focus on the future of humanity. My goal was to be involved in environmental action and sustainability, and I was drawn to this field even then.

As a young, curious student of environmental science and public policy, I was blind to how race and gender were influencing leadership on climate and energy. Throughout my years of formal education, I never took a class on race or gender, and I was unaware of the structural power dynamics influencing leadership in climate and energy. As a student, I listened diligently and learned a lot from my professors, who were almost all white men, and I never questioned that what I was learning might be different if my instructors had different backgrounds. Only more recently have I begun to see the connections between the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of efforts to reduce the risks of climate change and the limited diversity in climate and energy leadership. And not until recently have I realized the links between those denying climate change to sustain fossil fuel reliance and those upholding patriarchal, racist conservative views to sustain the systems that gave them concentrated wealth and power.

Despite the insufficiency of our societal response to the climate crisis, I was inspired to write this book because I have now gained a distinct sense of optimism. This optimism does not come from scientists or engineers, but from social activists and political movements. Both the problems associated with the climate crisis and the problems of growing racial and economic inequities require transformative politics to disrupt the status quo and restructure society. A shift is occurring as social justice activists are leveraging the climate emergency to address social justice and climate activists are leveraging Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and other social justice movements to motivate climate action. Recognizing this building momentum for transformative change, *Diversifying Power* celebrates the power and impact of multiracial coalitions of diverse emerging leaders that are effectively connecting their commitment to racial justice and gender equity with climate action and renewable energy.

Acknowledgments

Diversifying Power is an integration of ideas that emerged from collaborative relationships with many colleagues, students, friends, and family. This book would not have been possible without the support and influence of some specific people as well. My editor at Island Press, Heather Boyer, has been amazingly knowledgeable and patient. My daughters, Cecelia and Anna, inspire me every day and generously share both their critique and their praise. They both read every chapter at different stages, providing invaluable feedback. My mother, Sarah Stephens, was my first and most influential editor and taught me the power of words. My father, Cathal Stephens, demonstrated the courage to challenge convention and hierarchy at a young age. Both my parents provided valuable suggestions and edits during the writing process. My sister-inlaw, Talaya Delaney, catalyzed this project with inspiration and specific suggestions along the way on how to write a nonacademic book. My siblings, Niall, Nora, and Kate, each provided me with constant support and encouragement. Adrian Ryan offered provocative inputs along the way. Elizabeth Wilson, Shalanda Baker, Liz Allen, Mariu Hernandez, Jose Buscaglia, KC Chaffee, Marla Perez Lugo, Cecilio Ortiz García, Kevin Surprise, Noel Healy, James Hackney, Suzanna Walters, and Peter Frumhoff all gave valuable suggestions and insights that helped shape some key ideas. Christina Thompson at *Harvard Review* gave invaluable initial guidance on the process and scale of the project. Liz Connor and Lauren Weinstein provided visual advice. Many wonderful colleagues at Northeastern have provided a dynamic and stimulating community where antiracist and feminist principles are nourished. I am grateful to you all.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Growing the Squad

Within the first few days of January 2020, unprecedented wildfires forced hundreds of thousands of people in Australia to be evacuated from their homes, a stream of earthquakes crippled Puerto Rican communities still struggling from the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Maria, and records were broken as the city of Boston reached two consecutive days of balmy 70 degree weather. During that same week, as impeachment loomed, President Donald Trump provoked a crisis in Iran with the targeted killing of a leading general. Even before the corona virus had emerged as a global pandemic, for many the year started with angst about the state of the world and an unsettling fear about the future.

Despite the disturbing climate chaos and geopolitical tensions, some of us were able to find hope and optimism as we celebrated changes happening at a more local level. During the same early days of 2020, hundreds of inspiring new leaders committed to transformative change and social justice were sworn in to elected office in cities and towns throughout the United States. In the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I live, an impressive woman, Sumbul Siddiqui, became, at age thirty-one, the first Muslim mayor in the state. And just across the river, Boston formed its most diverse city council ever. For the first time, women and people of color held the majority of the thirteen Boston city council spots. With this multiracial gender-balanced leadership comes a shift in priorities. Kim Janey, the second African American woman to be voted in as president of the Boston City Council, declared following the swearing-in ceremony at historic Faneuil Hall, “It is not enough to have diversity. We need full inclusion.” Boston’s new leadership is calling for bold action to address growing inequities.

Compared with other US cities, Boston ranks among the highest in income inequality[1] and has among the worst racial disparities in wealth[2] and health.[3] Boston also has a worsening crisis in affordable housing and an inadequate public transit system that is not serving many of the communities that need it most. But with a city council that now better represents the people and communities struggling the most, there is a new sense of urgency and hope for structural changes in Boston. And when that urgency and hope for social justice is linked to the city's commitment to ambitious climate action, the potential for larger transformation to a more just equitable future seems not only possible, but also likely.

> *"It is not enough to have diversity. We need full inclusion."*
>
> *—Kim Janey, the second African American woman to be voted in as president of the Boston City Council*

I first met Siddiqui in the summer of 2017 at José's, a local Mexican restaurant, when I had just moved to Cambridge and she was running for her first term for the Cambridge City Council. During our brief conversation as we sat at adjacent tables eating chips and salsa and waiting for our dinner, I was impressed with how she communicated her strength and compassion as well as her deep commitment to her community. She arrived in Cambridge at the age of two, when her family emigrated from Pakistan. Her family had won a spot through a lottery in one of Cambridge's large affordable housing complexes. Siddiqui discussed her priority focus on inclusive access to affordable housing, and I mentioned my work on climate and renewable energy. She quickly connected the dots and talked enthusiastically about the opportunities for integrating solar panels and energy-efficient design into new affordable housing construction.

Siddiqui and other local leaders are joined at the national level by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a first-term congresswoman from New York, and the three other junior nonwhite congresswomen, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts, and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. This group of four women became known as the "Squad" after Trump suggested in a tweet that they "go back and help fix the totally broken and the crime infested places from which they came." In response to this public display of

racist misogyny, Pressley said, "Anyone who is interested in building a more equitable and just world is a part of the Squad."

At this time in human history, when both the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis are altering every aspect of society and exacerbating economic and racial injustices, we need to grow the Squad. We need more bold leaders committed to social justice who recognize how the biggest challenges facing society are linked and that the best opportunities for change are when these challenges are addressed together. We must build and foster multiracial, multiethnic, gender-balanced coalitions of ambitious and optimistic leaders advocating for transformative changes. The United States needs leaders who are willing and able to push back against the concentration of wealth and power that is threatening our democracy, exacerbating injustice, and accelerating climate chaos. We need leadership to counter the male-dominated climate deniers who are resisting change to perpetuate profits for the fossil fuel industry and other corporate elites who benefit from fossil fuel reliance. We need visionary leaders who recognize that many of our legacy systems and practices need to be restructured not only because they are accelerating climate chaos, but also because those systems and practices continue to favor rich white men who have disproportionate power and influence. It is becoming increasingly clear that incremental steps and small tweaks to the status quo are insufficient. Therefore, we need bold and ambitious leaders who are committed to ending fossil fuel reliance by prioritizing economic justice and by investing in the universality of human rights and a future that offers dignity for all. To achieve these broad systemic changes, we need diverse leadership to better represent the needs and interests of the families and communities that are disproportionately affected and most vulnerable to climate disruptions.

We need to support leaders who can help move us beyond climate isolationism. Climate isolationism is a phrase I use to describe the common, yet ineffective, framing of climate change as a narrow, isolated, discrete problem that needs a technological solution. This framing is inadequate because climate change is so pervasive; it impacts everything and everyone. As the authors of the 2019 book *A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green New Deal* state, "All politics are climate politics."[4] We need a paradigm shift so that climate action is integrated into all policies and recognized as an

opportunity for new investment in and commitment to broad structural changes.

Beyond Climate Isolationism: From Threat to Opportunity

Although the secretary general of the United Nations declared in 2018 that climate change is the defining issue of our time,[5] the climate crisis is much more than a singular "issue." Just as a single virus has upended human society, influencing everything, changes in Earth's climate are also influencing every aspect of society, including the economy, our health, and access to food, energy, water, housing, and transportation. We are now in a new era of human existence. We know the future will be fundamentally different because of more frequent and intense climate disruptions of all kinds, including devastating storms, floods, droughts, and wildfires, as well as the spread of new infectious diseases and accelerated species extinction. Climate change is also a threat multiplier, which means that climate impacts exacerbate other problems. Around the world, drought due to shifting rain patterns, for example, has led to food shortages, which then result in conflict and forced migration.[6] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlights the urgency of prioritizing timely ambitious and coordinated action in ending fossil fuel reliance and adapting to climate impacts.[7] As the increase in global average temperature accelerates[8] and greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, the costs and risks of delayed action are escalating, and the value of transformative change is growing.

The narrow way that climate change is often discussed—as an isolated threat that is separate from other issues—has limited opportunities for people to connect and engage. Many climate and energy experts have focused public discourse on carbon reductions, greenhouse gas emissions, and global average temperature—but using these abstract, scientific concepts has proven to be ineffective. Not only does this technical way of talking about climate change resonate with only a small subgroup of society, it also projects the need for sacrifice and hardship rather than highlighting benefits and opportunities.

When the climate crisis is framed as a scientific problem with only a technological fix, the human element is ignored, and the challenge seems

distant and unapproachable. For those looking at the world through this narrow lens, decarbonization is usually the goal. With this approach, costs of specific carbon mitigating technologies or practices are often projected and compared. Although carbon accounting and technology cost estimates provide helpful ways to assess some proposed changes, these quantitative measures cannot be the only way to consider climate action. Climate isolationism has encouraged too many leaders to be blind to the important opportunities for improving people's lives and strengthening communities as we transition away from a society reliant on fossil fuels.

Many proposed technological "solutions" are also expensive and perceived as options that are only accessible to the rich. Driving a Tesla electric vehicle, for example, is not an option for most people, so many people feel disempowered and disengaged, with limited options for acting on climate change. This disempowerment is compounded by science and engineering being fields that continue to be dominated by white men. Despite efforts to diversify science and engineering, persistent racial, gendered, and economic injustices of our economy and our educational systems perpetuate exclusive access to science and engineering. Participating in science continues to be a selective activity only accessible to a privileged few. The lack of diversity within the fields of science and engineering limits the scope of inquiry and constrains the types of connections that are made among science, technology, and society. As we move to incorporate innovative responses that promote social justice to climate change beyond technological justifications for energy transformation, we need to include other kinds of expertise, experiences, and perspectives.

The narrow approach of climate isolationism has not only been ineffective in mobilizing transformative change, but it has also resulted in climate and energy programs and policies that further exclude and disadvantage low-income communities and communities of color. For example, throughout the United States, most incentive programs for rooftop solar and home energy efficiency exclude many lower-income and black and brown communities and disproportionately provide benefits to well-off households and white communities.[9] Recent research identified large racial disparities showing that even when corrected for racial differences in income and homeownership, white majority census tracks have installed 37

percent more rooftop solar systems than black and Hispanic majority census tracks.[10] This unequal distribution of incentives is both unfair and unjust, and it reinforces economic and racial injustice.

Strengthening climate resilience requires us to restructure society by prioritizing social justice for all and ensuring healthy and resilient communities. As the impacts of climate disruptions become increasingly difficult to ignore, momentum is building. More and more leaders are reframing the climate crisis not only as a growing threat, but also as an opportunity for transformative social change and investment for the public good.

A renewable-based society will rely on both large-scale renewables (including large offshore wind farms, mega solar farms, and large geothermal power plants) and small-scale distributed renewables (including household and community wind and solar farms, wave and tidal systems in coastal communities, and distributed geothermal heating). The diversity in scale and sources of renewable energy means that every household, every community, and a variety of organizations can benefit. Unlike fossil fuel resources, which are geographically limited so that some countries profit from their extraction while others compete for access, every community around the world has some regional renewable resources. Renewable resources are plentiful and reliable, so a renewable-based future will be founded on abundance and predictability rather than scarcity and volatility. With committed leadership and political will, a locally appropriate mix of renewable power could be deployed to meet the energy needs of every community—not only in the United States, but across the globe.

Renewable resources are plentiful and reliable, so a renewable-based future will be founded on abundance and predictability rather than scarcity and volatility.

Energy Democracy

A compelling alternative to the narrow lens of climate isolationism is energy democracy, a growing social movement that envisions a fossil-fuel-free future in which individuals, households, and communities rely on a regionally appropriate diverse mix of renewable energy with local

ownership, local control, and local benefits (figure 1-1). Energy democracy connects the renewable transformation with redistributing political and economic power, wealth, and ownership to create a more just and equitable world.[11] Leaders who embrace energy democracy recognize that investing in renewable energy is much more than a substitution of energy technologies. Rather, the renewable transition provides an opportunity to reverse the economic oppression associated with concentrated wealth and fossil fuel reliance by empowering local energy production and control.[12]

Three kinds of activities are central to the energy democracy movement: *resisting* the legacy energy agenda that continues to support fossil fuels, *reclaiming* energy decision-making so that the public interest is prioritized over corporate interests, and *restructuring* energy systems to maximize distributed local and regional benefits.[13] A key feature of energy democracy is the critical recognition that "how" renewable energy is deployed—that is, who is included, who is excluded, and how the benefits are distributed—matters a lot. To leverage the interconnected social justice benefits, renewable energy has to be explicitly linked to investments designed to meet the needs of families and communities rather than large corporate interests. Doing so requires moving beyond narrow carbon accounting and the scientific and technological framing that has dominated climate policy so far. The energy democracy vision, including the resist, reclaim, and restructure framework, provides a valuable lens to guide participation, governance, and leadership on climate and energy.

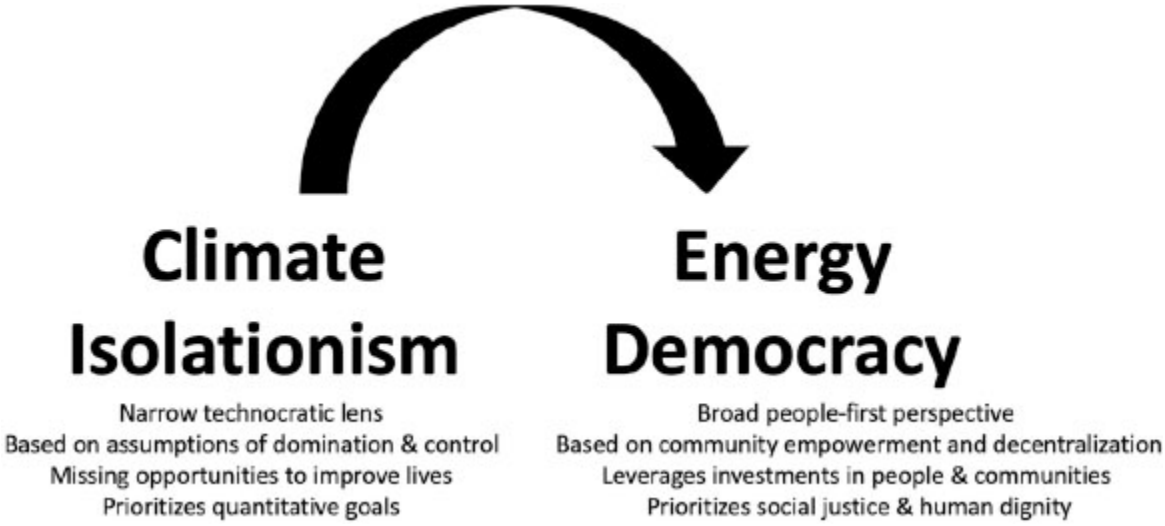

Figure 1-1. Moving from climate isolationism to energy democracy represents a paradigm shift that broadens opportunities for transformative change.

When underserved, marginalized, and frontline communities are prioritized for renewable energy investments, the energy transformation provides benefits to people who have been excluded for too long. Frontline communities are those communities that are facing climate injustice head-on. Many of these communities are communities of color, which are more vulnerable because of the legacy of harm from centuries of racism, colonization, and economic injustices. When a commitment is made to ensure that all low-income and frontline communities are powered by local, clean, reliable wind energy or solar power, a cascade of other benefits beyond reliable local electricity is possible. The focus on energy is not just about how we keep the lights on and how we heat and cool our buildings. Energy is also a basic component of many aspects of life, affecting jobs, health and well-being, transportation, housing, and food. Leaders who link climate and energy to these other aspects of social justice are leveraging the connections between investments in technology and infrastructure with investments in people, families, and communities.

A People-First Approach

At the international level, Mary Robinson has been one of the most inspiring global leaders resisting the narrowness of climate isolationism. Robinson, former president of Ireland (1990–1997) and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997–2002), has used her global platform to advocate for a people-first approach to climate. By bringing a human rights perspective to her leadership on climate, she has had a huge influence on mainstreaming the idea of climate justice and advocating for the people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts. In her leadership roles and in the speeches she gives around the world, Robinson is an outspoken leader calling for radical changes, human solidarity, and the need to bring marginalized voices to the table.

Now a United Nations Special Envoy on El Niño and Climate, Robinson is often associated with the phrase, “Climate change is a man-made problem that requires a feminist solution.”[14] That phrase is the tagline for the podcast

Mothers of Invention that she developed with New York–based Irish comedian Maeve Higgins in which they provide optimism, hope, and humor as they interview women from around the world who are taking innovative action in pursuit of climate justice. As Higgins, cohost of the show, said, "This is for people like myself who feel stuck, knowing there are actions they should be taking but paralyzed by despondency. The capitalist patriarchy is not going to solve this. We need to."[15]

A people-first approach is needed to guide cities and states who have adopted climate and energy goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In Massachusetts, for example, the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act required a 25 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from all sectors of the economy below 1990 levels by 2020 and an 80 percent reduction by 2050. The state met the 2020 goal and is now focusing on how to reach and exceed the 2050 goal. I was asked to join an academic steering committee of experts to inform the state's road map and plan for achieving the 2050 targets. As the modelers tried to quantify projections with different scenarios and pathways for reaching the goal, our group grappled with how to integrate the critically important issues of distribution and equity. How will different communities be impacted? How should the costs and benefits be distributed? How can different social and economic policies be aligned and integrated to achieve ambitious decarbonization goals in a way that does not exacerbate inequities and injustices?

As our group tried to help the state's Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs develop an implementation plan for the next decade, we faced a recurring challenge. The conventional modeling techniques to assess the most cost-effective way to reach the specific quantitative goal are unable to capture the many opportunities that arise when investments are prioritized in low-income communities. To implement a people-first approach, these sophisticated quantitative tools need to be modified, and reliance on simplistic models must be coupled with information about who will benefit and who will be left out.

Why Antiracist and Feminist Leadership?

A new kind of leadership is emerging to confront the climate crisis in an inclusive way. We know that we need to stop burning fossil fuels, we know that we need to transition to a renewable-based future, and we know that we need to invest in our communities to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerabilities in the face of growing climate instability. But we are paralyzed by inadequate leadership in the United States. White, patriarchal leadership has been focusing too much on technocratic investments based on narrowly defined results and quantitative outputs. The prevalence of this rigid leadership style, based on assumptions of domination and competition, has been exacerbating the climate crisis, reinforcing racial and gender disparities, and excluding diverse voices and perspectives. But as the Squad grows, a new kind of leadership is emerging and widening the circle of power and opportunity. New coalitions of leaders are calling for public investment in collective, collaborative action that harnesses human potential, nurtures people, and builds strong communities.

Antiracist feminist leadership is essential to effectively address the climate crisis and to accelerate a just transition to a renewable based society. So what do I mean when I refer to antiracist and feminist leadership?

To understand the term *antiracist*, I refer to Ibram X. Kendi's powerful 2019 book, *How to Be an Antiracist*. In this book, Kendi explains that anyone who declares that they are not racist is signifying neutrality, but, he points out, in the struggle with racism, there is no neutrality. Kendi explains that the opposite of "racist" isn't "not racist," but is "antiracist"—whenever we ignore issues of race we are inadvertently perpetuating racism.[16] Given the deep legacy of racial injustice embedded in our culture, our institutions, our communities, our economy, and our policies, those who do not actively resist racism are in fact supporting it. Antiracist leadership requires continual recognition and active resistance to racism in all its many forms and structures.

A similar argument can be made regarding patriarchy, misogyny, and gender discrimination. Like racism, sexism is deeply rooted in our society, and many of our institutions, norms, and values will continue to reinforce gender discrimination unless we are continually and actively resisting. Leadership that is not actively resisting racism and patriarchy is actually perpetuating these systems of oppression.

According to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of *We Should All Be Feminists*, many men say that they don't think much about gender or notice gender disparities.[17] Similarly, many white people say that they don't think much about race or notice racial disparities. Those with privilege who consider themselves successful within current systems are generally less aware of the structural oppression that stratifies society than those without such privilege, which is why antiracist, feminist leadership is so critical in society's efforts to confront the interconnected challenges of the climate crisis and growing inequities. If we continue to rely on climate solutions proposed by those who are unaware of or indifferent to racism and sexism, we are guaranteed to reinforce those inequities. And if we don't embrace antiracist and feminist leaders, we are unlikely to succeed in designing inclusive and effective responses to the climate crisis.

Anyone can embrace antiracist and feminist principles. Bernie Sanders is a prominent example demonstrating that leaders with any racial or gender identity, including older white men, can bring antiracist feminist principles to their leadership. Every human being has the capacity to learn, understand, and have empathy for other human beings, and we can all resist systems of oppression, regardless of where we are positioned within those systems. As Pressley often says, "There is no hierarchy of hurt." Ultimately, because everyone is negatively impacted by racism, misogyny, and other forms of oppression, everyone—regardless of gender, race, or any other identities—can be encouraged to embrace and prioritize antiracist and feminist principles.

Why Diversify Leadership?

As a related but distinct priority, we need not only antiracist and feminist leadership, which women and men of any racial identity can bring, but also more people of color and more women in leadership positions. The experiences and perspectives of many leaders in climate and energy have not represented the diversity of people and communities in our society, and this lack of representation has limited the ideas and priorities that have been integrated into climate and energy policies.

Recently published research showed that countries with more women in leadership positions adopt more stringent climate policies than countries where women do not play as prominent a leadership role.[18] This analysis of ninety-one countries concluded that increasing female political representation is an underrecognized mechanism for addressing the climate crisis and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This study is consistent with other research showing that women have greater awareness and concern about environmental issues and that diversity of all kinds encourages innovation.[19]

To implement the scale of change that is required, we need visionary leaders who represent a more inclusive, broad, and diverse set of experiences and perspectives and who are better able to integrate social justice into every aspect of climate action and the renewable energy transformation. This requirement goes beyond the value of leadership that embraces antiracist and feminist principles; it is about recognizing the value of bringing a range of experiences and perspectives to the table.

The distribution of representation on the United States Supreme Court, an influential group of nine judges appointed by the president and confirmed by Congress, provides an example of why diversity matters so much. The societal value of moving away from the 180-year legacy of a court that was made up of only white Christian men is undeniable. The first Jewish justice, Louis Brandeis, was appointed in 1916; the first African American justice, Thurgood Marshall, was appointed in 1967; the first woman justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, was confirmed in 1981; and the first Latinx justice, Sonya Sotomayor, was appointed in 2009. There have still been only four women who have ever served on the Supreme Court: in addition to Sandra Day O'Connor, who served from 1981 until 2006, Ruth Bader Ginsburg has served since 1993, Sonya Sotomayor since 2009, and Elena Kagan since 2010. Although some claim that gender, race, and religious views have played little documented role in these justices' positions and decisions serving on the Supreme Court, the increased diversity of the people represented there has undeniably changed the perspectives that are being integrated into the court's deliberations.

When Sotomayor was being considered for the Supreme Court in 2009, she was widely criticized by her opponents, who found this quote from a

speech she gave in 2001: "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life."[20] Barbara Ransby in a 2019 *New York Times* article explained that what Sotomayor was saying was, "If I come in, my family, my community, my elders, my people, will in some form come with me."[21] When women and people of color bring their whole selves into leadership spaces where they have historically been excluded, they are necessarily going to approach things differently than their white male colleagues.

> *"I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life."*
>
> *—Sonya Sotomayor*

We each bring our family, our community, our elders, and our people with us into our professional lives. The experiences we have throughout our lives influence who we are; they determine what we prioritize and how we view the world. Diversifying leadership is therefore critical because some of us experience racial and gender oppression, and others do not. Some of us experience economic and environmental injustices, and others do not. More often than not, those in positions of power have been among the most privileged in society who often have less direct experience with the negative effects of oppression and injustices. But the Squad and many other leaders are challenging that reality, and momentum is growing. To confront the devastating societal impacts of racism and to dismantle the destructive patriarchal systems that perpetuate the concentration of wealth and power, leadership must be diversified at every level—and on every issue.

In 2020, white men made up less than 30 percent of the United States population, yet they were disproportionately represented in positions of power. In a June 2019 report, the Reflective Democracy Campaign, which maintains a database of candidates and elected officials by race and gender that demonstrates the shifting demographics of power in American politics, showed that white men made up 62 percent of elected positions; however, there was a substantial increase in the number of women and women of color who ran for office between 2012 and 2018.[22] In 2019, women made up

31 percent of elected positions across local, state, and federal races, which was an increase from 28 percent of elected positions in 2015 (a 10 percent rate of increase over four years). These accelerating trends of diversifying power offer hope and inspiration.

As Ocasio-Cortez of New York and others across the United States expand details on how the Green New Deal connects with jobs and housing and as Greta Thunberg of Sweden continues to expand the global climate youth movement, millions of other new leaders are stepping up to push for more inclusive and integrated action on climate and energy—embracing a people-first approach. By anchoring their advocacy with explicit acknowledgment of the legacy of injustices and oppression, diverse leadership is prioritizing policies and plans that will benefit frontline communities, low-income communities, and communities of color that are disproportionally impacted by climate change, pollution, and poverty. Pressley expresses it this way: "The people closest to the pain, should be closest to the power, driving and informing the policymaking!"[23] By focusing on the needs of families and communities that have been excluded and marginalized, these leaders are accelerating momentum for a major course correction and transformative change (figure 1-2).

Figure 1-2. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), Ilhan Omar (D-MI), and Sumbul Siddiqui, mayor of Cambridge, Massachusetts, speaking at an event in Somerville, Massachusetts, on January 12, 2020.

Resist, Reclaim, and Restructure

The key to effectively addressing the climate crisis is to diversify leadership and redistribute wealth and power by ensuring that antiracist, feminist principles are prioritized. Because "all politics are climate politics,"[24] all policies—from economic policy to health policy and from housing policy to transportation policy—now have to integrate climate resilience and renewable energy. The level of policy integration required will only be possible through diverse leadership and multiracial, multiethnic, gender-balanced coalitions mobilizing a broad-based movement to support transformative change. Diverse leadership is already mainstreaming the idea that the biggest challenges facing society are linked and the best opportunities for change are when these challenges are addressed together. Growing the Squad involves supporting bold and diverse leaders who bring their experiences to resist legacy power structures while also reclaiming and restructuring practices and systems to advance a just, equitable, and sustainable future.

Throughout this book, the focus is on leveraging the resist, reclaim, and restructure framing of the energy democracy movement. Chapter 2 focuses on why diverse leadership is needed to resist the male-dominated status quo that continues to concentrate wealth and power and promote technical fixes to climate. Multiracial, gender-balanced coalitions of leaders are essential to resist the power of the "polluter elite," a term researcher Dario Kenner coined to refer to a select group of influential decision makers, including wealthy shareholders and executives at large multinational oil, gas, and coal companies as well as other high net worth individuals who are profiting from continued fossil-fuel reliance.[25]

Growing the Squad involves supporting bold and diverse leaders who bring their experiences to resist legacy power structures while also reclaiming and restructuring practices and systems to advance a just, equitable, and sustainable future.

Other chapters focus on reclaiming and restructuring, providing inspirational examples of how diverse, antiracist, and feminist leadership is building momentum for transformative structural change. Recognizing the need for climate and energy policies to be integrated into other broader policy areas, these chapters focus on connecting climate and energy with basic necessities for all: jobs and economic justice, health and nutrition, transportation, and housing and buildings. Each chapter highlights examples of innovative leaders reclaiming power for underserved and marginalized people and communities as well as restructuring organizations and institutions to move toward a more just, equitable, and climate-resilient future for all.

Chapter 3 focuses on the growing momentum of innovative leaders who are responding to expanding economic disparities and a growing sense of precarity, a term that describes the instability and vulnerabilities of living with unpredictable low-wage work. By focusing on the widespread need for higher wages and more stable jobs, these leaders are reclaiming the power of workers by strategically connecting job creation and economic justice with ambitious climate and energy action. By prioritizing investments in good jobs for all, quality education for all, and job training as we transition to a renewable economy, these leaders are advocating for a restructuring of society for a future of inclusive prosperity. New coalitions of leadership promoting the Green New Deal, a plan to connect climate and energy with economic justice, are demonstrating how jobs and economic justice are essential to a just and sustainable future.

Chapter 4 focuses on innovative leadership integrating health, nutrition, and well-being with climate and energy. Leaders responding to growing health disparities, unequal access to nutrition, and decline in well-being are reclaiming public health priorities by connecting with climate action and the renewable energy transformation. Leaders who recognize that public health investments to prepare for the spread of new infectious diseases, like the novel coronavirus COVID-19, are critical to climate resilience are now leveraging powerful synergies to justify a major restructuring of public health investments.

Chapter 5 focuses on clean transportation for all, showcasing how leaders reclaiming the need for equity in transportation services are

connecting with diversifying non-fossil-fuel-reliant transit options. Diversifying leadership in transportation is elevating a transformative social justice lens and a shift to prioritizing more climate-friendly transit systems.

Examples of diverse leadership linking housing, buildings, and homelessness with climate and energy are the focus of chapter 6. Beyond the technical potential of zero-emissions buildings, leaders and activists are reclaiming the right to housing for all and linking that issue to investments in climate-resilient housing and buildings. Such links can leverage the transformative potential of restructuring investments in public housing, building retrofits, and cooperatively owned housing.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, suggests specific steps that anyone can take to advance antiracist, feminist leadership and become part of the transformation toward a more just, sustainable, and regenerative future. Joining a local activist group in your own community, getting involved in efforts to unlearn racism and sexism, advocating for local renewable energy for low-income neighborhoods in your city or town, and focusing on systemic change rather than individual change are among the specific actionable ideas.

The Squad is growing. At every level—from neighborhood leaders, to school leaders, to business leaders, to faith-based leaders, to community activists, to state and federal representatives, to international leaders—antiracist, feminist leadership is bringing people together. Coalitions are aligning around a people-first approach to resist, reclaim, and restructure. The broad-based movement for transformative change is getting stronger every day. Despite how the coronavirus pandemic has limited our capacity to convene in person, individuals, communities, and organizations of all kinds are organizing virtually, protesting, speaking out, and getting involved. As the status quo is being challenged, a new transformative politics is gaining strength.

By elevating the stories of powerful, transformative leaders, this book offers hope and optimism. Sharing the stories of creative individuals and diverse organizations who are making change happen in innovative ways provides motivation and inspiration and encourages readers to step up, stand out, and get involved in creating a better future for all. New leaders are needed at every level. As Alice Walker said, “The most common way people

give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."[26] We all have agency, and we all have power. We just need to decide how to use it.

Antiracist leadership is demanding changes to end structural oppression, and feminist leadership is subverting traditional masculine and male notions of what it means to have power. This shift from a divided, unequal, extractive, and oppressive society to a just and sustainable regenerative, healthy future is well under way, and the momentum is building as we inspire one another to get involved and take action.

CHAPTER 2

Resisting the Polluter Elite

It could be argued that the most effective leaders influencing climate and energy policy so far have been a select group of decision makers that researcher Dario Kenner calls the polluter elite. The polluter elite are extremely rich individuals whose net worth, luxury lifestyle, and political influence rely on their accumulating wealth from their investments in polluting activities, most notably fossil fuels. Charles Koch, ExxonMobil executives and other wealthy shareholders, high-net-worth individuals, and executives at large multinational oil, gas, and coal companies who profit from continued fossil fuel reliance make up the polluter elite. In his 2019 book, *Carbon Inequality: The Role of the Richest in Climate Change*, Kenner explains that these leaders are particularly passionate about influencing climate and energy policy because their money, power, and influence depend on continued fossil fuel reliance.[1] Since the 1980s, when climate change first became a public concern, these leaders have been strategically and secretively trying to block efforts to transition away from fossil fuels. By aligning with conservative, antigovernment, patriarchal, and racist politics, the polluter elite in the United States have used their political power to promote fossil fuel dependence, weaken public oversight of the fossil fuel industry, and limit consumer choice of fossil fuel alternatives. Unfortunately for the rest of the world, their efforts to support climate denial, resist renewable energy, and weaken public protections have been very effective, and their influence continues to expand. The disastrous US government response to COVID-19 results from decades of destructive influence of the polluter elite on US politics and public policy.

As the climate crisis worsens, economic inequities expand, and racial disparities grow, the dangerous tactics of the polluter elite are being revealed and their leadership is now being challenged. Leaders who prioritize

economic and racial justice rather than corporate profits are mobilizing to resist the polluter elite, restore faith in the government's role to protect the public, and restructure the institutions that have allowed the polluter elites to become so powerful. Among the national leaders resisting the power of the polluter elite by revealing their strategies and holding them accountable are Elizabeth Warren, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Bernie Sanders, and many more are active at the state and community levels.

As the movement grows, diverse leadership is essential. To effectively resist the influential billionaires who profit from the strategic dismissal of risks associated with growing inequity and climate disruptions, we need leaders who are committed to prioritizing the needs of disadvantaged and frontline communities.

The Power of the Polluter Elite

Since the Industrial Revolution, when burning coal enabled a shift to mass production, a select subgroup of society has been profiting from fossil fuels. With the exploration of oil and gas, fossil fuel extraction has continued to be an extremely profitable activity. David Koch, one of two brothers who ran Koch Industries, a multisector conglomerate of more than twenty industrial companies, used to joke that Koch Industries was "the biggest company you've never heard of."[2] Although many Americans are now familiar with the Koch brothers (David Koch died in August 2019), the scale and scope of their steady but subtle influence on American society is still not widely known. Charles and David Koch inherited Koch Industries, their father's family oil business, in the 1960s and expanded it to include companies focused on oil and gas exploration, refining and pipelines, chemical and fertilizer production, cattle and game ranching, forestry and timber products, commodity speculation of oil derivatives, and finance, electronics, and other consumer products. The Koch family profits from almost every aspect of American life, and they profit more when Americans produce and buy more stuff.

As the Koch brothers grew their company to be the second largest privately held company in the United States, they developed an unprecedented, largely unnoticed strategic influence on politics, the

economy, and American culture. To increase their profits and spread their libertarian views, they invested in a complex network of antigovernment influencers at every level of American society. The Koch brothers' often-secretive political actions have weakened government and contributed to the demise of labor unions in the United States. Their political influence has also led to growing income inequality, the spread of climate denialism, and the paralyzing partisan nature of US climate and energy politics.[3] A consistent part of their influence in each of these areas has been reinforcing a deep and pervasive cultural mistrust of government. For decades, the Koch brothers have invested in a long-term, coordinated strategy to inject their antigovernment principles into local, state, national, and even international affairs. By financing an expansive network of think tanks, political action groups, and research initiatives to advance their agenda, they have been steadily influencing American politics behind the scenes for decades.

The Koch brothers' often-secretive political actions have weakened government and contributed to the demise of labor unions in the United States.

Their strategic efforts have paved the way for expanded corporate power and ballooning private-sector profits by undermining the role of the government and diminishing public perception of the value of public services and public protection. From a social justice and human rights perspective, their strategic campaign has been a campaign of injustice and white supremacy. By promoting their libertarian individualistic ideals, they made sure that their companies thrived while public benefits and protections for marginalized people were slashed. They expanded their power and influence by strategically weakening workers' rights, eliminating public benefits, and dismantling public health protections.

Since the 1990s, ExxonMobil, Koch Industries, the Charles Koch Charitable Foundation, and the Castle Rock Foundation, among others, have been financing the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) to thwart any local or state initiatives that could weaken fossil fuel reliance. ALEC is an industry-supported network that equips conservatives with ready-made legislation and other resources to effectively endorse a conservative agenda.[4] With the support of these fossil-fuel corporate leaders, ALEC continues to leverage its broad national networks to coordinate

resistance to renewable energy policy, public transit, and any other proposed policies that might reduce the use of fossil fuels.

The lobbying efforts of the polluter elite have also been expanding economic inequity and exacerbating economic injustice. Since the early 1980s, economic inequality has worsened throughout the world. The widening economic gap is particularly striking in the United States, where inequality in both income and wealth has increased dramatically since the 1980s (figure 2-1). With income, the top 1 percent of population in the United States received 10 percent of national income in 1980, but by 2020, they received 20 percent.[5] Wealth is even more concentrated than income. The richest 1 percent owned 30 percent of wealth in the United States in 1989, a percentage that rose to 39 percent in 2016.[6] There are huge racial disparities in both wealth and income as well. The poverty rate for black Americans is almost 21 percent[7]; for Hispanics it is 18 percent, but it is only 8 percent for non-Hispanic whites.[8] As of 2016, the median wealth of black families was $17,100, which is about 10 percent of the $171,000 median net worth of white households.[9]

Inequities in wealth and income are exacerbated by racial and socioeconomic disparities in access to quality jobs, education, health care, housing, and transportation. With help from the polluter elite, antiunion legislation has passed in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio, all states that were once union strongholds.[10] The success of these antiunion bills can been traced to Americans for Prosperity (AFP), a Koch-supported organization that installs paid staff in those states, giving money and resources to influence elections and deploy volunteers and lobbyists in specific policy campaigns.[11] Recognizing that public-sector unions and the labor movement more broadly tend to support liberal candidates and liberal causes, AFP and the Koch brothers have been building allies in their quest to weaken unions for decades. Eliminating or weakening the rights of workers to bargain collectively helps the polluter elite accumulate more wealth—while workers become more vulnerable.

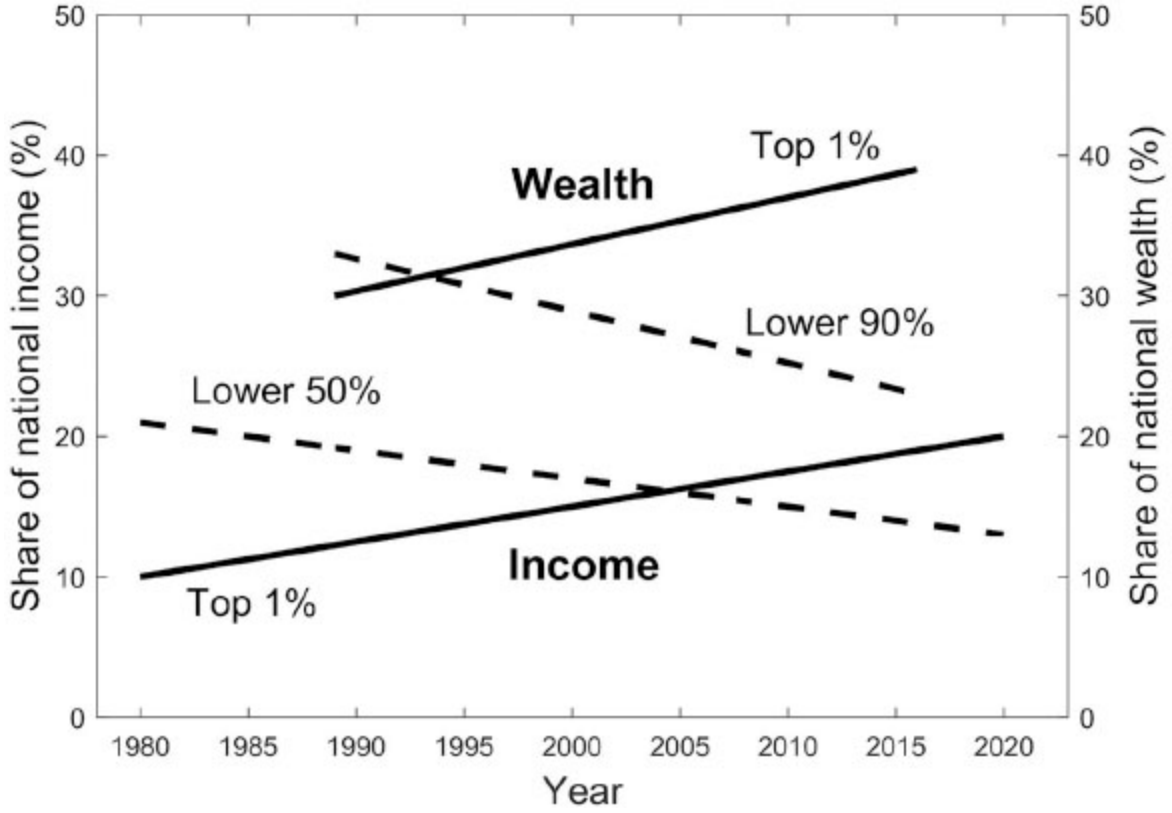

Figure 2-1. Widening income and wealth gaps in the United States. (Data from World Inequality Report 2018 and the Washington Center for Equitable Growth)

Multiple efforts to narrow the widening wealth gaps and address these worsening economic injustices have included tax code alterations, job training programs, health care reform, and urban renewal initiatives, but the lobbying strength of the polluter elite has thwarted these efforts. Recent tax code changes, including the 2018 tax reform bill, have actually ended up strengthening advantages for the polluter elite, further exacerbating economic injustice.

Awareness of the dangerous influence of the polluter elite on the public good is growing, however, and leaders are rising up to resist their disproportionate power and their oppressive economic practices. Today, diverse leaders at multiple levels—local to national—are calling out the policies and practices that allow these corporate giants to maximize profits for themselves by minimizing benefits and protections for everyone else.

Climate Denialism

The cultural influence of the polluter elite in creating and sustaining widespread climate denialism in the United States cannot be overstated. The executives profiting from fossil fuel reliance have orchestrated a decades-long strategic campaign to spread disinformation about climate science and confuse the US public and politicians about whether burning fossil fuels contributes to climate change.[12] The Koch brothers were instrumental in convening the earliest conference of climate deniers after President George H. W. Bush announced that he would support a treaty limiting carbon emissions,[13] and the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank that the Koch brothers founded and supported, sponsored the 1991 conference. At that time, climate change had not yet become such a partisan issue; both Democrats and Republicans were accepting of the scientific consensus on climate change, and the issue was gaining political attention. Recognizing the threat to the profits of Koch Industries, Charles Koch took the lead in mobilizing around this issue.[14] A major part of the Koch brothers' strategy of influence included coordinating their investments with others, so they formed corporate alliances to strategically invest billions of dollars to support climate denial and resist climate policies.[15]

As part of the coalition in collaboration with the Kochs, ExxonMobil has been identified as a corporate leader orchestrating the steady and strategic campaign to confuse the public and decision makers about the reality and severity of human-caused climate change. ExxonMobil, the Koch family, and other members of the fossil fuel industry invested in individuals and organizations to discredit climate scientists, deny climate science, and legitimize the notion that fossil fuel burning is benign. These efforts included citing fake experts, cherry-picking data, attacking climate scientists, promoting conspiracy theories, and manipulating the media to give attention to "both sides."[16] Similar to the tobacco industry's efforts to deny scientific evidence that smoking cigarettes causes cancer, the fossil fuel industry successfully deployed well-proven tactics of effective disinformation. Despite the scientific consensus that fossil fuel burning is the primary contributor to climate change, the polluter elite successfully convinced many Americans that there are unresolved questions about the science of climate change and that climate scientists can't be trusted. In addition to ExxonMobil, investments in climate science disinformation were

made by global fossil fuel companies, including BP, Chevron, ConocoPhilips, Royal Dutch Shell, Peabody, and CONSOL energy.[17] These fossil fuel companies promoted this disinformation campaign even though their own scientists had understood the role of fossil fuels in climate since the early 1960s.[18] Revealing this duplicity has led to the #Exxonknew campaign, a series of lawsuits, and increasing interest in fossil fuel divestment in an attempt to hold ExxonMobil and other fossil fuel companies accountable. Understanding how the public was deceived and how shareholders were misled for so long reveals how profit-driven corporate strategy has so far prevented humanity from reversing course on climate and energy.[19]

Subsidizing Fossil Fuels and Technological Fixes

Effective lobbying by the polluter elite has resulted in increasing support for multiple kinds of fossil fuel subsidies, including both direct tax subsidies designed to support and reward domestic fossil fuel production and indirect subsidies like government funding for fossil fuel technological innovation and financing for fossil fuel projects abroad.[20] A conservative estimate suggests that the US government spends about $20 billion per year on direct subsidies to the fossil fuel industry,[21] and indirect subsidies have been expanding rapidly with the Trump administration's priority of expanding fossil fuel production and profits.

Government support of the fossil fuel industry has been justified because reliance on cheap fossil fuel energy resources has been a critical part of the historic evolution of the United States. The low cost of energy has influenced American high-consumption lifestyles, including the car culture, suburban sprawl, and the prevalence of disposable consumer goods. Maintaining low-cost energy has been a dominant political priority in the United States, and the fossil fuel industry has leveraged this priority very effectively, by ensuring a steady stream of government support to reduce the industry's costs and increase its profits. In turn, the fossil fuel industry contributes millions of dollars to political campaigns to support individual politicians, thus ensuring that those politicians will maintain the regulatory landscape to promote their financial interests.

A report by Oil Change International calculated that in the 2015– 2016 election cycle, oil, gas, and coal companies spent $354 million on campaign contributions and lobbying, and during that same time, they received $29.4 billion in federal subsidies.[22] This 8,200 percent return on investment is clearly money well spent for these companies. The intertwined relationships between fossil fuel companies, campaign contributions, and subsidies, however, has created an almost impenetrable barrier to advancing effective climate policy for the public good. If the public good had been prioritized over fossil fuel corporate interests, there would already be a federal policy dedicated to ending fossil fuel reliance; instead, the kind of climate policy that has moved forward in the United States invests narrowly in science and technology, including huge investments in fossil fuel technologies.[23]

The concentrated power and influence of the polluter elite have contributed to and reinforced the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* allowing corporations to spend as much money as they want on election-related communication. This Supreme Court decision has given the fossil fuel industry even greater influence over political campaigns and determining which political leaders get elected. Although the fossil fuel industry did not give much financial support to Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, the industry did contribute to his 2020 campaign to sustain the huge financial benefits that the fossil fuel industry experienced with the administration's regulatory rollbacks and pro–fossil fuel priorities.[24] Recognizing the power and influence of fossil fuel interests, elected officials in the United States continue to be constrained in their efforts to prioritize the public good when designing climate and energy policy.

Fossil fuel subsidies have included public investment in fossil fuel research and development, including investment in so-called clean coal technology. Clean coal received a lot of attention and investment when it was first proposed in the late 1990s because it offered the promise of addressing climate change without having to reduce fossil fuel reliance.[25] Clean coal generally refers to carbon capture and storage (CCS), a set of technologies that captures carbon dioxide before it is released into the atmosphere and then stores the carbon dioxide gas in underground geologic formations.[26] The promise of this technology in the early 2000s led many US fossil fuel companies to acknowledge climate change and lobby for

additional government subsidies to help them develop technologies like CCS.[27] Although CCS technology remains too expensive and inefficient for mainstream deployment, this strategic public investment in an advanced fossil fuel technology has strengthened, rather than weakened, the power and influence of fossil fuel companies. An unrealistic technological optimism about the potential for CCS has been perpetuated by the polluter elite, which has resulted in continued subsidies for fossil fuel technologies.

A more extreme technological solution supported by some of the polluter elite is solar geoengineering, a proposed strategy for reducing warming of the planet by reflecting sunlight back to space by continually spraying sulfate aerosols into the lower section of the atmosphere.[28] From a narrow climate isolationist perspective, sending a continuous fleet of airplanes to fly around the globe to disperse aerosols to cool the planet may seem like a good idea. Leading solar geoengineering scientists claim that this method would be relatively cheap and effective in reducing global average temperatures.[29] A broader people-first perspective, however, forces us to consider how it would be governed and who would be included and excluded in the benefits as well as the control of this global manipulation of Earth's climate system. Not only are there huge risks of unintended consequences to people and communities around the world, but researching solar geoengineering itself is dangerous—it is an extreme, expert-elite, male-dominated technocratic intervention that would further concentrate political and economic power to whoever has control.[30] Solar geoengineering is being advanced by a small group of primarily white men at elite institutions, and the research so far has been funded largely by white, male billionaires. Feminist and antiracist leaders focused on social justice, energy democracy, and a people-first approach are frightened by this technological fix because it perpetuates dangerous power dynamics and fails to hold the polluter elite responsible. Advancing solar geoengineering also doesn't address the root of the problem, there is no global governance system to regulate or manage it, and increased attention and investment in solar geoengineering detracts from transformative social change and social justice.

Taking On ExxonMobil

Among the many inspiring examples of leaders taking on the polluter elite is Maura Healey of Massachusetts, the first openly gay attorney general in the United States. In October 2019, in *Commonwealth v. Exxon Mobil Corporation*,[31] the Massachusetts attorney general's office sued ExxonMobil for deceiving Massachusetts consumers about the role of its fossil fuel products in climate change and for misleading investors about the financial risks of climate change. Although several other states—including New York and Rhode Island—and a handful of cities—including New York City, Boulder, Oakland, and Baltimore—have filed similar lawsuits with the charge of misleading investors, Massachusetts filed the first lawsuit that uses consumer protection law to allege that false advertising deceived consumers. ExxonMobil ran advertisements in Massachusetts that suggested that its "synergy" gas and diesel products and its "green" Mobil 1 oil products reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Massachusetts alleges that this advertising was a deceptive "greenwashing" marketing campaign designed to intentionally mislead consumers. Healey, who has a track record of effectively leveraging her public office to fight for social justice, led this action. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated bold and principled antiracist, feminist leadership in multiple areas, including marriage equality, immigration rights, and resisting the polluter elite.

Healey, who was elected attorney general in 2014, calls herself the "people's lawyer." By doing so, she is elevating the value of the publicly supported state attorney general's office. She reminds people all the time that her role is to protect people from injustices of all kinds, especially injustices perpetrated by corporations. As a civil rights lawyer, she has spent her career championing the safety and well-being of the most vulnerable individuals and communities. As attorney general, she works collaboratively with her team, and they pride themselves in being accessible and responsive to everyone. Suing ExxonMobil has been among her most ambitious and courageous acts. ExxonMobil executives have tried disparaging her and her team, and they have sued her back—but to no avail. Although Healey's office originally filed the lawsuit in Massachusetts state court, ExxonMobil got the case moved to federal court, arguing that beyond state consumer protection law, the case relies on complex federal law.[32]

Healey demonstrates why government is crucial in upholding justice, whether it be economic justice, racial justice, or environmental justice.

In addition to her work within the state of Massachusetts, Healey has filed dozens of lawsuits challenging Trump administration policies, particularly around restricting immigration and attempts to bar transgender people from serving in the military. In this capacity, she has helped lead other Democratic, blue-state attorneys general to resist the Trump administration's conservative and exploitative agenda. One reason Healey is so inspiring is that she demonstrates why government is crucial in upholding justice, whether it be economic justice, racial justice, or environmental justice.

Elected officials like Healey provide a shining light at a time when public trust in government in the United States is at an all-time low. According to a 2019 Pew Research Center report, only 17 percent of Americans say that they trust the federal government to do the right thing always or most of the time.[33] With the uncoordinated and inconsistent national response to COVID-19, public trust in the federal government's actions continued to decline in 2020.[34] For decades, the declining public trust in government has been actively encouraged and supported by corporate leaders, including the Koch brothers, who know that strategic efforts to diminish the legitimacy of government can result in higher corporate profits.[35] The blatant ways that the Trump administration has used governmental powers to further prioritize corporate profits over public protection has diminished trust even more. Among black Americans, the Trump administration has reinforced a deep mistrust of government and a skepticism of politicians that is based on a long legacy of direct experience of living in a society in which government has sponsored racial injustices. The racial disparities of COVID-19 have further exacerbated and reinforced widespread mistrust in government.[36]

A trusted and competent government is an essential component of the transformative changes required to simultaneously confront the climate crisis and reduce economic and racial injustices. More representative and inclusive leaders like Healey are needed so that people and communities can see that their elected officials are representing their interests.

Taking On the Kochtopus

Acknowledging the broad reach of the Koch family influence, several watchdog groups, journalists, and climate and social justice activists now refer to the expansive Koch family network of influence as the Kochtopus, using the allegory of an octopus to reveal the breadth and reach of the Koch family's multilimbed influence.[37] Revealing the scale and scope of the Koch family influence is a major part of resisting their power. For example, the International Forum on Globalization hosts an interactive map on its website that describes the money, structure, and scale of the individuals and organizations in Kochs' influence network (table 2-1).

The Koch brothers quietly established AFP, their antigovernment political advocacy group, in 2004. AFP has hired a network of people, located in communities around the United States, to knock on people's doors, giving the effort a local grassroots appearance. AFP relies on personal interactions at the local level to gain support for its policy priorities. A common tactic to oppose renewable energy legislation or investments in public transit is to convince people that the proposed policies or projects are a waste of taxpayer money. In 2018, for example, AFP helped kill Nashville's proposed public transit project—which would have relieved congestion, reduced emissions, and spurred economic development—by convincing citizens that it was a waste of taxpayer's money.[38] The same approach is being used in communities across the United States to influence legislation that limits public investment, lowers taxes, and weakens government.

By investing in a consistent, long-term strategy integrating grassroots organizing, legislation, litigation, higher education, and political action, the Koch brothers became major social change agents. Their political influence has not only changed the policy priorities of elected officials in ways that bolster Koch profits, but the Kochs have also won over the hearts and minds of conservative Americans who mistrust the government. There is now a large faction of Americans who are adamant, loyal supporters of unregulated capitalism that perpetuates the concentration of wealth and power and exacerbates the climate crisis.

Table 2-1. The Kochtopus

Tentacles	*Description*	*Examples*

Media manipulators	Press professionals who create positive media coverage favorable to Koch's free-market ideology	Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh, Stephen Moore, Glenn Beck, John Stossel, Michelle Malkin
Think tanks	To promote policy proposals for less government that protect people and the planet but more rights for corporations and investors	Cato Institute, Heritage Foundation, Competitive Enterprise Institute
Astroturf agents	Fake grassroots groups to project an appearance of popular support for ideas and policies that benefit big corporations	Americans for Prosperity, National Rifle Association, Club for Growth, Americans for Tax Reform
Wealth warriors	Legions of lobbyists and armies of accountants and tax attorneys to keep wealth out of government	ALEC, US Chamber of Commerce, KochPAC
Congressional collaborators	Campaign contributions enable like-minded candidates to get elected and pass favorable laws	Tea Party Express, Tea Party Patriots, Mitch McConnell, James Inhofe, Mike Pompeo
Courtroom collaborators	Like-minded elected officials appoint judges to rule in Kochs' favor	Pacific Legal Foundation, Clarence Thomas, Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment
Academic agents	Fund universities to hire like-minded faculty to teach their ideologies	George Mason University, Georgia Tech, Dartmouth, Brown
Physical force	Police, military, and private contractors maintain security against civil unrest	Contract police for security at their gatherings

Source: "Kochtopus: The Influence of Koch-Cash," International Forum on Globalization, ifg.org/kochtopus/.

Several popular books have helped expose the hidden power of the Koch networks. Jane Mayer's 2016 book *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* reveals how the Koch brothers used investments in higher education and media as well as political action groups to perpetuate conservative free-market ideas. And Christopher Leonard's 2019 book *Kochland: The Secret History of Koch*

Industries and Corporate Power in America details the cult-like strategies used to control and align the Koch brothers' priorities and principles of market-based management.

Another inspiring example of diverse leadership resisting the polluter elite is the collaborative team on staff at UnKoch My Campus, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve democracy by protecting higher education from actors whose expressed intent is to place private interests over the common good. UnKoch My Campus was founded in 2013 after students at several universities realized how donations from the Koch family were influencing the curriculum, research, and hiring and firing of faculty on their campuses. Students at George Mason University, Florida State University, and the University of Kansas were all involved in campus protests after they found out about the Koch Foundation's gifts. When university administration refused to reveal the details of these donations, the students recognized the need for coordinated resistance. Since its founding, UnKoch My Campus has expanded to become a national nonprofit organization, providing resources to other campuses around the country and internationally.

Jasmine Banks, executive director of UnKoch My Campus, has expanded the reach and impact of the organization by centering the group's strategy on the most vulnerable communities impacted by structural oppression. As a mother of four and passionate supporter of her queer, black community, Banks understands the critical role that education plays in our democracy and how educational institutions can be manipulated to promote and legitimize antidemocratic, white supremacist climate denialism throughout society. Under Banks's antiracist leadership, UnKoch My Campus now supports efforts to resist corporate-backed white supremacy on campuses, corporate influence on K–12 education, and corporate efforts to influence the courts and judicial decisions. The organization investigates and audits relationships among wealthy donors, corporations, and educational institutions to reveal the strategic investment in promoting private interests over the common good and provides trainings on how to resist. Through a principled approach (table 2-2), UnKoch My Campus is building a movement of young people committed to disrupting corporate influence through education. By connecting local campus leaders with national and

international resources, the organization supports accountability on campuses by facilitating difficult conversations about corporate influence in higher education. Recognizing that public opinion and public policy are shaped by the pursuit and production of knowledge in higher education institutions, UnKoch My Campus is leading the way in resisting corporate influences throughout society.

Table 2-2. Grounding Beliefs of UnKoch My Campus

Change is possible.
Elevating private interests of corporations and the wealthy over the common good catalyzes structural oppression. Disrupting this strategy builds a more just society where communities can grow unhindered.
It is imperative that communities recover the power to shape the institutions they value, free of corrupt influences.
Constructive conflict is necessary and critical to transform our communities in service of a more just world.
Shared and appropriate governance is vital to break free from corrupt hierarchical structures that threaten the common good.
Education and the advancement of knowledge are foundational to democracy. Protecting our democracy is reliant upon preserving the independence of our colleges and universities.

Source: UnKoch My Campus, www.unkochmycampus.org.

Resisting Fossil Fueled Foolery

Leaders are also resisting the racial implications of the polluter elite's influence. Jacqueline Patterson, director of the Environmental and Climate Justice Program at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), is another inspiring leader who has been taking on the fossil fuel industry. Under her leadership, the NAACP has focused on exposing how communities of color have been strategically manipulated and taken advantage of by fossil fuel interests.[39] She has also been working with local and state NAACP chapters to help discourage them from accepting money from utilities that promote fossil fuels.[40] As part of this effort, the

NAACP's Environmental and Climate Justice Program released a report on April Fool's Day in 2019, *Fossil Fueled Foolery*, calling out the top ten predatory tactics of the fossil fuel industry (table 2-3).

The intent of the report is to empower NAACP branches, members, and elected officials to stand up against powerful energy interests perpetuating fossil fuel reliance. *Fossil Fueled Foolery* reveals the disingenuous tactics that the industry has been deploying in communities of color and provides resources and specific suggestions on how frontline communities can resist and get involved in advancing the shift toward energy democracy. The NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program also provides trainings to community leaders to support engagement in local processes to address these injustices. As the NAACP ramps up its advocacy for access to clean, renewable energy, Patterson has been inspiring many other leaders throughout the United States to resist the polluter elite and recognize that these corporate energy practices are a civil rights issue.[41]

Table 2-3. Top Ten Fossil Fuel Industry Tactics

1	Invest in efforts that undermine democracy.
2	Finance political campaigns and pressure politicians
3	Fund scientists and scientific institutions to publish biased research studies.
4	Contend that government regulations hurt the economy, ratepayers, and poor people.
5	Deny or understate the harms polluting facilities cause to people and the environment.
6	Deflect responsibility—shift blame to the very communities they pollute.
7	Exaggerate the level of job creation and downplay lack of quality and safety of jobs.
8	Pacify or co-opt community leaders and organizations and misrepresent the interests and opinions of communities.
9	Praise false solutions while claiming that real solutions are impractical or impossible.
10	"Embrace" renewables, seek to control the new energy economy, and quell energy

Source: Jacqueline Patterson, *Fossil Fueled Foolery* (Baltimore: NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program, April 1, 2019).

Elevating Public Trust

The antigovernment sentiment of the powerful polluter elite may have caused the most harm throughout the past few decades. The erosion of public trust in our institutions creates a challenging environment in which to promote transformative change. But this erosion of public trust could also be the very thing that motivates and inspires expansion of new leaders who prioritize integrity, social justice, and a clear commitment to the public good. For too long, so many public institutions have been failing people, particularly people of color and indigenous people. With the climate crisis looming and increasing exposure of the damage caused by the polluter elite, however, leadership is now stepping up to reestablish expectations for public institutions, including the criminal justice system, public education system, public health systems, public housing systems, and public transportation systems.

Leaders are realizing that the inadequacy of government responses to the climate crisis and a multitude of other crises facing the world is in part due to a decades-long corporate effort to create public mistrust in government by weakening its effectiveness.[42] Genuine representative, multiracial, gender-balanced leadership committed to social justice is required to restore faith in government. And rebuilding trust in government is essential to achieve more effective responses to the growing climate crisis.

The humanitarian crisis and chaos in Puerto Rico following weeks of earthquakes in December 2019 and January 2020 highlight the dangers of widespread mistrust in government. Afraid that their homes and schools might collapse, thousands of families slept outside in makeshift camps for weeks because they did not trust the government to accurately assess the structural integrity of their buildings.[43] Such deep mistrust in public institutions that were supposed to protect the people of Puerto Rico resulted in many becoming paralyzed with fear.

The erosion of public trust in our institutions creates a challenging environment in which to promote transformative change.

The 2020 coronavirus pandemic has elevated the dangers of widespread government mistrust and highlighted how disasters and disruptions disproportionately impact marginalized communities. When people do not trust the information from the government, there is confusion and inconsistency in how people respond to government actions intended to protect the public. Mistrust also expands the influence of misinformation. In the early days of the spread of COVID-19, some Americans believed the pandemic was a hoax, and rumors spread in some communities that black people were immune to coronavirus. Mistrust in government coupled with long-term disinvesment in black communities and a legacy health care system that has perpetuated racial health disparities has resulted in black Americans dying of COVID-19 at disproportionately high rates across the United States. By April 2020 in Milwaukee, for example, nearly three-fourths of those who had died of the virus were black, whereas only one-quarter of Milwaukee's population is black.[44]

To restore faith in government, all Americans need evidence that government policies are helping them and not leaving them out. When climate and energy policies perpetuate racial injustices, communities that are already suspicious and cynical about the government's ability to help them and protect them from harm become even more distrustful, and this mistrust prevents programs and policies from being effective. But with more diverse and representative leadership—with leaders who are able to consistently and genuinely demonstrate their commitment to social justice and their resistance of the polluter elite—public trust can be rebuilt, and transformative change can be advanced.

Resistance Is Not a Moderate Position

Challenging the rich and powerful is a daunting and risky task because those most threatened by transformative change often use their power to retaliate and double-down to justify their priorities. Bold leaders like Healey, Banks, and Patterson remind us that resistance is not a moderate position.

Resistance results in the distinct discomfort inherent in challenging the status quo.

In the United States, Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy of resistance is celebrated each year with a national holiday in his memory. Through his inspirational leadership, King teaches us not to be silent, but rather to stand up for justice and to be courageous and unapologetic as we fight on the path toward dignity and freedom.

King reminds us that when transformative changes are needed, those in favor of a moderate position can be more dangerous than those who oppose the change. In his April 16, 1963, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," he wrote:

> Over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice…. Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

As the United States struggles to adjust to and recover from the suffering of COVID-19, the magnitude of disruption has created new opportunities for transformative, radical change. Throughout human history, pandemics have forced societies to break from the past and reimagine their future with new and different assumptions and priorities. As we rebuild and restructure, we must take back the power from the polluter elite and resist efforts to reestablish the prepandemic systems that will not serve us well as the climate crisis accelerates. The pandemic has helped more Americans see both the risks of leadership that does not invest in preparing for future disruptions and the value of leadership that explicitly connects economic justice and public health.

CHAPTER 3

Jobs and Economic Justice

In September 2019, millions of youth walked out of school to demand action on climate from their political leaders in the largest-ever global Youth Climate Strike. These massive student demonstrations around the world are not only motivated by concern about the impacts of climate change; rather, many of these young people are also worried about their futures in terms of jobs and economic stability. With protest signs that say things like "Fighting for our future" and "At this rate, there won't be an economy to destroy," youth leaders are connecting the intergenerational fight for climate justice with concern and uncertainty about jobs, the future of work, and growing economic injustice. The economic crisis associated with COVID-19, including the unprecedented increase in unemployment in the United States, validates the concerns that many of these youth climate activists have had, and the postpandemic economic recovery provides an opportunity to restructure society to prioritize jobs and economic justice for all.

In the United States, climate activism has been growing rapidly with the coordinated leadership of the Sunrise Movement, a youth movement to "stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process."[1] Determined to make climate change a priority in politics, Sunrise has been mobilizing young people to resist fossil fuel interests in American politics and elect leaders who stand up for economic justice and the well-being of all people. The Sunrise Movement has focused its advocacy on mobilizing support for the Green New Deal, the proposed resolution introduced by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) in 2019 that explicitly connects climate action with economic justice and jobs for all. This youth movement has changed the Democratic conversation by elevating the connections between climate and jobs throughout the 2020 Democratic presidential primary. Sunrise endorsed the

candidacy of Bernie Sanders because of his consistency in articulating the opportunities for coming together to simultaneously address the scale and urgency of the climate crisis and growing economic injustices.[2] Youth leadership has captured what so many people, adults as well as teenagers, are feeling—a palpable sense of uncertainty about the future and a growing awareness of precarity.

Youth leadership has captured what so many people, adults as well as teenagers, are feeling—a palpable sense of uncertainty about the future and a growing awareness of precarity.

Resisting Precarity

Precarity, the state of having insecure employment or income, refers to the instability and vulnerabilities of living with unpredictable, low-wage work. A growing sense of precarity is emerging not just because of more short-term, temporary jobs without benefits, but also from the dangers associated with the erosion of any kind of social safety net. In today's society, many people without a steady job and those working in low-wage jobs are living in constant fear of homelessness. A growing percentage of the global population, particularly women, youth, immigrants, and those working in service jobs, are living with precarity.

UK labor economist Guy Standing popularized the term *precariat* to describe people whose livelihoods depend on uncertain, short-term, temporary, part-time, low-wage work and who do not have social protections or benefits. In his 2011 book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* Standing argues that this distinct new social class of workers living under precarious circumstances is expanding and leading to populism.[3] An alternative view is that precarity is more widespread, and that growing precarity is not limited to a distinct class of part-time, temporary workers.[4] Author and political activist Richard Seymour suggests that "we're all precarious now" because precarity is, in fact, being felt across multiple social classes, including the working class who have long-term, steady employment and even the middle class.[5]

Diverse leadership is essential to address the growing sense of precarity because people of color, women, indigenous people, youth, and migrants are disproportionately experiencing precarity. Traditional measures of economic success, including gross domestic product and fluctuations in the stock market, do not adequately capture the precarity that so many people are living with. Even economic analyses that show the troubling expansion of disparities in income and wealth (see chapter 2) do not reflect the vulnerabilities resulting from the oppressive practices that low-wage workers experience. Before the coronavirus pandemic resulted in an abrupt and drastic increase in unemployment in 2020, conventional economic analyses of jobs in the United States had portrayed a labor shortage and the lowest unemployment in decades.[6] Not reflected in these numbers, however, was the hardship of having to work two jobs with double shifts to cover the rent or the sense of vulnerability of having to stay in a job with an abusive or exploitative employer.

Intermittent income and low wages make workers particularly vulnerable because many believe that they have to be flexible and accommodating. As the impacts of climate change continue to grow, those with unpredictable jobs and insufficient income are less resilient than others. Working families with parents who work multiple jobs and still struggle to pay the rent are more likely to be negatively affected by a power outage, an intense storm, or a heat wave. Inspiring leaders throughout the United States, including leaders of the youth climate movement, are reclaiming workers' rights and economic justice by connecting climate action with structural changes to ensure high-quality jobs and economic justice for all. We need more leaders who recognize that growing precarity has led to an increase of worker exploitation by employers. We need leadership committed to structural innovations that reinforce workers' rights and empower workers.

Reclaiming the Power of Public Investment

Reclaiming the power of public investment is a critical part of connecting climate and energy with jobs and economic justice. The scale of public investment required for COVID-19 economic recovery provides an

opportunity to reprioritize how public funds are invested. The Green New Deal is a federal-level proposal for massive public investments, and leaders in some state and city governments are already committed to local Green New Deal–like public investments that connect job creation with climate action. In 2019, New York City passed a bill to invest in energy-efficiency building retrofits that is expected to create eight thousand jobs a year.[7] Los Angeles updated its Sustainable City pLAn in 2019 to combine ambitious climate goals and air pollution reductions with investments in the local workforce and economy by creating good union jobs for technicians, electricians, engineers, and other clean energy workers.[8] And many states, including Maine, Illinois, California, and New Mexico, have recently established new mechanisms for connecting workers and job creation with their climate goals.[9]

All too often, municipalities have been overly accommodating and supportive of corporate interests, allowing large companies to have powerful influence and control over the future of their communities. Pandering to private interests often leads to greater precarity, a result of increased corporate dependence. As communities around the United States have tried to attract well-paying jobs to their region, companies have leveraged their power to negotiate corporate perks like tax exemptions or reductions. This kind of "jobs blackmail" reduces the municipality's tax base and capacity to provide quality public services to the community.[10] The result is often a growth in corporate profits but a downward cycle for the community due to declining capacity to support public services of all kinds, including schools, parks, transportation, libraries, and community planning processes. These same companies often then step in to help by providing token levels of additional community support, which further ingratiates them into the community and gives them even more power in future negotiations with the local government. Given COVID-19 and the financial crises facing almost all municipal governments as they struggle to sustain basic public services, new innovative approaches to job creation are desperately needed.

An example of the pre-COVID "jobs blackmail" corporate strategy is Amazon's 2017–2018 competitive interactions with cities vying to be the home for the new second Amazon headquarters. Amazon promised that the headquarters would bring fifty thousand well-paid positions (jobs paying an

average of more than $100,000 per year) to the winning city. In return, Amazon expected incentives, including tax abatements, land grants, workforce training funds, sales tax exemptions, permitting waivers, and fee reductions.[11] In October 2017, a total of 238 North American cities submitted bids to Amazon that included a wide array of taxpayer-supported incentives to lure the company. Each city's proposal to Amazon also included a huge amount of valuable data that the company has since been able to use to strategically expand and distribute its presence.[12] In many of these cities, there was widespread opposition to Amazon based on the belief that any benefits of new jobs were far outweighed by the huge cost of tax incentives and other investments that cities and states were proposing, which would divert funds from community budgets to Amazon.[13] After releasing a public list of twenty finalists in January 2018, Amazon announced two locations for their future "second headquarters"—Long Island City in Queens, New York, and Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia. New York City collaborated with New York State to offer Amazon almost $3 billion in government incentives, and the state of Virginia offered $570 million.[14] Community opposition in New York was particularly strong as lawmakers, unions, and local civil rights groups argued that billions of dollars of public funds should not be spent investing in a company that exploits its workers and whose presence in the city would cause more gentrification, displacing New Yorkers in low-income communities.[15] Ocasio-Cortez, whose congressional district covers part of Queens, fiercely opposed New York's bid. After Amazon pulled out in February 2019, she wrote in a tweet, "Anything is possible: today was the day a group of dedicated, everyday New Yorkers & their neighbors defeated Amazon's corporate greed, its worker exploitation, and the power of the richest man in the world."[16]

The power that companies have with state and municipal governments is also often leveraged to resist environmental protections and other regulations that are in place to protect public health and the public interest. Corporations, especially those in the fossil fuel sector, have leveraged growing precarity to effectively resist these protections by threatening job cuts. They argue that the cost of complying with environmental regulations will reduce their company's profits, forcing them to reduce their workforce.

In coal country, including Appalachia and the Powder River Basin in Wyoming and Montana, hundreds of towns grew because of steady, lucrative jobs in the coal mines. As the future of coal became threatened—not just by the potential of future climate policies but also by lower-cost natural gas, renewable energy, and increased global competition—coal companies have leveraged the communities' reliance on these jobs to minimize environmental, health, and safety regulations. The coal industry has resisted regulations, including those designed to limit pollution in streams and reduce toxic dust, and this deregulation is resulting in an increase of black lung in coal miners. When an Ohio-based coal company, Murray Energy, sued the US Department of Labor over a new coal dust rule in 2014, the company's assistant general council claimed that the regulation was part of a "War on Coal, which has been destroying the jobs and livelihoods of coal miners and their families."[17]

Corporations, especially those in the fossil fuel sector, have leveraged growing precarity to effectively resist these protections by threatening job cuts.

With the recent fracking boom in the United States, the same pattern is observed. Companies eager to make money from extracting oil and gas enticed hundreds of local governments to grant permission to frack without regulatory oversight by dangling the potential of local jobs. The short-term nature of fracking extraction has led to fleeting jobs[18] as well as to long-term environmental devastation and permanent public health impacts.[19] Leaders in New York, Maryland, Washington, and Vermont have resisted corporate pressure and the false promise of local jobs and instead have banned fracking.[20] These bans were passed with support from diverse coalitions advocating for the need to protect public health, the environment, and safe drinking water. Leaders throughout the United States are recognizing the possibilities for reclaiming the power of public investments and resisting corporate interests profiting from local economic decline.

Inclusive Prosperity

Despite the widespread sense of precarity and powerful corporate influence, there is hope. Leaders at every level (local, state, and national) are resisting the dominant jobs-versus-environment framing that has resulted in growing precarity and the systematic oppression of marginalized people. Leaders throughout the United States are connecting job creation and transformative climate action by investing in a clean-energy economy. The current movement to connect jobs to bold action on climate and renewable energy is more transformative than previous efforts to promote so-called green jobs. Enthusiasm for investment in green jobs and the green economy appeared in response to the fiscal crisis and recession starting in 2007,[21] and the terms *green-collar jobs* and *green-collar workers* emerged to categorize jobs in the environmental sector. But much of the promise of green jobs has yet to be realized.

Ambitious leaders are now working on transformative changes: ending fossil fuel subsidies, altering corporate incentive structures, reforming tax law, and expanding cooperative models of business, including worker-owned cooperatives. To restructure society for more inclusive prosperity, the systems that have been concentrating wealth and power need to be reclaimed so that resources are redistributed and investments are made in the creation of high-quality, well-compensated jobs. Investing in low-carbon jobs, including service jobs and caring jobs (such as teachers, nurses, child care workers, and elderly care workers), is gaining traction as multiracial coalitions of leaders are advancing the Green New Deal. These leaders are resisting the corporate claim that prosperity and environmental protection are at odds. They are reclaiming the societal benefits, including climate benefits, of sustaining good jobs and investing in communities, and they are working to restructure society into a renewable-energy based society that guarantees good jobs for all. Within the Green New Deal and multiple other initiatives, there is an explicit prioritization of job creation and job training for communities of color, women, and indigenous people. This priority results from antiracist and feminist leaders who are advocating for a form of reparations to compensate for past workforce discrimination that has excluded, marginalized, and disadvantaged so many.

Leading the Sunrise Movement

One particularly inspiring leader who is resisting the corporate claims that economic prosperity and job creation are at odds with climate policy is Varshini Prakash, cofounder and executive director of the Sunrise Movement (figure 3-1). Prakash is mobilizing millions of young people with the idea that climate change requires economic prosperity for all. Her resistance to the status quo is contagious. The rapid rise and expansive influence of the Sunrise Movement is a testament to Prakash's skills as a collaborative, strategic, and courageous organizer. Her leadership in climate activism began in 2015 while she was an undergraduate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she led a campaign that pressured the UMass administration to commit to divesting the university endowment from fossil fuels.

Figure 3-1. Varshini Prakash, cofounder and executive director of the Sunrise Movement, speaking at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government on September 9, 2019. The title of her talk was "Green New Deal: An Economic Vision for the Twenty-First Century."

The Sunrise Movement caught national attention immediately after the 2018 elections, when Prakash led a coordinated occupation of the office of

Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives. Prakash and other youth activists demanded that Democrats refuse donations from fossil fuel interests and support a Green New Deal that explicitly connects jobs with climate. This bold action got national attention, which catalyzed a major shift in how the Democratic candidates for president began speaking about the climate crisis.

I first met Prakash at an energy policy seminar at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in 2019, where she talked about her collaborative leadership and youth activism to Harvard students, faculty, and a few returning alumni. I arrived early so that I could introduce myself and chat with her briefly before her seminar started. I looked over to see who was in the reserved seats in the front row of the large classroom and saw a group of familiar Harvard faculty experts in energy, climate, and environmental policy, all white men, who sat distractedly in the front row, waiting for the presentation to start.

As Prakash described the theory of change that informs the Sunrise Movement's approach to accelerating transformation, the men in the front row appeared to listen attentively. She described how the Green New Deal has resonated with young people from diverse backgrounds across the United States who are deeply concerned about their futures. She explained how a group of passionate activists collaborated in the summer of 2017 to identify three priorities needed for change to happen: (1) people power, (2) political power, and (3) new political alignment. Prakash described how the focus on people power means activating a large and vocal active base of public support. "Social movement research shows that if 3.5 percent of a population gets active on a particular issue—which means they are voting, donating, out in the streets, and talking to neighbors on that this issue—that movement inevitably wins," explained Prakash. The goal of activating only 3.5 percent of the population makes the task seem tangible and realistic.

The focus on political power means building a critical mass of enthusiastically supportive public officials. Prakash said that the Sunrise Movement realized that people power without what she called "allies in office" would be ineffective, so it was crucial to cultivate the strong support of elected officials willing to fight for transformative action. The focus on

political power also means voting out politicians who are benefiting from fossil fuel interests and are against ambitious climate policy.

The third necessary ingredient, new political alignment, refers to coalition building, coordinating, and collaborating with other social movements (human rights, racial justice) across various sectors and organizations, including think tanks, academic institutions, and different levels of government. Political alignment, Prakash explained, is "a grouping of social, economic, and political forces that are able to define a shared agenda for society."

Prakash was articulate and inspiring as she described the Sunrise Movement's strategy. When it was time for questions, many attendees raised their hands, but most of the time was taken up by the faculty in the front row expressing their subtle but clear skepticism. One asked if it might be possible to push for too much change. He highlighted the risk of being too ambitious and suggested that advocating for change that is too transformative may result in no change at all. Another expressed concern that the Sunrise Movement and the Green New Deal do not encourage other countries to change. Prakash acknowledged that some critics say that the movement is too radical and unrealistic, but she explained that for many young people, it seems unrealistic *not* to invest heavily in connecting climate change and jobs. "Climate wasn't going to be a priority," she said, until more than two hundred Sunrise activists occupied Pelosi's office.

Observing the interactions between the all-male Harvard faculty in the front row and the speaker, I was struck by the distance between them. A lack of appreciation and enthusiasm for this impressive activist leader from the established faculty members was noticeable, and it felt unsettling. I knew several of these faculty members from early in my career when I was a researcher at Harvard, and I felt myself aligning more closely with Prakash. I was disappointed in the narrowness of the more established mainstream technocratic climate and energy work that these Harvard faculty members represented.

To me, Prakash embodies graceful and inspiring courage. As a woman of color who has energized millions of young Americans, her leadership has changed the political discourse on climate in the United States. With principled focus on a better future for all, Prakash is collaborative and

inclusive in her leadership style. As she continues to lead a growing movement and the Sunrise Movement becomes a powerful force in national politics, the impact of her leadership will continue to expand.

Jobs and Economic Prosperity in a Renewable Society

Unlike fossil fuel resources or the uranium used in nuclear energy, sources of renewable energy are abundant and widely accessible. A renewable-based future will include a mix of solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, tidal, and wave technology deployed at large-scale, small-scale, and midscale sites. Renewable energy allows for the ramping up of distributed energy so that individual households, buildings, and organizations can generate and manage their own energy. Regions and communities can rely on a locally appropriate mix of different renewable energy technologies to harness the renewable resources of that region to meet individual demand. Burlington, Vermont, for example, the first US city to generate 100 percent of its electricity from renewable sources, is powered by a mix of biomass, hydro, wind, and solar energy.[22] Leadership committed to social justice in Burlington created the decades-long effort to invest in local, renewable power.[23] To reach this goal, a culture of community-engaged collaborative leadership supported the city's municipally owned electric utility, Burlington Electric Department, a public organization that employs an estimated eighty-five local workers in steady, well-paid local jobs.

Diverse leadership that recognizes the opportunities associated with moving beyond large private company ownership and investing instead in community cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, and public and municipal organizations is changing how the benefits of energy systems are distributed. Every state has seen growth in green energy jobs attributed to four main areas: (1) renewable installation (mostly wind and solar); (2) energy storage and grid innovation; (3) energy efficiency, including building retrofits and installation of more energy-efficient technologies; and (4) advanced vehicles and transportation.[24] Other growth areas for public investment during the renewable transformation advocated by leaders for the Green New Deal include teachers, nurses, and other service jobs.

Innovations in Job Training

Despite the efforts of the fossil fuel industry to slow down the transition to a renewable-based society, the number of creative initiatives focused on job training and job creation related to renewable energy is growing. Two inspiring women-run nonprofit organizations, for example, are committed to training workers from marginalized communities for the energy jobs of the future. GRID Alternatives, the nation's largest nonprofit solar installer, is also a job training organization, and All In Energy, a Boston-based nonprofit, is advancing workforce training in communities underrepresented in the clean energy workforce while also promoting the adoption of clean energy technologies and services in underserved communities.

GRID Alternatives based in Oakland, California, focuses on ensuring that both renewable energy technology and renewable job training are accessible to underserved communities. Erica Mackie, chief executive officer and cofounder of GRID Alternatives, is a professional engineer who recognized early on in her career that low-income communities have been systematically excluded from the solar boom. Although rooftop solar has been growing by about 50 percent a year since 2012, racial diversity in the solar industry is low, and installation of solar panels has been significantly lower in black and Hispanic neighborhoods, a statistic that holds true even when corrected for income and home ownership.[25] By creating a nonprofit organization that provides both workforce training and solar installation in communities that have been left out, Mackie and her team are reclaiming the environment–jobs relationship.

I met Mackie in 2013 at Clean Energy Education, a conference for women in energy. Mackie was receiving the entrepreneurship award and was being acknowledged for GRID Alternatives' innovative approach to linking jobs and renewable energy deployment.

Mackie and her colleagues at GRID Alternatives recognized that solar adoption rates vary drastically based on the level of affluence of a community. Research found that California's most disadvantaged communities are eight times less likely to adopt solar energy than wealthy communities.[26] And not only is there a huge discrepancy in the rates of solar

installation, but access to new solar installation jobs is also limited among low-income communities.

Mackie describes the approach of GRID Alternatives to engaging participants as a "community barn-raising method with a job training component." In addition to the gains in local economic benefits of installing new renewable energy infrastructure, members of the community come together to gain skills.

GRID Alternatives' workforce training programs include an initiative for recently incarcerated individuals, a tribal solar energy program, and a Women in Solar Initiative. By focusing on improving racial and socioeconomic diversity and inclusion in the solar industry, these programs also elevate the profile of people from historically marginalized groups working in the industry and give representatives of these communities the opportunity to participate in the industry.

The job training program focuses on providing five "R's":

1. **Recruitment** to reach members of underserved communities and promote solar job opportunities.
2. **Real-world experience** for people attempting to enter the solar energy workforce
3. **Readiness**—working with industry leaders to provide relevant job training that meets industry needs.
4. **Referrals** to connect job seekers with industry.
5. **Retention**—elevating issues of diversity and inclusion in the solar industry to ensure supportive working environments that retain newly trained workers.

GRID Alternatives' Women in Solar Initiative was launched in 2014 with a $1 million donation from Sun Edison, one of the largest solar companies in the world. The campaign is designed to attract more women to the solar industry and to improve retention by making the industry more inclusive to the women already working in it. The program includes a series of "We Build" women-only solar system installation trainings along with a pledge to train one thousand women in solar installation and thirty women to be solar installation team leaders. The campaign includes a quarterly "We Lead"

webcast series revolving around the issues facing women in the solar industry and providing advice for women entering the industry. As part of its commitment to gender diversity, GRID Alternatives has pledged to include at least twenty women in its more extensive SolarCorps training program in the coming years, which will ensure a fifty-fifty gender ratio. In addition, the campaign launched the "We Give" circle of women donors to support their work and establish additional connections with successful women who are already a part of the solar industry.

Under Mackie's leadership, GRID Alternatives has grown to include eight affiliate offices serving communities in California, Colorado, and the mid-Atlantic region (with an office in Washington, DC), as well as a Tribal Program serving communities throughout the United States. The organization now has an international program that contributes to solar installations and job training in Nicaragua, Nepal, and Mexico. The impact and growth of this nonprofit organization demonstrates the creative possibilities of antiracist, feminist leadership.

All In Energy, another innovative women-owned nonprofit organization inspiring change, connects job training with energy system change. All In Energy focuses specifically on helping marginalized and underserved communities in Massachusetts access public benefits and incentives related to energy efficiency and renewable energy. Although Massachusetts is recognized as a national leader in energy efficiency, there are big disparities between who is accessing the publicly available incentives to promote energy efficiency and who is benefiting from renewable energy subsidies. Lower-income communities in Massachusetts have been consistently receiving lower amounts of efficiency savings than other communities; for example, households in towns and neighborhoods with median household incomes of $45,000 or less averaged 1.9 percent in efficiency savings, whereas the more affluent communities averaged closer to 3 percent.[27] Recognizing this disparity, cofounders Rouwenna Altemose and Gabe Shapiro established All In Energy to combine community outreach with job training.

All In Energy, another innovative women-owned nonprofit organization inspiring change, connects job training with energy system change.

All in Energy identifies, recruits, hires, and trains members of communities underrepresented in the clean energy workforce, providing them with skills and experience necessary for clean energy careers. The job training program is coupled with an outreach initiative that leverages the social and institutional networks in specific partner communities to help residents save money on their utility bills by connecting them with energy efficiency resources and renewable energy programs. Since All In Energy started in 2018, it has helped 729 families get no-cost home energy assessments, and 136 of them have then had additional energy efficiency weatherization work completed, saving families more than $350,000 a year on energy bills.[28] Looking forward, the organization plans to expand beyond energy efficiency services and connect residents with affordable solar energy and home electrification options, including heat pumps and electric vehicles.

Through connections with the organization New England Women in Energy and Environment, I recently met Altemose. By working with individuals, families, and communities, she and her collaborative team are demonstrating positive changes that emerge when there is a commitment to more equitable access to the benefits offered by the energy transition, and by proactively recruiting staff from the communities they serve, they are diversifying the clean energy workforce by placing alumni from their training programs into jobs with partnering clean energy companies. As the organization expands, it is finding growing interest from clean energy companies looking for diverse talent to meet their sales and customer service needs.

The Green New Deal: Restructuring and Reparations

New political leadership is advocating for the Green New Deal and a vision of a restructured society in which climate and clean energy are explicitly linked with new public investments and guaranteed jobs for all. As the United States embarks on a strategic economic recovery from the COVID-19 disruptions, the principles and structure of the Green New Deal are increasingly valuable to guide investments. Momentum is building, and diverse alliances, including labor, environmental groups, and social justice organizations, are mobilizing around this ambitious societal

transformation.[29] Organizations supporting the Green New Deal include unions like the Service Employees International Union, the Labor Network for Sustainability, and the Association of Flight Attendants. Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, which has more than fifty thousand members, has explained that in the airline industry, "it's not the solutions to climate change that kill jobs. Climate change itself is the job killer" because more extreme weather and increased turbulence are disrupting travel and making it more dangerous for airline workers.[30]

The Green New Deal proposes a jobs guarantee—meaningful work for all—by connecting all kinds of jobs with the public investment required to restructure to a low-carbon future. One way that Ocasio-Cortez has been such an effective leader on the Green New Deal stems from her ability to communicate the need for diversity, inclusion, and the guarantee of good jobs for all in a direct and compelling way.

Her ambitious leadership is based on advocacy for the rights of workers. The Green New Deal explicitly acknowledges that advancing renewable energy alone is not enough to create a more just society. Advancing renewable energy without focusing on the creation of good jobs for all could end up hurting workers and exacerbating inequities. A 2019 controversy surrounding the solar company Bright Power, which fired twelve of its full-time construction workers in New York who were trying to unionize, demonstrates this tension. The company, which was ranked as one of the five thousand fastest-growing companies in the United States, decided to switch to contract workers after their full-time employees were inspired by the Green New Deal and voted to unionize.[31] Most of the workers, who came from low-income communities of color, were working in dangerous conditions and making just slightly more than minimum wage, and they believed that the company did not care about their safety or well-being. The disappointing outcome for these fired workers demonstrates the likelihood that without a commitment to ensuring unionized, high-quality jobs, the renewable energy industry could become just as extractive and exploitative as the fossil fuel industry.

The Green New Deal goes beyond a plan to create a fairer society and calls for reparations for past injustices. "It is the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal … to promote justice and equity by

stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth."[32]

This inclusion of "repairing historic oppression" recognizes the realities of how so many societal structures have been perpetuating inequities and injustices. This inclusion recognizes that in the United States, median white families own forty-one times more wealth than median black families.[33] The current disparities between white and black Americans result from structural and cultural racism that has been persistent yet changing over time, including the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow laws, discrimination in mortgage lending, real estate redlining, and a race-based system of mass incarceration. Immigrants with European heritage and others continue to benefit, directly and indirectly, from structures that continue to privilege white people. The call within the Green New Deal to "repair historic oppression" is aligned with the movement to resist the mass incarceration of black men, which has resulted in huge discrepancies in jobs, debt, and wealth accumulation for black and brown men and women.

Those in favor of reparations make the point that because the US government and many wealthy individuals have benefited immensely from slavery, the federal government has an obligation to return some of this profit back to the people who were so unjustly exploited. Nearly 75 percent of African Americans and 44 percent of Hispanics in the United States support reparations, whereas only 15 percent of white Americans do.[34] In 2019—on Juneteenth, the June 19 holiday that celebrates the end of slavery, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties held a hearing on reparations. Senator Mitch McConnell said that he was against reparations because none of us currently living are responsible for what he called America's "original sin." He did not explicitly acknowledge how slavery has molded capitalism, health care, culture, and politics and created persistent wealth gaps between black and white Americans. Nonetheless, the integration of reparations as well as the hope that the Green New Deal offers in terms of future jobs for young people,

black and brown people, and all those currently living with precarity is building diverse coalitions of supporters.

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Innovations in the Future of Work

Growing precarity has mobilized diverse leadership to advocate for the right of every human being to a certain level of economic prosperity. In the United States, it was Franklin Delano Roosevelt who first signed into a law a federal minimum wage in 1938. The current federal minimum wage has remained at $7.25 per hour since 2009. Despite this stagnant and low minimum wage at the federal level, twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have mandated a minimum wage that is higher than the federal level, while workers in the other twenty-one states are compensated at this inadequate wage for their labor.[35] Low wages that have not kept up with inflation force millions of workers to depend on multiple jobs, leaving little time to spend with their families.

In response to these low wages, there has been a recent reemerging of the idea of an Economic Bill of Rights, which was originally proposed by Roosevelt in 1944.[36] In his State of the Union address that year, Roosevelt made the claim that the freedom to pursue happiness required a "second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all."[37] Roosevelt died before he was able to build a movement to integrate economic rights into the Constitution, but Martin Luther King Jr., along with civil rights activist Bayard Rustin and others, expanded this movement, linking civil rights with economic justice. Before King was assassinated in 1968, he was planning a big march on Washington, DC—the Poor People's Campaign—to demand economic rights for all, including jobs, education, health care, housing, and income for all Americans. This idea has been revisited recently by several progressive activists, and one group of academics has expanded on the original proposed elements to suggest that an economic bill of rights for the twenty-first century should also include the right to a safe and clean environment.[38] Because COVID-19 has revealed

the collective dangers of a society with extreme economic inequality, interest in an Economic Bill of Rights is rising.

Another set of innovative approaches to reduce precarity is scaling up cooperative models of businesses, including worker-owned cooperatives in which workers earn money from the profits of their own labor. This alternative approach to the conventional investor-owned business is gaining popularity among new young entrepreneurs in some communities and also among some retiring baby boomers who are selling their businesses to their workers.[39] The structure of worker-owned cooperatives eliminates the possibility of corporate executives making multi-million-dollar salaries while workers are struggling on minimum wage. Activists like Esteban Kelly, executive director of the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives, are advocating for the expansion of worker-owned cooperatives and providing support and resources for new and existing organizations to restructure into this model. Different kinds of businesses in communities around the United States, including bakeries, breweries, and food markets, are establishing themselves as worker-owned cooperatives. One well-known worker cooperative is Equal Exchange, a national distributor of fair trade organic goods, including coffee, tea, sugar, bananas, cocoa, and chocolate bars. Equal Exchange is owned by more than one hundred workers and elevates cooperatives around the world by distributing products produced by farmer cooperatives in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.[40]

The New Economy Coalition is a network of organizations imagining and building alternative economic structures to create a future in which people, communities, and ecosystems all thrive. This network convenes and connects leaders throughout the United States and amplifies stories, tools, and analysis to build a shared identity to shift culture and policy. The New Economy Coalition also supports the organizing work of communities on the front lines of the economic and ecological crisis. In February 2020, it released Pathways to a People's Economy, a policy tool kit with insights on a host of policy ideas about how to move toward more worker-owned workplaces.[41]

I remember David Hawkins, one of the grandfathers of the environmental movement in the United States, saying once that the biggest sustainability challenge facing the world was not climate change or water or

waste; rather, the biggest sustainability challenge was and remains jobs. What will people around the world do all day? How will people sustain their livelihood? Jobs are an essential component of a healthy society.

In 2005, Van Jones, who was later appointed special advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in the Obama administration, asked, "As the new green economy springs to life, will we live in eco-equity or eco-apartheid?"[42] In this question, Jones was recognizing the choices ahead. The renewable energy revolution may continue to concentrate wealth and power, exacerbating racial and socioeconomic disparities. Alternatively, this revolution could be a mechanism for enhancing equity and repairing past injustices. Antiracist, feminist leadership will ensure that the renewable energy transition moves us toward eco-equity rather than eco-apartheid.

CHAPTER 4

Health, Well-Being, and Nutritious Food for All

On January 16, 2020, leaders of the Boston City Council adopted a resolution declaring that the climate crisis is a public health emergency.[1] Referencing the health impacts of extreme heat, reduced air quality, more frequent and intense weather events, increased exposure to infectious diseases, effects on mental health, and increased risk of population displacement and conflict, Boston joined more than thirteen hundred local governments in twenty-five countries that have declared a climate emergency.[2] The Boston City Council resolution, which was passed just before the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, recognizes that climate change "exacerbates health disparities, disproportionately harming the most vulnerable among us—children and pregnant women, people with low income, the elderly, people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and marginalized people of all races and ethnicities."[3]

A 2014 survey showed that most Americans do not think of climate change as a public health concern,[4] but awareness of the devastating impacts of climate change on human health is growing. In June 2019, more than seventy leading health organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Heart Association, signed a statement urging politicians to declare climate change a public health emergency and prioritize the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy to protect public health.[5] The statement, "The US Call to Action on Climate, Health and Equity," highlights that climate change poses a greater threat to children, pregnant women, and marginalized communities than to many others. These medical professionals are calling for social justice to be at the core of all climate health policy.[6]

Interconnected Public Health Emergencies

As global concern about the novel coronavirus COVID-19 grew in the early months of 2020, little was initially mentioned about whether and how the pandemic was related to climate and energy. But as the scale of disruption expanded, more attention was paid to the fact that climate change is making health crises like coronavirus more frequent and more severe now and will continue to do so in the future.[7] The dramatic reduction in fossil fuel burning for transportation and manufacturing during the coronavirus pandemic resulted in drastic improvements in air quality around the world, and the coronavirus reinforced what was already known: those more exposed to chronic air pollution are more susceptible to respiratory infections, including COVID-19.[8] Throughout the United States, COVID-19 deaths were higher among communities with worse air pollution, which are disproportionately communities of color.[9]

For decades, public health experts who study infectious diseases have known that climate change is increasing the ease by which diseases are spread. An increase in epidemics caused by viruses and other pathogens has been predicted, and we know that rising temperatures reduce the effectiveness of our natural immune systems.[10] Although the pandemic surprised many, the rapid spread of the coronavirus is consistent with experts' previous projections as anticipated effects of climate change on human health, with a predicted increase in the spread of new infectious diseases, including new viruses.[11]

Governments around the world struggled with how to best contain the spread of COVID-19, and different countries have been more effective than others. The pandemic has demonstrated that a high level of coordinated and trusted public leadership is needed to protect public health. Comparing leadership effectiveness during COVID-19, it is clear that countries led by women—including New Zealand, Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Taiwan, and Norway—have been among the most effective in managing the spread of the virus. Jacinda Ardern, prime minister of New Zealand, established early strict restrictions while providing empathetic video messages focused on the collective goal of saving lives through a kindness-first approach—and public trust in her government exceeded 80 percent. German chancellor Angela

Merkel prioritized extensive testing from the very beginning and provided straightforward direct communication—and Germany had among the lowest COVID-19 deaths of any European countries. Erna Solberg, prime minister of Norway, and Mette Frederiksen, prime minister of Denmark, both implemented extensive testing and an early lockdown; they also directly addressed their country's children, acknowledging the challenges of not being able to go to school and see their friends.[12] By prioritizing the advice of medical and epidemiological experts into their decision-making and by providing empathetic communication, these women have demonstrated the effectiveness of compassionate, collaborative leadership during a public health crisis.

In times of crisis and disruption, uneven distribution of resources often results in worse outcomes for already vulnerable communities and populations. And as with other major climate disruptions—including storms, floods, and droughts—those individuals, families, and communities that are already struggling are more likely to be negatively impacted when a public health epidemic spreads. The distribution of death and suffering in the United States resulting from COVID-19 demonstrated this reality. As the climate crisis accelerates additional public health emergencies, we need leadership committed to investing in protections for the most vulnerable among us.

Such protections are necessary because public health disruptions have explicit economic and environmental impacts. The restrictive measures taken to slow the spread of COVID-19 demonstrated multiple critical links among health, economics, and the environment. As the global economy slowed down, climate pollution was reduced and the entire global energy sector was disrupted. With unprecedented volatility in the global oil market, the sun kept shining and the wind kept blowing, demonstrating the long-term stability and reliability of renewable power.[13]

Leaders who recognize that public health investments to prepare for the spread of new infectious diseases, like COVID-19, are critical to climate resilience are leveraging powerful synergies to justify a major restructuring of public health investments. Given the complex links between the climate crisis and human health, investments in public health must be expanded to reduce vulnerabilities as climate-related health disruptions become more

frequent and intense. The weakening of policies that prioritize the public good has resulted in troubling health trends, including growing racial and socioeconomic disparities in health, wellness, and nutrition.[14] When leaders frame the climate crisis as a human health emergency, the need for public investment in the renewable transformation resonates in a more compelling way than when melting ice caps or hungry polar bears are held up as dangerous climate impacts. The urgency of moving to a renewable-based society, when linked to the need to improve the health of all Americans and to reduce health disparities, broadens climate conversations and reinforces the call for major public investment in transformative and ambitious climate action.

With climate disruptions becoming more frequent—including more intense heat waves, floods, droughts, wildfires, and storms as well as new infectious diseases like COVID-19—the risks for communities already struggling with disproportionate health problems are heightened. Climate disruptions are exacerbating health disparities because those most vulnerable, including low-income families and the elderly, are more susceptible to health challenges and have less capacity to recover and regain their health than their younger and richer counterparts. When the power goes out or roads are closed during or after a storm, for example, older adults, people who depend on medical devices, and people who rely on a caregiver for daily activities can be extremely vulnerable.

Among the many impacts of climate change on health, rising temperatures and hotter summers cause an increase in heat-related health problems, especially for children, the elderly, and people who do outdoor work.[15] More extreme heat also increases dependence on energy-intensive air conditioning. Warmer temperatures and sustained use of fossil fuels are also making air pollution worse, which is directly linked to a range of acute and chronic health issues and lung diseases. Changes in the climate are also influencing the distribution and transmission of diseases other than COVID-19, particularly vector-borne diseases like malaria and West Nile Virus and water- and food-borne diseases like cholera and diarrheal diseases.[16] Due to warming temperatures, today's pathogens are adapted to higher temperatures than in the past. As a result, the effectiveness of one of the human body's primary defense mechanisms—fevers stimulating the

immune system—decreases.[17] In addition, changes in temperature and precipitation have made some communities new breeding grounds, and places that have never before had to deal with some vector-borne diseases, such as Lyme disease, are now confronting outbreaks.

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Recognizing the climate crisis as a public health emergency elevates an inclusive, people-first approach that also connects with day-to-day well-being and access to nutritious food. Disparities in access to affordable and nutritious foods in the United States have resulted in food deserts, geographic areas without stores that sell fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains. As food production and crop yields decline in some places due to changes in temperature, rainfall, and increased severity of droughts and floods, malnutrition and food insecurity add to health-related impacts of climate change.

Forced migration and climate refugees represent another public health challenge associated with climate change. These social disruptions often lead to increased violence, which brings different kinds of health risks. In military language, climate impacts are often considered "threat multipliers" because they aggravate existing stressors, such as political instability and environmental degradation. In this way, climate impacts catalyze conflict. One prominent example is the Syrian refugee crisis. In the years leading up to the violence and political instability in Syria, a severe drought reduced food production and led to food shortages, which in turn led to economic hardship, civil unrest, and war. Eventually, thousands of people fled Syria. A 2018 study of asylum seekers from 103 countries coming to the European Union found a direct connection: higher temperatures are linked to a higher number of refugee applications.[18]

Forced migration and climate refugees represent another public health challenge associated with climate change.

Resisting Corporate Influence in Public Health

As more leaders are reframing the climate crisis as a public health emergency, resisting the corporate influence on public health is essential. Just as powerful corporate interests have had huge influence over climate and energy policy, corporate interests in the pharmaceutical, food, tobacco, alcohol, and health care industries have also had huge influence on US public health policies.[19] Research on corporate influence on health policy and health outcomes highlights not only that corporations continue to lobby for policies that favor their profit-seeking interests, but also that their efforts undermine recognition of the public's right to health protections and public health information.[20] Because the negative public health impacts of climate change and fossil fuel use are strategically minimized in public discourse,[21] leaders committed to standing up against corporate interests and fighting for public health equity are more important than ever. Responding to the climate crisis requires making the transformation to a renewable-based society a public health priority and a social justice priority.

We need more leaders committed to elevating the public health impacts of fossil fuel and leveraging outrage at the injustices of how people and communities are being harmed at every point along the fossil fuel supply chain, including extraction, transportation, refining, and combustion. Fossil fuel extraction creates what journalist and author Naomi Klein calls "sacrifice zones"—places and communities devastated or destroyed by fossil fuel drilling and mining. Because the places where fossil fuels are extracted are often distant from and out of the minds of the eventual fossil fuel consumers, the negative health impacts of polluted water and other contamination in the communities close to fossil fuel extraction sites are rarely considered.[22] For example coal miners across Appalachia have been dying from advanced stage black lung disease, an illness that comes from inhaling coal mine dust. Although black lung was recognized as a serious health threat to coal miners even before the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act was passed in 1969, health protections have been inadequate, and rates of black lung were higher in 2018 than they were in the 1960s.[23] Likewise, the extraction of natural gas through fracking is causing various

public health complications, including increased risk of birth defects, cancer, asthma and other respiratory ailments, and skin conditions.[24]

The burning of fossil fuels is also a danger to public health. Burning coal, oil, and natural gas generates air pollution that contributes to an estimated seven million premature deaths worldwide every year.[25] Research shows that reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with a goal of limiting global warming to 2.7°F (1.5°C), a level that scientists believe could avert disastrous consequences from climate change, would prevent 153 million premature deaths, largely by reducing air pollution.[26] Leaders who recognize that the negative public health impacts of fossil fuels are disproportionately in low-income communities and communities of color know that renewable energy investments are critically important to health equity.

Bold Leadership on Climate and Health

One bold leader connecting the climate crisis with public health—and resisting corporate influences on public health—is Gina McCarthy. Currently president and chief executive officer of the Natural Resources Defense Council, one of the largest and most influential environmental advocacy organizations in the world, McCarthy served in the Obama administration as the administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from 2013 to 2017. While there, she worked tirelessly on the Clean Power Plan, which set the first federal standard to reduce carbon pollution from power plants. McCarthy has devoted her career to environmental protection and public health, and she is among only a handful of prominent environmentalists who emphasize that climate change is the biggest public health threat facing the world today.

When she was the head of the EPA, McCarthy not only pushed through the ambitious Clean Power Plan, but she also championed rules to increase fuel efficiency in cars, to cut mercury emissions, and to protect rivers and streams that supply drinking water.[27] All these regulations are designed to protect human health, and she was tenacious in her efforts—despite unrelenting resistance from the fossil fuel industry and other corporate interests to block them. Throughout her career in public service, McCarthy

has tried boldly and consistently to uphold the government role of protecting public health and the public good.

McCarthy is spunky, direct, and tough; she is well known for her blunt and funny, no-nonsense style. She also is fiercely optimistic despite the frustrating response of the Trump administration to the legacy of the Obama administration's work on climate and energy. In a 2018 speech, McCarthy reflected on how the Trump administration had been dismantling the public health protections that she worked so hard to enact while she headed up the EPA. She acknowledged, "I agree we live in crazy-ass times. But if we get hopeless, we lose. We're in the fight of our lives. Get tough!"[28]

McCarthy has also been outspoken about the ineffective technocratic language used by climate experts when they talk about the climate crisis. Speaking to an audience of scientists in 2018, she said, "I love you scientists dearly, but could you speak English?"[29] She went on to reflect on the inaccessibility of the jargon that is so often used to talk about climate change, and she advocated for a greater emphasis on health. As a mother of three and now also a grandmother, she focuses on the need to protect public health, especially for children, as a bipartisan strategy for accomplishing the bold action required on climate issues.

After assuming leadership of the Natural Resources Defense Council in early 2020, McCarthy continued to focus on health to leverage action on climate and energy. In a February 2020 testimony to the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, she explained that the public health costs from climate change already total billions of dollars in the United States, and those costs are disproportionately impacting children, the elderly, the poor, and the powerless.[30] She called for reducing carbon pollution to address these negative health impacts and increased funding for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Climate Health program.[31]

The impacts of climate change on the costs of health care are, in fact, staggering.

The impacts of climate change on the costs of health care are, in fact, staggering, although not consistently reported. Research on the effect of ten distinct 2012 climate disruptions (including extreme heat in Wisconsin, wildfires in Colorado and Washington, and ozone air pollution in Nevada)

estimates that the health-related costs of those disruptions came to $10 billion.[32] Leaders like McCarthy are reminding us that an ineffective response to the climate crisis has value far beyond the direct benefits of a transformation away from fossil fuels to renewables. With the scale of negative public health impacts expanding every year, the health costs of climate change are underappreciated. The emergence of an unpredictable epidemic, like the novel coronavirus COVID-19, demonstrates the larger societal costs of underinvesting in public health.

Health Disparities in the United States

The climate crisis is exacerbating health disparities and increasing inequities in access to healthy living. Despite spending significantly more on health care per capita than any other country, the United States has experienced a decline in life expectancy.[33] With regard to mental health, a rise in despair from 1990 to 2020 (before the coronavirus pandemic) has been described by a diversity of researchers, including sociologists, demographers, health services professionals, epidemiologists, and economists.[34] The rise in drug addiction, gun violence, and mass incarceration also have major public health impacts, and each is connected to corporate interests profiting while public health trends worsen. Individuals, families, and communities who have been disadvantaged by structural racism, white supremacy, and patriarchy are disproportionately impacted by negative health outcomes of each of these troubling trends.

Leadership that connects health and well-being with access to nutritious food is also an important part of public investment in climate and energy. Throughout the United States, access to nutritious food and a healthy diet is too often limited in low- and moderate-income communities, in black, brown, and indigenous communities. Given how diet is linked to so many health conditions, the lack of access to nutritious foods leads to higher incidences of morbidity and increased frequency and severity of diet-related chronic diseases and conditions, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, cancer, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.[35] Disparities in access to nutritious food have increased as the corporate food industry influences

food and agriculture policy. Its influential advertising and marketing continues to work insidiously to shape cultural norms of food consumption.

As the United States struggled to contain the coronavirus throughout 2020, the inequitable access to food and the disparate vulnerabilities of food shortages were exacerbated. With disruptions in both global and local food supply chains due to COVID-19, worldwide hunger is a growing concern.[36] In April 2020, more than one in five US households were food insecure.[37] Restructuring society to ensure that everyone has access to nutritious food, especially during times of crisis, is an increasingly critical priority.

New Power Dynamics

As connections between climate and health become more widely recognized, priorities are shifting. In November 2019, in her remarks at the first ever Presidential Forum on Environmental Justice, Mildred McClain of Hurambee House Citizens for Environmental Justice said, "We are sick and tired of being sick and tired."[38]

The Presidential Forum on Environmental Justice was held at South Carolina State University and was hosted by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and leaders from frontline and tribal communities, civil rights, youth, and environmental organizations. The forum provided Democratic presidential candidates an opportunity to respond to the disparate impacts of environmental degradation and climate change on low-income communities, tribal nations, and people of color and was moderated by Amy Goodman, host and executive producer of the independent news program *Democracy Now!*, and Mustafa Santiago Ali, a climate justice advocate and former EPA official. A goal of the forum was to promote a new vision and new agenda that includes everyone, acknowledging that all Americans should have equal access to clean air, clean water, and clean land.

> *"We are sick and tired of being sick and tired."*
>
> *—Mildred McClain*

Although all the presidential candidates were invited, only six of the Democratic candidates participated: Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)

and Cory Booker (D-NJ), billionaire Tom Steyer, author Marianne Williamson, and former members of Congress John Delaney and Joe Sestak. Steyer promised to declare a climate emergency on day one of his presidency. Warren, when asked about Mark Zuckerberg's comment that climate policy will not be good for his company, sarcastically dismissed his concern about his corporate interests by saying, "Boohoo." Each of the candidates acknowledged how corporations have to be held accountable for the injustices they have perpetuated on frontline communities.

Among elected officials already in office, concern about racial disparities in exposure to environmental and climate-related health impacts is growing, although the EPA's environmental justice office has been weakened considerably during the Trump administration. One of the moderators of the Presidential Forum on Environmental Justice, Ali is a national leader in environmental justice who resigned from the EPA in 2017 after twenty-four years with the agency.[39] After serving as assistant associate administrator for environmental justice at the EPA as well as senior advisor for environmental justice and community revitalization, Ali moved his leadership outside of government to contribute his environmental justice advocacy and his commitment to a holistic approach to revitalizing vulnerable communities to organizations, including the Hip Hop Caucus and the National Wildlife Federation. His public resignation from the EPA got international attention, as he eloquently called on the EPA administrator at the time, Scott Pruitt, to increase efforts to defend the health of the country's most vulnerable communities. In his resignation letter addressed to Pruitt, Ali wrote: "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, 'We may have come to these shores on different ships, but we are now all in the same boat'. The upcoming choices you make will have significant impacts on the public health and environment of our country. Those choices can stand as a beacon of hope, and as a powerful role model to the rest of the world on our priorities and values. Those choices will be magnified ten-fold in our most vulnerable communities and will highlight the value we place on the lives in those communities who are too often overlooked and forgotten."[40]

Ending Environmental Racism and Health Injustices

Growing mainstream awareness of environmental racism—the disproportionate negative environmental health impacts experienced by communities of color—can be attributed to the early leadership of Robert Bullard, an academic activist who is sometimes referred to as the father of environmental justice and who was among the first to conduct research to document environmental racism. Bullard found overwhelming evidence that communities of color who lack the social, financial, and political power to stand up against environmental harms are the most affected by them when he and his students studied waste disposal in Houston and found that all five landfills in Houston were in black neighborhoods. They concluded that from 1930 to 1978, even though black people made up only 25 percent of Houston's population, 82 percent of all solid waste disposed of in the city was dumped in black communities.[41] Houston is not alone; there is a pervasive pattern of locating toxic waste sites, incinerators, and other dangerous industrial facilities in places where people of color live, work, and play. In response to awareness about environmental racism, a movement for environmental justice prioritizes "fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies."[42] Examples of environmental racism are prevalent throughout the United States, including in California where millions of residents—mostly people of color—are living with oil drilling and fossil fuel pollution in their neighborhoods. Some oil wells are quite literally next door, in the backyard, or next to a community's schoolyard.[43] The health impacts of living near oil wells are well documented; multiple studies link living near oil extraction sites with headaches, upper respiratory illness, nausea, nosebleeds, and a possible increase in cancer risk.[44]

A major contributor to siting toxic, unhealthy environmental hazards within communities of color is the systematic exclusion of people of color in decision-making processes. Although the Jim Crow laws that codified racial segregation have been eradicated, racial segregation continues, and the impacts on the health and well-being of today's communities of color are persistent. Bullard and others have pointed out that people of color have not had the opportunity to contribute to larger conversations about climate

change and health.[45] Mainstream environmental groups have failed to reach out to people of color and integrate their stories and perspectives. This situation is beginning to change as racial injustices related to climate, energy, and the environment are increasingly recognized and as more inclusive antiracist leadership on climate and energy is emerging.

In 2014, University of Michigan environmental sociologist Dorceta Taylor published a study revealing the "whiteness" of environmental organizations, including their staff and their board members. This research showed that although the ethnic minority population in the United States makes up approximately 38 percent of the entire population, the percentage of minorities on the boards or staff of environmental organizations was only about 16 percent.[46] Ethnic and racial minorities work predominantly in lower-ranking positions in environmental organizations, and they occupy less than 12 percent of the leadership positions in the organizations studied by Taylor. Of those leadership positions, virtually none are at the most influential leadership positions, such as president or chair of the board.[47]

In response to this influential work, mainstream environmental justice advocates have attempted to engage more with black and brown communities.[48] The Green 2.0 initiative, which was established in 2013 to promote racial and gender diversity in the environmental movement, released its third annual diversity report card in February 2020 and reported modest but positive increases in people of color and women on staff and boards of directors since it started collecting data in 2017.[49] This report relies on self-reported data from the top forty environmental organizations and the top forty foundations across the United States, and each of the green organizations that provided data reported that it added an average of eleven people of color to its staff between 2017 and 2019.[50]

Food, Nutrition, and Climate

There are many links between food and nutrition, health, climate, and energy. It has been suggested that eating a plant-based diet is the single most important change in lifestyle that any individual can make to mitigate climate change. This claim is based on the fact that worldwide livestock production accounts for 14 to 18 percent of total greenhouse gas

concentrations.[51] Not only do food choices have an impact on the climate, but climate changes also impact food production and availability. Inequities in the distribution and access to different kinds of foods, particularly the limited access to fresh and healthy foods in low-income communities, is exacerbating racial disparities in health and well-being.

At the end of 2019, the Trump administration instituted cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the federal program that provides food assistance to low-income families. By tightening work requirements, these cuts were expected to impact more than 700,000 Americans. As food insecurity worsened throughout 2020 due to the economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, SNAP benefits were increased to some families, but Republicans and Democrats argued over whether to expand the SNAP program as a way to alleviate hunger for additional families.[52] As food banks across the United States try to increase their capacity to provide help to food-insecure households, the number of American households experiencing food insecurity, which the Department of Agriculture defines as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life, has been rapidly increasing.[53] Before the COVID-19 outbreak and the Trump administration's 2019 cuts, approximately thirty-six million Americans were receiving SNAP benefits, and of those, most working-age SNAP participants were working in low-wage unstable jobs.[54] And before COVID-19, food insecurity in the United States was a bigger problem than most people realized: in 2019, roughly one in ten Americans experienced hunger, and about eleven million of those were children.[55] The apparent rationale for reducing the SNAP program was to reduce reliance on federal assistance so as to encourage people to be more self-sufficient. But taking food away from people does not help people get a better job—it just makes them hungry, weak and unhealthy, leaving them with less energy to search for a job and more vulnerable to become sick.[56] Given the racial inequities in American society, any cuts to the SNAP program will have a disproportionate effect on black and Hispanic families.

The Trump administration's reduction in the SNAP program is an example of a policy that exacerbates inequities and makes life even harder for those who are already struggling the most. Antiracist, feminist leadership is needed to counter this kind of logic with more compassionate,

inclusive, and transformative strategies that prioritize healthy diets being available for everyone. And as climate disruptions get worse, including disruptions from COVID-19, additional food assistance is clearly required. Policies that ensure that all citizens are healthy enough to fully participate in our democracy will benefit everyone and lead to a more prosperous society.

A scientific paper that I often assign in my class on climate and energy parallels the need for a transition in food systems with the need for a transition in energy systems. In the 1999 article "Nitrogen Management and the Future of Food: Lessons from the Management of Energy and Carbon," Robert Socolow, a professor at Princeton University, cleverly describes how organic farming is like renewable energy, nitrogen fertilizers are like fossil fuels, and agricultural biotechnology is like nuclear power.[57] My students often expand this analogy to say that eating meat is like burning fossil fuels in that it provides quick, high-density energy and its production requires lots of resources and contributes to environmental degradation. A sustainable future involves reducing reliance on both meat and fossil fuels. Different kinds of meat come with different levels of environmental degradation and resource use, just as there are different kinds of fossil fuels with different kinds of environmental degradation and resource use. Similar to the fossil fuel industry wanting to sustain fossil fuel dependence to perpetuate its concentration of wealth and power, the meat industry wants to continue our dependence on meat to continue its concentration of wealth and power. As we learn more about the societal costs of the environmental degradation of large-scale animal agriculture, there is huge potential for leadership that integrates climate considerations into agriculture policies. Envisioning the transition to a renewable-based society has multiple similarities with transitioning to a plant-based diet: future communities could have multiple healthy, locally appropriate food options that are less environmentally degrading and cost less than a meat-based diet and that provide local economic benefits. One recent assessment of meat and dairy production's climate impact suggests that greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture are on track to soon outpace greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels.[58]

In the current system in the United States, the food industry has influenced policy to such a degree that its profits are increased when people

buy unhealthy processed foods. Providing local, fresh, and healthy foods is not as profitable to the powerful corporate food and agriculture companies, so much of the US food policy does not ensure access to healthy foods for all. Many low-income communities have limited access even to a full supermarket, resulting in a high dependence on fast-food and processed food. To connect food, health, climate, and energy, we need new, diverse leadership that prioritizes public health and investments in transforming our food systems and allows all communities to have access to a nutritious diet with fresh and healthy foods.

To connect food, health, climate, and energy, we need new, diverse leadership that prioritizes public health and investments in transforming our food systems.

Leaders like Jillian Hishaw, a lawyer and an advocate for black farmers, are part of a growing movement in the Southeast to preserve the cultural heritage and agricultural practices of black farmers using sustainable, organic, or afro-indigenous practices.[59] In the early 1900s, black farmers owned about fifteen million acres of land, making up about 14 percent of American farms. Racial discrimination within the US Department of Agriculture limited access to financial and technical assistance, however, and contributed to a sharp decline, and by 1997, black farmers owned only about two million acres of land.[60] In 2012, only about 1.5 percent of American farmers were black.[61] Inspired by her grandfather who lost his agricultural land, Hishaw, who has been internationally recognized as an influential changemaker in the food industry, has dedicated her career to supporting black farmers and resisting additional land loss. She is founder and chief executive officer of Family Agriculture Resources Management Services (F.A.R.M.S), a legal and educational nonprofit organization that provides services to small farmers in several rural states in the South and Southeast. In addition to providing legal support to protect farmland and save small farmers from foreclosure, F.A.R.M.S. also purchases fresh produce from its clients and donates that food to food banks, food pantries, and homeless, childcare, and eldercare centers.[62] Although many black farmers are farming with sustainable practices, cultivating crops without pesticides or chemical fertilizers, and raising livestock without growth hormones, some are not

officially certified as "organic" because of the expense associated with the Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program's certification process. As climate disruptions in agriculture add another stress to black farmers, the need for the kind of collaborative leadership, support, and advocacy that Hishaw provides to communities throughout the Southeast is growing.[63] In 2019, Hishaw was featured in a list of fourteen women leaders from around the world who are changing the food industry; the organization that published this list, FoodTank: The Think Tank for Food, also featured a group of fourteen African American women leading change in the US food system.[64] By connecting community-supported agriculture and grower cooperatives with locally sourced vegan and vegetarian food trucks, farm stands, and restaurants, leaders like Hishaw are expanding the movement to restructure food production and local distribution in the effort to strengthen community health.

Moving Beyond Technological Innovations in Health

Despite huge investments in innovative technical advances to improve health, the United States is among the countries that have had the worst health outcomes from COVID-19. Even before COVID-19, many health outcomes in the United States had been steadily deteriorating. Although technological innovations in health sciences and food production have resulted in some public health improvements, inequities in access to basic necessities for a healthy life continue to impair progress in communities throughout the United States. Just as the focus on investing in technological solutions to climate has proven to be ineffective and inadequate, so has the focus on investing in technological innovations in health. More investment is needed in basic preventative health care, which includes more equitable and reliable access to nutritious foods. Also needed is increased public investment to improve the social determinants of health, a term used to describe the social conditions in which people are born, grow, work, and live. To improve public health, more attention to social determinants—including socioeconomic status, physical environment, access to health care, employment, and social-support networks—is needed to reduce growing vulnerabilities and strengthen climate resilience. Now more than ever,

preparing for climate disruptions requires improving public health, which requires a restructuring of public investment in communities. From job creation to food security, ensuring healthy living for all needs to be reprioritized.

Driven by corporate profits from biotech companies, much of the investment in health innovation has focused on finding treatment for disease rather than investing in healthier lifestyles and environments that would prevent the disease in the first place. Public health advocates (and health insurance companies) know that investing in access to preventative care is cheaper and leads to better health outcomes than investing in advanced treatments, yet corporate interests have continued to distort health priorities in the United States.

The Universality of Health and Wellness

Every human being deserves access to health, wellness, and nutritious food. The global disruptions associated with COVID-19 have provided a stark reminder of why investing in public health and wellness for all is so essential. As we prepare for a future of climate disruptions, we need more leaders to prioritize the integration of health, well-being, and nutrition. Treating the climate emergency as a public health emergency provides urgency for innovative investments and a restructuring of the health and food systems that have been perpetuating inequities for too long. Just as all politics is now climate politics, leaders who prioritize access to healthy lives and nutritious food as a part of their climate politics are guiding us toward a transformation to a better future for all.

CHAPTER 5

Clean Transportation for All

During Ayanna Pressley's historic campaign to become the first black woman to represent Massachusetts in the United States Congress, she released a video of her riding the number 1 bus. The clip portrays the thirty-minute trip from Harvard Square in Cambridge, a well-off, hip community that is also a tourist destination and shopping hub, to its terminus in Dudley Square (now Nubian Square), the commercial and cultural center of Roxbury, Boston's historically black neighborhood.[1] The three-mile bus ride illustrates the racial inequities and socioeconomic disparities in the state's Seventh Congressional District. In the video, Pressley points out that from one end of the bus line to the other, the median household income drops by nearly $50,000 a year, the average life expectancy drops by thirty years, and the likelihood of the average teen to graduate from high school in four years drops 20 percent. As the bus travels the city streets, Pressley acknowledges the stark contrasts and conveys her commitment to activist leadership elevating the voices of the people hurting the most. Although transportation policy is not explicitly mentioned in the video, Pressley uses public transit as a unifying theme. "People from every walk of life on that bus. Everyone connected in that moment just trying to get where they are going," she said. This effective video went viral locally during her campaign,[2] and then, after her impressive win against a ten-term incumbent, the video got broad national attention.

Leaders are increasingly recognizing that mobility—getting from work to home, home to school, food shopping to health services—is fundamental to everyone in every community and are pointing out that limited transportation options lead to hardship. Transportation has emerged as one of the most challenging components of the renewable energy transformation. The dependence on fossil fuels for transportation is

widespread, not just for transportation of people, but also for transportation of stuff, including shipping and trucking of food and consumer goods. In the United States, the transportation sector is responsible for 29 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, which makes it the single largest contributor to total emissions.[3] The country with the largest transportation emissions is the United States, and since 2000, emissions from transportation have increased more than any other sector.[4] Investments in mass transit, vehicle electrification, shared mobility, and vehicle automation are often considered potential disruptors in transportation, and innovations in each of these areas offer both risks and opportunities with regard to climate mitigation and reducing mobility inequities.[5] Whether these disruptions exacerbate or reduce climate emissions and growing inequities in transportation depends on how they are regulated, distributed, and funded. The need for public investment in clean, alternative transportation systems is more acute than ever. Some bold leaders are recognizing the opportunities for connecting economic justice and climate mitigation by restructuring transportation planning and investments so that the communities are better served and clean transportation options are accessible for all.

In the United States, public transportation infrastructure continues to be massively underfunded. Corporate interests have perpetuated the fossil-fuel-reliant automobile culture and have been strategically eroding public support for mass transit for decades. Federal transportation funding has disproportionately been focused on automobile-based transportation infrastructure, including highways and roads, whereas funding for trains, buses, and other alternative transportation options has been minimal. There is hope, however, as new leadership is connecting the transformative potential of increasing public investment in transportation with climate action. From Pressley in Massachusetts to new local leaders around the United States, greater diversity in the backgrounds of those involved in transportation planning is resulting in innovative proposals to restructure more just and sustainable transportation systems for the future.

In an increasingly global and mobile world, inequities in access to transportation have become a major social justice issue. The ability to travel often and move easily from place to place has become a mainstream expectation among the privileged, while a lack of reliable mobility options

and difficulty in commuting characterize many low-income communities. Limited mobility is linked with economic constraints and hardship. Improving access to transportation options is therefore critical to efforts to reduce broader socioeconomic and racial inequities.

Car Culture

The individual automobile has dominated transportation in the United States. The prevailing male-dominant car culture has been incentivized by transit policies designed to promote the success of the US automobile and fossil fuel industries. A 2011 article in *Men's Health* suggests two reasons cars and masculinity are connected: men are drawn to the appeal of asserting masculinity through technology, and men are drawn to the appeal of being in control of their destiny.[6] The gendered implications of automobile culture in the United States are not widely discussed in climate and transportation policy, but an increase in gender diversity in transportation planning leadership is already shifting priorities and outcomes.

For decades, many traditional leaders in transportation—from automobile manufacturers to transportation engineers to aviation executives—have undermined efforts to increase public transit options that might decrease car dependence. Not all Americans want to be car dependent or can afford to own a car. In 2015, it was estimated that 9.1 percent of US households did not have a car.[7] The cost of owning and maintaining a car remains too high for many Americans. In 2009, it was estimated that 21 percent of households earning less than $25,000 a year did not own a car.[8] Because of the lack of other options, many Americans have been buying cars that they cannot afford; the total value of outstanding automobile loans in 2017 was estimated to be $1.135 trillion,[9] which is of the same magnitude as the $1.56 trillion in student loan debt[10] and more than the estimated $1.03 trillion of credit card debt.[11] Non-car transit options, including buses, trains, and bike infrastructure, have not received financial support adequate to meet the needs of many Americans. Efforts to move away from the car culture are further hindered by a lack of affordable housing in areas that have transit options and areas with greater walkability. These links between transportation and housing are discussed further in chapter 6.

Non-car transit options, including buses, trains, and bike infrastructure, have not received financial support adequate to meet the needs of many Americans.

But millions of Americans are also resisting car culture and the influence that the fossil fuel industry and car manufacturers have had on transportation investments. Although vehicle miles traveled have recently increased nationwide and sales of gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles has increased, car culture is diminishing in urban centers. In some US cities, the growing appeal of city living has been accompanied by recognition that an individual automobile is no longer needed and that owning a car may, in fact, cause inconvenience.

Reclaiming Transportation

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, leaders in many cities were prioritizing a reinvestment in public transit and placing more restrictions on automobiles. To respond to traffic congestion, New York City became the first US city to propose congestion pricing, which would require drivers to pay to drive through certain congested roads during the busiest times of the day; some of the new revenue generated would be invested in public transit improvements. In trying to respond to its freeway congestion, Los Angeles now measures vehicle miles traveled when assessing the transportation impacts of new developments. And advocates of public transit, bike infrastructure, and walkability are mobilizing to push cities and towns throughout the United States to invest more in non-car-related transportation options. The drastic reductions in travel and commuting due to COVID-19 have altered transportation planning priorities, opening up new opportunities for reimagining the future of transportation.

At the congressional level, Pressley has cofounded, with Mark Takano (D-CA) and Jesús García (D-IL), a new Future of Transportation Caucus to reenvision the future of transportation by developing a new model for allocating federal transportation investments.[12] The caucus, established in October 2019, is committed to convening communities and stakeholders most adversely affected by the current system to create a new transportation system that prioritizes communities' needs "for a more equitable, accessible

and sustainable system that leaves no one behind."[13] By explicitly connecting crumbling road infrastructure, failing public transit systems, and transportation-related carbon emissions that are exacerbating the climate crisis, this diverse group of three national leaders—an African American woman representing Massachusetts; a Japanese American former teacher representing Riverside, California; and a Mexican-born Hispanic immigrant representing Chicago—are changing the national discourse on transportation investments.

Reducing Travel Expectations

The social and economic impacts of the sudden and drastic reductions in global travel in 2020 in response to the novel coronavirus demonstrate how reliant so many of us had become on frequent long-distance travel. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, in response to the need to reduce fossil fuel use in transportation, some people were already adjusting their lifestyles to reduce travel, including reducing day-to-day car travel as well as air travel for work and leisure. In 2018, it was estimated that more than 4.4 billion people traveled by airplane,[14] which was part of a steady increase each year before the big disruption of 2020. At the end of 2019, the world's population totaled 7.7 billion, and in that year, more than half of the world's population used air travel as a way to get around.[15] Because airplanes are powered by burning fossil fuels, air travel was estimated to account for about 2.5 percent of the world's total climate-polluting greenhouse gas emissions in 2019.[16]

Precoronavirus projections estimated that air travel would increase by about 3.5 percent each year, which would mean a doubling of air travel by 2037.[17] Even before the coronavirus disruption raised lots of uncertainty about the future of air travel, a movement was building to slow down the rate of growth in air travel. One key leader in this movement has been Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg who, true to her principles, decided not to fly from Sweden to North America and then to South America in 2019. Instead, she traveled on a boat powered by the wind and the sun. Photos of Thunberg along her transatlantic journey went viral as she inspired climate activists around the world to partake in fossil-free Friday protests and activism. During Climate Week NYC in September 2019,

Thunberg gave a powerful speech directed to world leaders at the United Nations in which she told them, "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words, and yet, I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing…. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you?"[18] After New York, Thunberg had planned to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference scheduled to be held in Santiago, Chile, in December 2019. When the Chilean government canceled Chile's hosting of the United Nations international climate negotiations, Thunberg had to adjust her plans. After a few days of uncertainty about whether and where the climate conference would be held instead, Madrid was selected. Thunberg quickly posted on Twitter asking her followers to help her secure a boat passage back across the Atlantic so that she could get to Madrid in time. In the end, a vessel was found, and she made it back to Europe to attend the Madrid conference.

Investing in Transit

The low level of investment in public transportation in the United States results from a strong car culture and under-the-radar investments from the Koch brothers and other corporate leaders who have been squashing transit initiatives to sustain fossil fuel reliance for decades. For example, the lack of support for Nashville's proposed transit plan in 2019, which was to include light rail, new bus routes, and a traffic-easing tunnel, has been linked directly to the grassroots canvassing of Americans for Prosperity, a Koch-funded organization (see chapter 2). The antitransit Americans for Prosperity campaign also encourages people to discuss how the automobile provides more "freedom" and asks people to question why anybody would want to ride a bus or train when they could drive their own car.

But in cities and towns throughout the United States, leaders are pushing for greater public investments in transit. To increase transit access, Seattle's regional transit system has been offering reduced fares for low-income riders since 2015, and San Francisco passed reduced low-income fares in 2019 as part of a bill to increase fares for other riders. In New York City, the

Straphangers Campaign has been an influential transit interest group advocating for investments and improvements in the city's public transportation system. Part of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), the Straphangers Campaign has been instrumental in pushing for major improvements in public transportation since the late 1970s. By representing riders—the people who rely on the transit services every day—the campaign has made sure that those making high-level decisions that impact those services hear directly from the riders.

An example of young people resisting the status quo occurred in November 2019, when hundreds of them barreled into the New York subway and jumped over turnstiles to enter the system without paying the subway fare. They were calling attention to the cost of public transit, the criminalization of people who cannot afford to pay subway fare, and the brutality of the New York City police. Given the large number of people involved in this protest, hopping on trains without paying their fare, the police did not really try to counter.

Fueling Transportation with Renewables

The transformation from transportation powered by fossil fuels to renewable methods of transportation is a major challenge because so much of current transportation infrastructure depends on fossil fuels. In addition to expanding options for biking and walking, most of the strategies for this transformation include electrifying vehicles so that renewable-generated electricity can provide the power. In early 2020, there were about 1.5 million electric vehicles (EVs) on the road in the United States, and states have been taking the lead in promoting electric vehicle adoption as the Trump administration limits incentives for EVs.[19] Electric cars, battery-electric transit buses, electric school buses, and electric-powered trains all offer many benefits, including reduced air pollution. Including substantial incentives and rebates for electric vehicles in the economic recovery from COVID-19 could be part of a larger "green recovery" strategy.[20]

The United States can look for inspiration in other parts of the world, where some countries have invested in streamlined, fast, and efficient electric trams as well as high-speed rail. Although electric buses, trains, and

vehicles are already being powered by renewable energy in many parts of the world, replacing fossil fuels in air travel, freight hauling, and long-distance shipping is a major challenge. In addition to electrification, another way to move away from fossil fuels is to switch to renewable-based liquid fuels, including biofuels. In addition, exciting technological innovations are being made in solar-powered air travel, renewable-based shipping, and biofuels that could be used to power airplanes and ships. Advanced battery technologies also offer new possibilities for renewable-based transportation.

Despite the potential for fueling transportation through renewable sources, the cost of electric vehicles is still out of reach for many Americans. But even as the purchase price comes down and it is increasingly clear that the operating and maintenance costs of electric vehicles are lower than conventional cars, US consumers are not very interested in electric vehicles.[21] Although many cities are greening their municipal fleets by investing in electric vehicles, US sales of electric vehicles declined in the second half of 2019.[22]

Beyond Technological Innovations

Social change and social innovations—including shifting cultural expectations for travel and reducing demand for material goods that require transportation from all over the world—are also major parts of reducing reliance on fossil fuels. To reduce the need for global transport of stuff, an inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous society of the future will require a return to more local provisioning of energy, food, and material goods as well. The disruptiveness of the reduced travel associated with the response to COVID-19 demonstrated how culturally reliant many of us have become on air travel. The reduction in air travel also forced a cultural adaptation in professional and personal expectations, elevating the potential for using technology to communicate in place of travel.

A key aspect of connecting climate policy and social justice to transportation involves moving the traditional focus beyond investing in new technologies for buses, subways, planes, automobiles, and ships. Technological innovation is clearly important in reducing the impact of transportation on climate, but the tendency to focus on technology may

work to diminish creativity and the innovative thinking required to change behavior and social norms. We need more holistic investment and system-wide attention to innovations that reduce people's need and desire to travel, but these kinds of innovations are often thought to be outside the scope of traditional transportation policy.

Transportation provides arguably the most blatant example of how and why a narrow technological focus limits social change and exacerbates inequities. For decades, electric vehicles have been promoted as a technological substitution to the fossil-fuel-powered internal combustion engine. The electric vehicle is a classic example of a technological change that reduces the need for social change. Electric vehicles are designed to look as similar as possible to conventional automobiles so as not to challenge the status quo. This focus, coupled with the hype around self-driving cars, has reduced investment in innovations in public transit and planning and development. Tesla popularized electric vehicles by appealing mostly to wealthy white men who are willing to pay for an expensive, high-tech vehicle. By early 2020, Tesla accounted for about 60 percent of the US EV market, with the Tesla Model 3 making up about half of that total.[23] Tesla has become a rich person's toy. Promoting electric vehicles as a "solution" to climate change reinforces the cultural impression that it is expensive to make eco-friendly choices, and so environmentalism is considered an activity for the rich. Even as the cost of electric vehicles drops and many car companies are now manufacturing electric cars, they remain out of reach of most Americans. EV incentive programs that prioritize low-income drivers and electric bus transportation would be a more inclusive and effective way to promote EVs than continuing to subsidize high-income Tesla drivers.

The hype around the technology for self-driving cars, or autonomous vehicles, is also likely to exacerbate inequities.[24] Although autonomous vehicle advocates claim that the technology could reduce congestion and make driving safer, a 2019 report by the Union of Concerned Scientists warned that autonomous vehicles are likely to increase driving and disproportionately increase congestion in low-income communities.[25] The focus on self-driving cars also detracts from investment in public transit by emphasizing continued investment in roads and car-focused transportation.

It is becoming increasingly clear that a world with more autonomous vehicles will likely reinforce, rather than reduce, the transportation problems of congestion and fossil fuel reliance, as well as exacerbate inequities. The popular focus on the technological futures of both electric vehicles and autonomous vehicles detracts from efforts to build a future of non-car-related transportation options.

Tesla popularized electric vehicles by appealing mostly to wealthy white men who are willing to pay for an expensive, high-tech vehicle.

The disruptions in transportation related to car sharing, including Lyft and Uber, have demonstrated how complicated the impacts of any transportation innovation can be. In many places, the rapid and widespread use of Uber and Lyft has undermined public transportation by weakening ridership because it is often quicker and easier for people who can afford it to take an Uber. This trend also exacerbates economic disparities in access to convenient transportation options and reduces the demand for high-quality public transit options. In most cities, ride-sharing has also added to congestion, increased the number of cars on the road, and worsened air pollution.

Transportation Injustice around the World

In multiple countries, tensions surrounding transportation and governments proposing fare hikes or transportation-related taxes have triggered civil unrest. In late 2019, for example, a rate hike in public transit triggered massive protests throughout Chile. Civil unrest became so intense that the Chilean government canceled the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference that Chile was scheduled to host in December of that year. The protests in Chile began in response to modest fare hikes in the subway system, but they quickly escalated to nationwide strikes and protests against the growing inequities in one of South America's richest, but most unequal, countries. In October 2019, just before the international climate conference was canceled, Chilean president Sebastían Piñera apologized in an attempt to settle things after days of disruptive protesting. This public apology for the government's inability to prioritize and address the concerns

of the people only highlighted a growing disconnect between elite leaders and the people. And, as protesters demanded economic reforms, improvements in education, health care, and wages, Piñera, a billionaire businessman, acknowledged the deficiencies and reversed the subway fare hike, increased pensions and the minimum wage, and pledged other reforms.

Chile is not alone in experiencing the pressure and uprising of widespread frustration among its people. In France, the yellow vest (*gilet jaunes*) protests began in 2018 over an increase in fuel taxes, which was part of the government's climate strategy to reduce carbon emissions. People from rural areas who had long commutes felt disproportionately penalized by the fuel tax. The yellow vests worn by the protesters symbolize an emergency: under a 2008 French law, all motorists are required to keep yellow vests in their vehicles to wear in case of emergency. The tension between the leaders focusing solely on the carbon emissions of transportation and the people who are trying to make ends meet as best they can is characterized well in this phrase used by yellow vest activists in reference to the French president: "Macron is worried about the end of the world, we are worried about the end of the month."

> *"Macron is worried about the end of the world, we are worried about the end of the month."*
>
> *—yellow vest activists*

Transformative Social Innovations in Transportation

The city of Boston represents both the challenges and opportunities of prioritizing transformative change in transportation. Boston, one of the most racially unequal cities in the United States, is also home to some of the country's worst rush-hour traffic.[26] The antiquated public transit system, run by the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), suffers from chronic neglect and needs a complete institutional and financial overhaul. Several train derailments in 2019 and increasingly unreliable service have frustrated many riders. The years of incremental improvements funded in part by fare hikes have proven to be completely insufficient. Michelle Wu, a Boston City

councilor, is a tireless advocate for confronting the climate crisis and reducing inequities. In response to the 2019 proposed fare hikes, which the MBTA predicted would result in reduced ridership, Wu has taken on the powerful Massachusetts establishment by proposing fare-free public transit.[27] Her transformative proposal includes restructuring how public transportation is financed and making the subway system (called the "T") and buses free to all. Bus and subway fares in Boston bring in about $430 million annually, so Wu recognizes that a major reorganization of the budget would be required.[28] But her proposal highlights that disparate access to transportation options has been identified as the number one factor preventing upward mobility of disadvantaged individuals and communities.[29] In a 2019 op-ed in the *Boston Globe*, Wu explained that "investing in free public transportation would establish a right to mobility—the right of every person to access every part of our city, regardless of income level, race, background, or home zip code…. Free public transportation is the single biggest step we could take toward economic mobility, racial equity and climate justice."[30]

> *"Free public transportation is the single biggest step we could take toward economic mobility, racial equity and climate justice."*
>
> *—Michelle Wu*

Wu's proposal has been critiqued as being unrealistic and impossible. In Kansas City, Missouri, however, the city began offering free transit in 2020; Quinton Lucas, the city's third African American mayor, says that the strategy is designed to "build up a culture of bus riding."[31] In Europe, Luxembourg moved to a fare-free transit system in 2020, and Germany is also considering it. Just as we don't charge people to walk down the sidewalk or drive their cars on most roads, we could stop charging for transit to increase mobility and lower fossil fuel reliance.[32] Many cities, including Boston, have adopted the less radical approach of offering reduced fares for particular groups of people, including people over age sixty-five, youth, people with disabilities, children, and low-income riders. In many places, however, the fare for public transportation is the same for everyone, which means that it is regressive in that the expense of one ride takes up a much

higher proportion of a low-income person's monthly income than that of a higher-income person.

Investing in Critical Infrastructure Beyond Roads and Bridges

Since automobiles were first introduced in the early 1900s, US transportation policy has been dominated by a focus on roads and bridges to support continued automobile reliance. Today, however, some innovative leaders are working on connecting racial justice with issues of critical infrastructure, including roads. Angela Glover Blackwell, founder and chief executive of PolicyLink, a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity, has been an influential advocate for racial justice that links with both infrastructure and climate change. "Now is the moment to reclaim control of our agenda and our future," she wrote in a 2017 *New York Times* op-ed.[33] By highlighting the millions of poor and working-class Americans who have limited access to public transportation, the internet, and clean water, she challenged the Trump administration to think more broadly about infrastructure investments.

Following the establishment of the new Future of Transportation Caucus, Pressley coauthored, with Boston city councilor Wu and Stacy Thompson, executive director of LivableStreets Alliance, a powerful 2019 *Boston Globe* op-ed, calling for a fundamental shift in transportation policy. The authors pointed out that "generations of policies … have pursued the wrong goals, where advancing mobility for some has been furthered at the expense of others.[34] They proposed instead that we ensure all transportation projects connect people to jobs, housing, education, and health services to bridge disparities rather than make them worse.

At the national level, the organization Smart Growth America provides resources to help communities advocate for transportation planning that is integrated with housing, economic development, and environmental priorities. And the growing interest in transit-oriented development, which prioritizes creating compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centered on high quality train services, represents a paradigm shift away from suburban, car-dependent lifestyles.

Ensure all transportation projects connect people to jobs, housing, education, and health services to bridge disparities rather than make them worse.

Radical Change in Transportation

With new diverse leadership represented by Pressley at the federal level and Wu at the city level, we see how diversity in leadership has already shifted priorities and forced more explicit conversations about how transportation infrastructure and planning reinforces or dismantles injustices. So what does radical change in transportation look like? Within the Green New Deal framework, there is a vision of a comprehensive system of clean, green public transit that could replace the need for individual automobiles and airplane travel.[35] Although detailed transportation plans or policy proposals have yet to be developed in the Green New Deal, there is an explicit priority for new transportation investments to reverse systemic injustices. There are so many opportunities ahead to simultaneously reduce fossil fuel reliance in transportation while ensuring equitable access to transportation to build more inclusive prosperity and more resilient communities.

CHAPTER 6

Housing for All

"Our House Is On Fire" read many of the painted banners and handheld posters at the 2019 youth climate march. This dramatic message speaks to the urgency of the climate crisis and also reminds us of the importance of having a place to call home.

For many individuals and families with unpredictable or insufficient income, maintaining a stable and safe place to live is a constant challenge. Almost eleven million households in the United States spend more than half of their total income on rent,[1] and many Americans worry about where they might live if they are unable to pay the rent. A report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that there is a shortage of seven million apartments for the nation's lowest income renters.[2] In many affluent cities, including Los Angeles, New York City, and Seattle, lack of housing affordability is leading to an increase in homelessness. As tent cities and homeless encampments expand, many cities and towns are responding by passing new laws that make it illegal to sleep on the streets. This move is part of a larger problem of criminalizing poverty, which perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage and suffering. When officials dismantle temporary living arrangements on the street or when they fine or arrest people for having no home to go to, they are adding additional hardship and uncertainty and exacerbating the problem.

Housing Insecurity

Low wages, widening income inequities, rapid gentrification in large cities, and a legacy of racial discrimination in home ownership are all contributing to growing housing insecurity. It is women and children and black and brown communities who are most vulnerable to housing insecurity. The

racial and gendered disparities in access to affordable, safe housing are perpetuating other inequities and vulnerabilities because without a place to call home, it is extremely difficult to hold down a job, stay healthy, and provide a stable foundation for children.

When people are forced to find affordable housing far outside central hubs where jobs may be and as a result face extremely long and tedious commutes, the housing crisis connects with transportation. Increased commutes not only increase greenhouse gas emissions, but they also weaken communities. These interlinked issues of housing, transportation, and climate were recognized by Scott Weiner, a California state senator, and Dan Kammen, a University of California, Berkeley academic expert on climate and energy, in a 2019 *New York Times* op-ed in which they argue that to achieve its ambitious climate goals, California will have to invest more in housing.[3]

In many places, climate disruptions, including fires and flooding, are exacerbating the housing crisis by displacing families. The term *climate refugee* is a new way to describe forced migration triggered by climate disruptions. This term often refers to international immigration, but it can also be used to describe domestic migration and forced displacement. The thousands of people who had to leave Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017 or the residents of New Orleans who evacuated and never came back after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 are considered climate refugees.

A 2019 report by the Center for American Progress details how climate disruptions are a housing crisis multiplier.[4] Low-income families are most vulnerable to climate-induced homelessness, whereas at the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, some wealthy homeowners with generous insurance policies have been able to build back even better homes after a devastating event. And it is not just private insurance that helps the well-off after a disaster; federal disaster money is also disproportionately helping the rich.[5] So not only are there huge disparities in vulnerabilities to climate disruptions, but the recovery process after a major event contributes to widening the gap between the rich and poor. This reality provides yet another example of how climate change is exacerbating inequities.

These troubling trends have created opportunities for leadership to link housing justice with transformative action on climate and energy. In

addition to focusing on the technical potential of ensuring that homes and buildings are energy efficient, innovative leaders are recognizing opportunities to resist fossil fuel corporate power by linking to housing. The stories below showcase leaders who are advocating for housing justice and criminal justice reform to end mass incarceration and are connecting their work to transformative change on climate and energy. In the United States, the disproportionate incarceration of people of color is a major disruptive force that takes people out of their homes and contributes to homelessness and fragmented and vulnerable communities. Strengthening communities to be prepared for climate disruptions demands leadership committed to transformative structural change that ensures housing for all, including ending racial injustices in US housing policy as well as in the US criminal justice system.

Housing, Buildings, and Climate Change

Buildings and the construction of buildings and homes are major contributors of climate-polluting carbon dioxide emissions. Globally, buildings are responsible for 36 percent of all energy use,[6] whereas in the United States, buildings account for 40 percent of all energy consumption.[7] Once a building is built, it uses energy for power, lighting, heating, and cooling. Low-income households, households that are renting, and households of color spend a higher percentage of their income on energy bills than other families, in part because many of these families tend to live in older housing with poor ventilation and insulation and with inefficient appliances and heating and cooling systems. Low-income households spend an average of 7.2 percent of their income to pay their utility bills, which is more than triple the 2.3 percent average spent by higher-income households for electricity, heating, and cooling; in some cities, low-income households spend up to 15 to 17 percent of their income on energy.[8] This disproportionate energy burden means that there is a huge opportunity when committing to investments in efficient, renewable-based housing to also improve the economic situation for many low-income households.

In addition to the energy used after a building is built, much energy is used in the manufacturing and transportation of building materials and

during the construction process. This energy use is often referred to as the "embodied energy" of a building. And when a lens of transformative change is applied to considering the full spectrum of climate pollution associated with building materials and construction, a future with very different kinds of housing is possible.

Much of the leadership surrounding climate change and the building sector has focused on how to "decarbonize" buildings. Burning fossil fuels has been the dominant source of most of the energy used in both commercial and residential buildings, but with new building technologies and renewable energy, there is huge potential for radical changes in how buildings are designed and how investments are prioritized in both new and retrofitted housing. California has led in making some regulatory changes to mandate renewable energy in new buildings, including requiring solar energy systems to be installed on all new housing as of January 2020. Although this rooftop solar mandate increases upfront costs, the net cost of doing so is zero—in fact, this program will save money in the long term—because harnessing the perpetual, free, and abundant energy from the sun lowers utility bills.

To meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, all buildings need to be net-zero carbon by 2050.

Although the United States has expressed its intent to withdraw from the United Nations Paris Climate Agreement, close to four thousand leaders of cities, states, companies, organizations, and college campuses have committed that "We Are Still In."[9] To meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, all buildings need to be net-zero carbon by 2050, meaning that every building needs to generate as much or more renewable electricity than it uses. Although carbon accounting offers a valuable approach to quantifying the scale and impact of building innovations, there is also a huge opportunity to leverage the social change possibilities that would be associated with the level of investment required, and leaders who recognize these opportunities for simultaneously investing in net-zero housing and housing for all are needed.

As new investments are made in affordable housing, national-level rating systems are providing resources for integrating green building standards

into new affordable housing developments. The US Green Building Council, an organization that promotes and certifies green building innovations through its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, program, has expanded to provide certification for neighborhood development beyond single buildings and also provides guidance on low-income green housing.[10] The Green Communities program of Enterprise Community Partners, a community of affordable housing providers, established nationally recognized green building criteria designed explicitly for the affordable housing sector. Leveraging connections to transportation, quality food, and critical services, the criteria include standards for water, operating energy, a healthy living environment, the neighborhood fabric, and the materials used in construction.[11] When leaders connect green building with the need for more affordable housing, the possibilities for transformative change are greatly expanded.

Housing as a Human Right

The right to adequate housing has been considered a human right since the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.[12] The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights states: "The human right to adequate housing is more than just four walls and a roof. It is the right of every woman, man, youth and child to gain and sustain a safe and secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity."[13]

Misty Cross, Tolani King, Dominique Walker, and Sharena Thomas are four black women living, working, and raising their children in West Oakland, California, who did not have safe and secure homes. With the high cost of housing in the Bay Area, they struggled to find a stable place to call home. In a bold move, the four women and their children began living in a vacant three-bedroom home on Magnolia Street in November 2019. For fifty-eight days, they occupied the home, resisting the efforts of the corporate owner, Wedgewood Properties, a large, national real estate speculator that had bought the house that summer, to get them out. As they occupied the house and ignored initial eviction notices, they raised awareness about the unequal distribution of housing resources in Oakland.

This particular house had been standing empty for many months while the women were in need of a place to live. After rallies and court battles with the corporate developer, a militarized eviction ensued very early on the morning on January 14, 2020, when the Alameda County sheriff's department came to the house with tanks and guns and arrested two of the women and two of their supporters (figure 6.1). The event received national and international attention, expanding awareness of growing housing insecurity in the United States.

Figure 6-1. To evict the women and children living in a Magnolia Street house in Oakland, California, the Alameda County sheriff's department sent a tank and soldiers with semi-automatic rifles to the house on January 14, 2020, at 5 a.m. (Photo taken by Katie Ferrari, East Bay Democratic Socialists of America)

As Cross, one of the women, explained, "It was never about trying to stay in that house. The message we were trying to send out was to get people aware of policies and things that are in place that are making us not move forward in life."[14] Their actions catalyzed a new organization, Moms 4 Housing, which has since been elevating a larger housing justice movement that reminds everyone that housing is a fundamental human right. The organization is raising the point that everyone, no matter what their situation or what hardships they have suffered, needs and deserves a place to

live. Moms 4 Housing also highlights the distributional injustice associated with corporate developers who leave their housing units empty while local residents are unable to secure adequate housing. In fact, in Oakland, for every homeless person there are almost four vacant units.[15]

Before and after the militarized eviction, the women used their power to elevate the conversation about the need to restructure housing policy in California and ensure housing for all. The community rallied around the women in support, and their campaign was ultimately victorious. After the eviction, with pressure from the supportive community and Oakland's mayor, Libby Schaaf, an agreement was reached in which a land trust bought the house from the developer. Today, the city is managing the property. The Oakland Community Land Trust, which bought the Magnolia Street house, is planning to fix it up and make it available for insecure families in need of housing. Schaaf played a critical role in brokering the deal between Wedgewood Properties, the land trust, and Mom's 4 Housing, and the mayor's office issued a joint press release with Wedgewood and Mom's 4 Housing announcing the deal. Although Schaaf "does not condone illegal acts," she has supported the group's mission and purpose.[16] And although the women and their children had to find other temporary places to live following the eviction, their activism has raised awareness about the need for systemic change in California's housing policies.

After the eviction, Carroll Fife, director of the Oakland office of Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, described the structural challenges that led to this situation and connected it to the California housing crisis.[17] "This home represents hundreds, if not thousands, of other homes that lie vacant, able to be used by Oakland residents. If there are four empty homes for every one unsheltered person, … the city could potentially purchase those, put them in a land trust and house everyone and get people off the streets tonight, if that was the goal," she told Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now!* "But because we have a market, a housing market, that is highly speculative, and we are selling homes to the highest bidder, we have the outcomes, which are not coincidental, which is some of the highest levels of poverty and homelessness in the state of California."[18]

In most places, the crisis is about an unjust distribution of housing and the inaccessibility of housing to low-income people and families.

The housing crisis is not simply about an insufficient amount of housing; in most places, the crisis is about an unjust distribution of housing and the inaccessibility of housing to low-income people and families. By moving into the vacant home on Magnolia Street in Oakland, these women drew public attention to the human consequences of the deepening housing crisis. The collaborative leadership of Moms 4 Housing has inspired thousands of others throughout the United States to get involved in advocating for larger structural change—not just in housing policy, but also in widespread economic and racial injustices, especially for women and children.

Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, a member of the Squad, has offered inspiration and clarity on the importance of massive public investment in housing. In the fall of 2019, Omar introduced the Homes for All Act, which proposes to build twelve million new public and affordable housing units across the United States. This legislation guarantees housing as a human right. When introducing this legislation, Omar said, "No one in the wealthiest county in the world should be forced to sleep on the streets."[19]

Green New Deal for Public Housing

Omar's leadership on the Homes for All Act is motivated by the insufficient supply of affordable housing. In addition to housing insecurity and homelessness, the United States also has a crisis within its system of public housing. Hundreds of thousands of low-income Americans live in public housing buildings in inhumane conditions, with asbestos and mold in the walls and ceilings, lack of functioning kitchens, and inadequate heating and cooling systems. After Superstorm Sandy, more than eighty thousand public housing residents were left without heat or electricity for weeks, and some of those buildings are still not fully repaired today. Massive investments in public housing in the United States are desperately needed.

Recognizing the worsening conditions in public housing, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont collaborated to connect housing with climate and energy by

proposing a Green New Deal for Public Housing.[20] They introduced a bill in the fall of 2019 to transform public housing buildings into renewable-based, zero-carbon, energy-efficient buildings that will dramatically increase the living conditions for residents of public housing. Central to the Green New Deal is the idea that systemic inequality has to be addressed at the same time as we tackle the climate crisis. By connecting the need to provide safe and comfortable homes for people with the need to transition to renewable-energy-powered buildings, they are linking energy justice with climate action.

There are 1.2 million public housing units in the United States, and it is estimated that the renovations with on-site renewable energy would require a $172 billion investment, which could create about 240,000 jobs per year while drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions.[21] This Green New Deal for Public Housing represents the first specific proposed legislation within the Green New Deal framework that Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts introduced in March 2019. With widespread support from a broad base of community activist groups around the United States, this first Green New Deal legislation linked to housing is just the beginning of building the multiracial, crossclass coalition needed to take on the fossil fuel industry and transition to a more just and equitable renewable-energy-based society. This legislation provides inspiration for leaders and housing activists around the country who are struggling in their own communities. The possibility of transformative agenda at the national level offers hope to many.

Building Community Leaders

A new set of leaders is connecting the current housing crisis with the legacy of discriminatory mortgage lending and real estate redlining that went on for decades in the United States, perpetuating racial inequities in housing. These leaders are calling for reparations for the legacy of discrimination in mortgage lending and real estate redlining. Lisa Owens, executive director of City Life: Vida Urbana, a nonprofit organization in Boston, is an advocate for housing as a human right and for community control of land. City Life: Vida Urbana is a grassroots community organization committed to building

collective community-based leadership on housing advocacy. Owens works to highlight the impacts of the legacy of white supremacy on housing. In her activism and her community engagement, Owens points out that the same forces that have created the housing crisis—dramatic displacement and historically and intentionally disinvested communities due to redlining—are the same forces contributing to climate change.[22] She proposes that the solution for transforming the housing system is to acknowledge that housing is a human right and that people's work and energy should be replenishing and regenerating their communities rather than extracting from them.

Prisons and Housing

In the United States, mass incarceration means that millions of Americans are being involuntarily "housed" in prisons rather than in homes with their families. With the privatization of prisons and the growing prison population, companies profit when more Americans are locked up. As Michelle Alexander eloquently describes in her best-selling book, *The New Jim Crow*, the US criminal justice system labels people of color "criminals" and then engages in all the racist, discriminatory practices we supposedly left behind.[23] She points out that today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it used to be legal to discriminate against African Americans. And today, African Americans are imprisoned at a rate five times that of whites.[24] Building on the important work of Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund who highlighted the cradle-to-prison-pipeline and called it America's new apartheid, Representative Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts has introduced the People's Justice Guarantee, a people-centered, decarceration-focused legislation that was developed in partnership with more than twenty grassroots organizations. This legislation is designed to transform and restructure the criminal justice system in the United States, end the discriminatory policies of the legal system, and dismantle injustices so as to have a system that is smaller, safer, less punitive, and more humane than what we have today.[25] Based on the five guiding principles of shared power, freedom, equality, safety, and human dignity, the People's Justice Guarantee

calls for four things: (1) prioritizing decarceration and dramatically reducing jail and prison populations, (2) eliminating wealth-based discrimination and corporate profiteering, (3) transforming the experience of confinement, and (4) investing in historically impacted communities.[26]

In the United States, registering to vote requires a home address. People who are homeless and poor people who move a lot do not have a home address, so these people are not able to vote. Prison inmates are also not eligible to vote, and in many states, people released from prison are also prevented from voting. In Florida, a state with 1.5 million people with felony convictions, voters approved a ballot measure in November 2018 to restore voting rights to those with felonies. Florida's legislature, however, subsequently restricted the restoration of voting rights to only those who had fully paid all fines and fees to the courts, which could prevent tens of thousands of people from voting.[27] This disenfranchisement means that millions of Americans are not represented in our democracy and their interests and needs are not adequately considered in policy making.

Climate Gentrification

The new phenomenon of climate gentrification refers to high-income people and affluent households moving to the parts of a neighborhood, city, or region where the climate impacts are reduced, pushing lower-income residents to more vulnerable areas. Without leaders committed to transformative change, climate gentrification is going to get worse. In Miami, for example, where sea-level rise is threatening low-lying areas of the city, wealthy people are displacing poorer people who live in the higher-elevation neighborhoods. Luxury development along the waterfront in Miami—as well as Boston and other water-front cities—is still happening, although projections say that by 2030, sea-level rise will displace those people. Bold leadership is needed now to prevent developers from profiting from housing projects that are not considering the climate realities of the future. Too much development that ignores climate impacts and sea-level rise is already happening in coastal cities. The recent rapid development of Boston's Seaport District is an excellent example of how developers were able to dismiss concerns about sea-level rise despite building in an area that

is already experiencing regular flooding from Boston Harbor. While leaders on the national level reclaim and restructure development practices so that the vulnerabilities of disadvantaged communities are not made worse by climate gentrification, strong, local leadership is needed to resist and respond to developers operating as if there will be no climate disruptions in the future. The housing industry has resisted changes to building codes that would make new housing developments more climate resilient. For years, the National Association of Home Builders, for example, has prevented new standards that would have made new homes more energy efficient and more resilient to floods, hurricanes, and other disasters. In 2019, the *New York Times* revealed previously undisclosed agreements that allowed homebuilders to block changes in building codes.[28] Strong leadership is needed to restructure planning and development regulations so that near-term corporate profits are not prioritized over the long-term needs of the public and the realities of coastal cities.

Big Tech to the Rescue?

In cities like San Francisco and Seattle, the big corporate tech companies are being impacted by the housing crisis (employees not being able to afford to live there) and homelessness (mostly around urban headquarters), so they have been trying to help. In 2019, Apple, Facebook, and Google announced that they would provide $4.5 billion in grants and loans to contribute to creating more affordable housing in the Bay Area.[29] In Seattle, Microsoft pledged $500 million to help Seattle's housing situation, and Amazon has a range of philanthropic housing initiatives, including providing a part of one of its office buildings to be converted to a homeless shelter. These efforts are inadequate, however, and do not change the underlying problems of gentrification that result from forty years of tax and land use policy that predates the tech boom in these cities.[30] Once again we see why leadership advocating for larger transformative change in housing and climate, including massive public investments in net-zero affordable housing and incentives and regulations for private investment in the same, is so desperately needed.

Indigenous Power

Tiny House Warriors is a group of Secwepemc women in Canada who are resisting the Trans Mountain pipeline from crossing unceded Secwepemc territory. In their move to assert Secwepemc law and jurisdiction and to block access to the pipeline, the women are building and living in ten tiny homes that will be strategically placed along a 300-mile stretch of the Trans Mountain pipeline route.[31] Kanahus Freedom Manuel, one of the leading activists of the Tiny House Warriors, spoke at a conference in Ottawa in June 2019 that I attended. In her speech, she said, "We, the Secwepemc, have never ceded, surrendered, or given up our sovereign title and rights over the land, waters, and resources within Secwepemcul'ecw. We have lived on our land since time immemorial and have never been conquered by war. We collectively hold title and governance regarding Secwepemcul'ecw, and the collective consent of the Secwepemc is required for any access to our lands, waters and resources."

Tiny House Warriors provides an example of indigenous women reclaiming the notion of home in protest of fossil fuel power. By placing these "resistance homes on wheels" along the path for the intended pipeline, they are hoping to prevent the destruction of the land they and their ancestors call home.[32] In their protests, they connect the pillage and rape of the land to the "genocidal rape and murders of our women and girls." As part of the women's resistance to the fossil fuel pipeline, they are also protesting the company, Trans Mountain, for inserting a man camp with one thousand white men in their territory. With the added risks of COVID-19, the women feel threatened not only by the presence of the construction workers, but also by the health risks associated with the densely populated man camp; in addition, because extractive industries are considered "essential," pipeline construction continues even though indigenous communities are in voluntary lockdown.[33] Tiny House Warriors is only one of many women-led efforts resisting fossil fuel pipelines.[34]

Tiny House Warriors is only one of many women-led efforts resisting fossil fuel pipelines.

A Transformative Approach to Housing

The coronavirus crisis has elevated the societal risks of widespread housing insecurity. As the crisis in affordable housing gets worse in cities throughout the United States, innovations are required that involve a restructuring to get out of a cycle that is perpetuating rather than reducing the crisis. In many places, traditional housing policies thought to improve communities—including subsidizing rents; improving transit, schools, and parks; and building more housing—are increasing the gentrification and pushing out more low-income people. Leaders are increasingly recognizing that diverse forms of housing ownership and financing, including co-ops and community land trusts, are needed.[35]

In Jackson, Mississippi, Kali Akuno cofounded Cooperation Jackson, an organization that aims to transform Jackson into the green capital of the South in a way that benefits everyone. This approach could be replicated in other resource-strapped and low-income communities. Akuno is creating a network of worker-owned cooperatives, including a housing co-op that is developing sustainable low-income housing. Cooperative models of housing and other kinds of basic provisioning, including food and energy cooperatives, provide an alternative organizational structure that changes the corporate strategy, a strategy that has all too often minimized the public good to maximize corporate profits. Similarly, the success story of the Moms 4 Housing movement in Oakland demonstrates leadership that leverages the transformative potential of shifting from private to community ownership of housing.[36]

In an era of climate disruptions and renewable energy, leaders championing increased public investment in housing are critical. Restructuring requires supporting investments not only through public land trusts like in Oakland, but also through public housing. As these public investments are made, we need leaders committed to ensuring that net-zero energy homes are standard both in new construction and in building retrofits and that housing for communities is developed with climate resilience as a priority for all.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Collective Power

As leaders around the world struggle to effectively respond and adapt to COVID-19, a comparison of national outcomes can be linked to different leadership priorities. By the end of March 2020, the United States had replaced China as the country with the highest number of coronavirus cases.[1] By early May 2020, the United States accounted for 30 percent of the world's pandemic deaths despite being only 4.25 percent of the global population.[2] The world is recognizing a new kind of American exceptionalism; the US is the only industrialized country lacking universal healthcare and no other advanced nation has denied worker protections and income support allowing so many citizens to plunge into poverty so quickly.[3]

Although the threat of climate change has emerged more slowly than the rapid spread of the novel coronavirus, the scale of disruption is similarly devastating and dramatic. To minimize additional human suffering, a collective and compassionate people-first response is essential. The common expression of solidarity—"We are all in this together"—was used frequently throughout 2020 to mobilize the power of a collective response to COVID-19. But the social inequities and massive disparities in who is being protected and who is vulnerable have demonstrated that in the United States, we are actually *not* all in this together.[4] To change this reality and effectively leverage collective power for future prosperity and health, diverse and inclusive leadership is needed.

Despite the deep suffering, this devastation and disruption create an opportunity for transformative change that can bring us all optimism and hope. As COVID-19 reminds us of our shared humanity and codependence, a new era of climate action is not only possible, but essential. We know we need to invest in people and communities to strengthen resilience and

reduce vulnerabilities in the face of growing climate instability. We also know we need to stop burning fossil fuels and transition to a renewably powered future. Rather than approaching the climate crisis with a narrow, paralyzing, doom-and-gloom lens, we must reclaim our power, individually and collectively, to restructure society. When we acknowledge that every human being deserves access to a job and a healthy lifestyle—including nutritious food, transportation, and housing—big change does not seem so radical. Those who recognize this possibility are joining the Squad and building a diverse coalition of leaders to resist the extractive and oppressive systems of the polluter elite, to reclaim the role of public investment to protect the public good, and to restructure society for a more just, sustainable, and regenerative future.

In every community, in every part of the United States and around the world, new leaders are stepping up and building collective power by integrating a transformative response to the climate crisis with a vision for a just and sustainable future. The stories of leadership included in this book are just the beginning. And the devastation of the coronavirus provides us all with additional urgency to usher in a new era in America—an era that harnesses the collective power of a diverse, compassionate, and innovative country that prioritizes above all else inclusive health and prosperity for all people. As we look to the future, we must continue to inspire each other and engage in collective action resisting, reclaiming, and restructuring our society. We must embrace the necessary paradigm shift that is under way. We are all part of a transformative time in human history, and we each get to decide how we leverage our collective power. By learning the stories, strategies, struggles, and impacts of other leaders, we can inform and encourage each other to take on leadership roles to work toward transformative change.

> *"To deal with climate change, we must simultaneously address the underlying injustice in our world and work to eradicate poverty, exclusion, and inequality."*
>
> *—Mary Robinson*

Sharing stories of courageous leadership is essential. Elevating the power of empathy and compassion by telling the stories of innovative and diverse leaders who are responding to the climate crisis in inspiring ways is what

Mary Robinson did in her 2018 book, *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*. Her stories include the persistence of Constance Okollet, a farmer in Uganda, who responded to devastating floods, drought, and hunger in her village by organizing a community women's network to provide one another with support, information, and resources. Also included is the passion of Sharon Hanshaw of East Biloxi, Mississippi, who along with other local residents established the group Coastal Women for Change. This organization helps families respond to the inadequacy of post-Katrina federal relief in which the state of Mississippi had distributed "$1.7 billion compensating middle and upper-income homeowners and big businesses and only $167 million on programs dedicated to helping the poor."[5] Hanshaw's effective advocacy for all those in Biloxi who were being left out of the recovery efforts focused on collaboration and coordination, determination, and justice. The details of these stories demonstrate why a people-first approach and antiracist, feminist leadership are so valuable in how society responds to climate change. Robinson explains her commitment to a people-first approach by saying that "to deal with climate change, we must simultaneously address the underlying injustice in our world and work to eradicate poverty, exclusion, and inequality."[6]

Action Steps for Everyone

So what can individuals do to mobilize and accelerate these needed changes? How can we catalyze antiracist, feminist leadership to end the continued perpetuation of patriarchal white supremacy that feeds on and contributes to corporate greed and the climate crisis? How can we harness our collective recovery from the pandemic suffering to build a better future? We can all take action and get involved in leveraging the urgency and outrage about both the coronavirus crisis and the climate crisis to transform society to be more just and equal. And we can all be involved in leveraging the urgency and outrage about racial, gendered, and economic injustices to accelerate the transition to a renewable-based society. To support antiracist, feminist leadership on climate and energy and diversify power, there are many action steps we can take.

Understand and Unlearn Racism and Sexism

Racism and sexism are intertwined into so many aspects of our society that we must focus on unlearning, which means constant attention and intentional resistance to racist and sexist policies and practices.[7] Read Ibram X. Kendi's powerful 2019 book, *How to Be an Antiracist*. Read Claudia Rankine's July 2019 piece in the *New York Times Magazine* in which she asks white men about their privilege.[8] Read the 1977 Combahee River Collective Statement, which explains black feminism and black women's need to define their own political agenda because of their unique experiences of interlocking oppressions based on race, gender, class, and sexuality.[9] Learn about the work of black feminists, including Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Barbara Smith, and Ida B. Wells, who each share deep wisdom on the intersectionality of these issues. Read James Baldwin's 1962 letter to his nephew in which he warns his nephew that white people are "trapped in a history which they do not understand and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it."[10] There is so much work to be done to understand and unlearn racism and sexism, and we all must integrate this work into everything we do.

Talk about Racism and Sexism

Talk openly and frequently about race and gender inequities, regardless of your own race and gender. Speak in solidarity with others so that it is not only black people who discuss racism and support the Movement for Black Lives and it is not only women who discuss feminism and speak up against gender discrimination. Regardless of your own identity and how you represent, act out and speak up as an ally for those who have been systemically marginalized for too long. Antiracist and feminist leadership involves distributing the burden so that everyone is involved in acknowledging, discussing, and restructuring. Failing to speak openly about race and gender inequities is a form of inadvertent silencing. And as human rights activist and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said, "Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."[11]

Advocate for and Support Local Community Renewable Energy

Wherever you live, explore the possibilities for local, community-based renewable energy. Get involved in advocating for renewable energy and energy-efficiency investments to be prioritized in low-income communities in your region. Remember that after the initial investment is made, renewable energy is free, abundant, and very reliable, so the sooner a household, business, school, or community is able to install renewable energy, the better off they will be in the future. The logistics of installing renewable energy can be complicated, so be prepared to be persistent and committed. Reach out to, engage with, and support organizations in your community, including the Sunrise Movement, GRID Alternatives, All In Energy, Mothers Out Front, and others mentioned in this book.

Commit to Unified Collective Action

Solidarity and a commitment to unified action toward transformation is key. Because powerful interests who want to maintain the status quo encourage divisiveness in an effort to weaken collective power, we need to unify across diverse coalitions of collective action as we move toward a just and sustainable fossil-fuel-free future. The Green New Deal provides a valuable policy framework supported by a diverse network of organizations. Unifying in advocacy for the Green New Deal as a key part of the national coronavirus recovery strategy is critically important. There is much work to be done to define how the Green New Deal will be developed and implemented, and there are many opportunities to get involved.

Vote and Help Others Vote

Vote for people you believe in who embrace antiracist and feminist principles and a people-first approach. Get involved in efforts to make it easier for everyone to vote regardless of their ability to get to a physical polling place. Embrace the goal of 100 percent voter participation by supporting vote-by-mail options. Do not accept the pattern of low voter turnout, with a high point of the 2008 presidential election when Barack

Obama won with only 61.6 percent of eligible voters casting ballots.[12] Resist corporate influence in electoral politics, and get involved in ending voter suppression strategies and making sure that everyone gets a chance to vote.

Engage with Your Elected Officials

Get to know who represents you and engage with them. Go hear them speak and attend events that they host. Learn what their priorities are and let them know your priorities. Elected officials are listening to and learning from their constituents all the time, so as you engage with them, thank them for specific positions they have taken that are aligned with your priorities and encourage them to shift their priorities when they don't align. Be open to supporting new and emerging leaders with different backgrounds who bring unique perspectives to the table.

Listen and Learn from One Another

Collective power requires listening and learning from one another. No one person has the answers, and there is no clear prescription on how to transform society. Societal transformation is messy and complicated, so listening—to learn and to understand—is an essential part of accelerating change. Listening is especially important because change is happening simultaneously in different ways, at multiple scales and in different places. Given the legacies of racism, sexism, white supremacy, and male domination, it is especially important that men listen to women[13] and that white people listen to nonwhite people. To ensure that individuals and communities have a voice, people must be allowed to speak for themselves. It is critically important to listen to those whose life experience differs from yours. Effective leadership requires listening to people's ideas and concerns and integrating them to advance a common agenda and collective vision.

Advocate for System Change

Instead of focusing on trying to change the choices made by individuals, get involved advocating for bigger system-wide structural changes so that

everyone has better options. For too long, environmental activism has focused on individual behavior and consumer choices, which has led to unproductive blaming and shaming.[14] It also has empowered some to feel self-righteous and proud of individual choices that may not contribute to the broader structural changes that are needed. When we recognize how climate and energy are linked to economic justice, health, food, transportation, and housing, the options for getting involved are many. Although advocating for system change is more complicated than trying to change individual behavior, you can leverage what you are passionate about and what skills you want to use to find a way to get involved. While focusing on system change, we can all also embrace and expand the feminist principle that the personal is political. We integrate our experiences to inform our political positions, and we can integrate our political positions to inform our experiences.

Prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Everything We Do

Operationalizing antiracist, feminist principles requires us to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in everything we do at every level. When we fail to do so, we are perpetuating inequities by reinforcing traditional practices that exacerbate racial and gender disparities. *Diversity* refers to all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. We need to elevate the value of diversity of all kinds—diversity of ideas, diversity of people's background, diversity of people's approaches—in our organizations and in our communities, in all spheres and at all scales. *Equity* refers to the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people. Equity also involves striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. *Inclusion* refers to the act of creating environments in which anyone will feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. Diversity, equity, and inclusion must be consistently prioritized and integrated in all our households, communities, and organizations as well as in all policy areas, including job creation, education, public health, transportation, and housing.

Leverage Data, Science, and Information for Change

Activists and policy makers have access to more data than ever before, and the data show devastating trends in both climate impacts and inequalities and disparities. We can use data to mobilize change and justify specific policies. Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) highlighted the potential of leveraging data when she said, "If the best policies are informed by data, the data supports the fact that black Americans continue to be in the bottom of every outcome when it comes to health, education, and economics."[15] Despite coordinated efforts to delegitimize science, information is still very powerful. And there is so much data publicly available for us to explore. Be curious with data. Get involved and be creative in communicating data to mobilize outrage, concern, and action toward a more just and sustainable society.

> *"If the best policies are informed by data, the data supports the fact that black Americans continue to be in the bottom of every outcome when it comes to health, education, and economics."*
>
> *—Ayanna Pressley*

Define your Role

As the previous suggestions imply, each of us can define our specific role based on our individual strengths and passions—and many of our roles may change as we engage, learn, and adapt to the dynamic political landscape. There are many different ways to contribute to the growing momentum for social transformation, and each of us must choose to engage in ways that make sense for us. In our activism, it is important to be able to articulate for ourselves what we are fighting for, not just what we are fighting against.[16] Despite the inevitable struggles ahead, it is an exciting time to be alive, and being part of a growing social movement for transformative change can be amazingly fulfilling and rewarding. Being active and connected to others who share priorities and are engaging in similar ways brings both hope and joy as we work collectively with compassion and in solidarity.

Explore Cooperatives and Other Novel Economic Structures

As we transition to a more just, sustainable future, different economic organizations and structures are becoming a big part of the change. Check out the People's Economy Policy Toolkit released by the New Economy Coalition in February 2020.[17] This valuable resource includes twenty high-level policy demands and seventy detailed policy asks, all focused on four areas central to the transformation to a new economy: worker ownership, community-controlled housing, financial justice, and climate justice. We can all learn about and be a part of alternative economic structures. Consider moving your money from a corporate bank to a credit union. If you have aspirations to start a business, learn about the possibilities of worker-owned cooperatives. Members of the Squad are also advocating for alternative economics structures. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), who represents Michigan's Thirteenth, the third poorest congressional district in the United States, is one of the newest members of the Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus, a bipartisan group that promotes a co-op friendly legislative agenda and raises the visibility of the economic potential of the cooperative model of business, including worker co-ops.

Act to Inspire New Leaders

By being supportive and encouraging of others, we can all play a role in inspiring new leaders. As a teacher, mother, colleague, and friend, I have had many opportunities to provide guidance and support to aspiring new leaders. When my younger daughter was involved in student government in middle school and high school, I realized that neither she, nor any of her politically involved classmates, ever mentioned politics as a career choice when they grew up. There seems to be a general impression among some that only those from well-off and well-connected families can run for office. In Massachusetts, for example, the Kennedy family dynasty reinforced that perception for decades. Fortunately, several newly elected representatives, most notably Ayana Pressley, have shattered that image. The 2018 midterm elections led to the 116th Congress being the most diverse ever, with 117 women (36 new members), 23 newly elected people of color, 20 black

women, 10 LGBTQ members, and the first two Muslim women and the first two Native American women.[18] With the 116th Congress, the number of white men is at a historic low, with 60 percent of the House of Representatives and 71 percent of the Senate.[19]

There are many organizations designed to inspire, support, and train new leaders to run for office. IGNITE is the largest nonpartisan national organization designed to support young women to consider running for office. In 2019, I became the faculty advisor to the IGNITE chapter at Northeastern University. This organization provides resources for young women in middle school, high school, and college and connects them to one another to fuel their political ambition and prepare them to run for office in the future. The Victory Institute provides training and resources to help LGBTQ candidates get elected to office. Founded in 1993 by LGBTQ advocates and donors who recognized the nationwide need to prepare LGBTQ people to run for office, the Victory Institute provides candidate and campaign trainings as well as more general leadership trainings. EMILY's List is a national organization that recruits and supports pro-choice women to run for office at every level of government. Another organization, the Rowan Institute, provides leadership training to scientists and science-based organizations to help them integrate human rights, integrity, and planetary stewardship so that they are better prepared to contribute to transformational change (table 7-1). With a focus on elevating compassion, equity, and community as fundamental core principles of leadership and communication, the Rowan Institute provides trainings and strategic advice to organizations, communities, and individuals. The organizational principles of the Rowan Institute in table 7-1 integrate many of the principles of the antiracist, feminist leadership referred to in this book.

There are many organizations designed to inspire, support, and train new leaders to run for office.

Table 7-1. Organizational Principles of the Rowan Institute

Advocate and act for antiracism and anticolonialism
Advocate and act to redress societal and environmental damages from greed, profiteering, and corruption

Center the values of community building and collective action
Use science and information
Stand up for human rights
Center marginalized voices
Listen with radical empathy
Demonstrate radical transparency
Acknowledge mistakes and make direct action to work toward accountability and reparation
Take risks: Now is the time to engage in the most difficult and polarized public conversations

Source: Reproduced with permission from Sarah Myhre, executive director of Rowan Institute.

Lead to Inspire Leadership

In 1968, Shirley Chisholm became the first black women in the United States Congress, representing New York's Twelfth Congressional District for seven terms. In 1972, she was the first woman and the first African American from either of the two major political parties to seek the nomination for president. As she campaigned for the Democratic nomination, her bold slogan was "Unbought and Unbossed" (figure 7-1).[20] She lost to George McGovern, who went on to lose to incumbent Richard Nixon in a landslide in the general election.[21] Although she didn't become president, Chisholm introduced more than fifty pieces of legislation as a congresswoman. She fought tirelessly for racial and gender equity and for improving the lives of the poor, she became the first black woman to serve on the House Rules Committee, and she cofounded in 1971 the National Women's Political Caucus.[22]

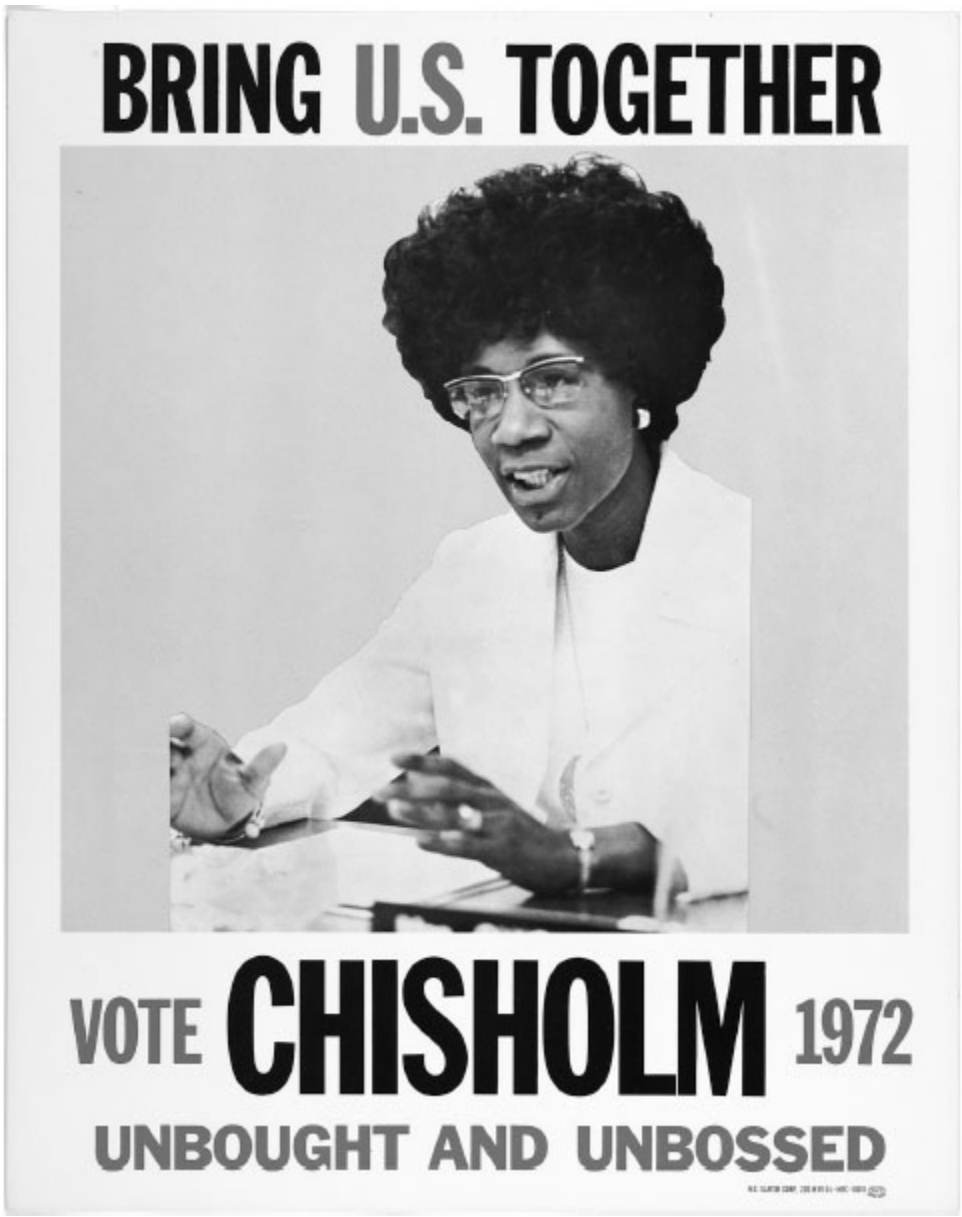

Figure 7-1. Shirley Chisholm's campaign poster as she sought the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party in 1972. (Library of Congress. LC-DIG-ppmsca-42048)

Chisholm's pioneering leadership continues to have impact today because it opened up opportunities for so many who had been excluded. Her bold leadership is frequently evoked by emerging and current leaders, including members of the Squad. One of Chisholm's most famous quotes is, "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."[23]

In February 2020, at a town hall event focused on antiracist leadership, all four members of the Squad appeared on a panel together. At one point in

the discussion, Michigan congresswoman Rashida Tlaib referred to this quote and elaborated by saying, "I love Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. She's like, if there is no chair bring one. I'm all for if you have been at the table too long, maybe shake the table, boot them off the chair and take the chair. We need to take the chair. Thank you all for taking some chairs!"[24] It is time for current leadership to step aside and let other leaders come to the table. The four members of the Squad—Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Ilhan Omar—represent this new leadership, and they are working hard to bring more new leaders to the table.

Connect across the Divide

Given how politically divisive climate, energy, and social justice have become, can antiracist and feminist leadership appeal to conservatives? Can the United States come together to focus collectively on a people-centered approach to future governance that no longer prioritizes corporate profits over community well-being? Can we leverage the rapid COVID-related decline in fossil fuel usage to restructure a renewable-based society with new cultural expectations about energy use? Can progressives build broad support for transformative policy frameworks, like the Green New Deal, across the political divide? Recent sociological research on partisanship suggests that when antiracist, feminist principles are presented in the context of the conservative principles of family, security, and the American Dream, the ideas are most likely to resonate.[25] Prioritizing equity in access to jobs, health, nutrition, transportation, and housing should not be considered radical or progressive. Advocating for a transformation to a socially just and sustainable future for all is becoming mainstream. Leaders are now increasingly reframing these issues and emphasizing the positive potential of responding to the world's increasingly interconnected challenges. During this transformative time in human history, we need to diversify who has power so that we can each play a role in collectively shaping a better future for all.

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Index

Page numbers followed by “f” and “t” indicate figures and tables.

accountants, 37t
Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, 12–13
advocacy, 133–134, 136
aerosols, 32–33
AFP. *See* Americans For Prosperity
agricultural biotechnology, 88
agriculture, 86–90
air pollution, 72, 74, 78
air travel, 97–99, 101, 102
Akuno, Kali, 126–127
ALEC. *See* American Legislative Exchange Council
Alexander, Michelle, 122
Ali, Mustafa Santiago, 82, 83
All In Energy, 60, 62–64, 134
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, 119
Altemose, Rouwenna, 63–64
Amazon, 51–52, 125
American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), 26
Americans For Prosperity (AFP), 28, 36, 99–100
Appalachia, 53, 77–78
Apple, 124
Ardern, Jacinda, 73
Association of Flight Attendants, 64
astroturf, 37t
automobiles, 95–97, 101–104
autonomous vehicles, 103–104

Baldwin, James, 133
Banks, Jasmine, 38–39
bike infrastructure, 97, 101
biofuels, 101
biotechnology, 88
black lung disease, 77–78
Blackwell, Angela Glover, 107–108

Booker, Cory, 82
Boston, Massachusetts, 1–2, 72–73, 93–95, 105–107, 124
BP, 30
Brandeis, Louis, 14
bridges, 107–108
Bright Power, 65
buildings, 114–116. *See also* housing
Bullard, Robert, 84
Burlington, Vermont, 59
Bush, George H.W., 29

California, 84, 116–119. *See also specific cities*
campaign contributions, 31, 37t
car sharing, 104
carbon accounting, 115
carbon capture and storage (CCS), 32
Carbon Inequality (Kenner), 23
cars. *See* automobiles
Castle Rock Foundation, 26
Cato Institute, 29, 37t
CCS. *See* carbon capture and storage
certification programs, 90, 116–117
Charles Koch Charitable Foundation, 26
Chevron, 30
Children's Defense Fund, 122
Chile, 98, 104–105
China, 129
Chisholm, Shirley, 141–143, 142f
cholera, 75
Citizens United v. FEC, 31
City Life, 121
clean coal technology, 32
Clean Energy Education conference, 60
Clean Power Plan (EPA), 78–79
climate change
  energy democracy and, 8–9
  food, nutrition and, 86–90
  gentrification and, 123–124
  Gina McCarthy and, 78–80
  housing and, 113–116
  housing insecurity and, 112
  as opportunity, 4–7
  people-first approach to, 10–11
  as public health emergency, 72–76

as threat multiplier, 5
women in leadership and, 14
climate denialism, 28–30
climate gentrification, 123–124
climate isolationism, 4–7
Climate Justice (Robinson), 131–132
climate refugees, 112
Climate Week NYC, 98
coal industry, 32, 53, 77–78
coalition building, 57
Coastal Women for Change, 131
collaboration, 57
Combahee River Collective Statement, 132
commitment, 134
Commonwealth v. Exxon Mobil Corporation, 33–35
commutes, housing crisis and, 112
Competitive Enterprise Institute, 37t
congestion pricing, 97
ConocoPhilips, 30
CONSOL energy, 30
consumer protection laws, 33
Cooperation Jackson, 126–127
cooperatives, 54, 68, 127, 138–139
coordination, 57
corporations. *See also* polluter elite; *specific corporations*
economic justice and, 52–53
food, nutrition, climate and, 86–90
housing crisis and, 124–125
influence of on public health, 77–78
public transportation and, 94–95
COVID-19 pandemic
collective response to, 129–130
food insecurity and, 81
government mistrust and, 43
housing crisis and, 126–127
as public health emergency, 72–76
transportation and, 97–99
cradle-to-prison pipeline, 122
criminals, 122–123. *See also* incarceration
Cross, Misty, 116–118

dairy production, 88
Dark Money (Mayer), 38
data, leveraging, 137–138

Davis, Angela, 133
decarbonization, 5–6, 114–115
Delaney, John, 82
Denmark, 73
diarrheal diseases, 75
diet, 86, 88. *See also* food supply; nutrition
diseases, 72–73, 75–78
diversity, prioritizing, 136
drug addiction, 81

East Biloxi, Mississippi, 131
Economic Bill of Rights, 67–68
economics
  of car ownership, 96
  of climate change impacts on public health, 79
  funding for public transportation and, 94–95, 99–100
  polluter elite and, 26–27, 27f
Edelman, Marian Wright, 122
elections, 123, 134–135, 139–140
electric vehicles (EVs), 101, 102–103
embodied energy, 114
EMILY's List, 140
emissions, Massachusetts and, 10–11
employment insecurity
  inclusive prosperity vs., 54–55
  innovations in future of work and, 67–69
  job training innovations and, 59–64
  power of public investment and, 50–53
  precarity and, 48–50
  renewable society and, 58–59
  Sunrise Movement and, 55–58
energy costs, housing and, 114, 124
energy democracy, overview of, 8–9, 8f
engagement, 135
engineering, 6
Enterprise Community Partners, 117
Environmental and Climate Justice Program (NAACP), 40–41
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 78–79, 83
environmental racism, ending injustices in, 84–85
EPA. *See* Environmental Protection Agency
Equal Exchange, 68
equity, prioritizing, 137
evictions, 117–119, 117f
EVs. *See* electric vehicles

ExxonMobil, 26, 29, 30, 33–35

Facebook, 124
Family Agriculture Resources Management Services (F.A.R.M.S), 89–90
fare assistance, 106–107
FEC, Citizens United v., 31
Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act, 77–78
feminism, 11–13
fertilizers, 88
fevers, 75
Fife, Carroll, 119
Florida, 123
Florida State University, 38
food industry, 88–89
food insecurity, 81, 86–88
food supply, 81, 86–90
FoodTank list, 90
forced migration, 76, 112
Fossil Fueled Foolery (NAACP report), 40–41
fossil fuels. *See also* climate change; polluter elite
  buildings and, 114–115
  sacrifice zones and, 77
  subsidizing, 30–33
  Tiny House Warriors and, 125–126
  transportation and, 94, 100–101
fracking, 53, 78
France, 105
Frederiksen, Mette, 73
freight hauling, 101
funding, 99–100, 107–108. *See also* loans
Future of Transportation Caucus, 97–98, 108

García, Jesús, 97–98
gender, automobile culture and, 95–96
gentrification, 112, 126
geoengineering, solar, 32–33
George Mason University, 38
Germany, 73, 107
Ginsburg, Ruth Bader, 14–15
Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008 (Massachusetts), 10–11
Goodman, Amy, 82
Google, 124
Green Building Council, 115–116
Green Communities program, 117
green jobs, 54–55, 58–59

Green New Deal, 48, 50, 54–57, 64–67, 108–109, 134
Green New Deal for Public Housing, 120–121
green-collar jobs/workers, 54
greenwashing, 34
GRID Alternatives, 60–62, 134
gun violence, 81

Hanshaw, Sharon, 131
Hawkins, David, 69
Healey, Maura, 33–35
health. *See* public health
heat-related health concerns, 75
Heritage Foundation, 37t
Higgins, Maeve, 10
Hip Hop Caucus, 83
Hishaw, Jillian, 89–90
homelessness, 111
Homes for All Act, 119–120
hooks, bell, 133
House Rules Committee, 143
housing
  big tech and, 124–125
  buildings, climate change and, 114–116
  community leadership and, 121–122
  gentrification and, 123–124, 126
  Green New Deal for, 120–121
  as human right, 116–120
  indigenous power and, 125–126
  overview of issues, 111–113
  prisons and, 122–123
  transformative approach to, 126–127
housing insecurity, 111–113
Houston, Texas, 84
How to Be an Antiracist (Kendi), 12, 132
hurricanes, 112–113, 120, 131

IGNITE, 140
incarceration, 61, 81, 113, 122–123
incentives, 6–7, 95–97, 101
inclusion, prioritizing, 137
inclusive prosperity, 54–55
income gap, 26–27, 27f. *See also* employment insecurity; housing insecurity
indigenous people, 125–126
infrastructure, 107–108. *See also* public transportation
insurance, 113

International Forum on Globalization, 36, 37t
investor-owned businesses, 68
isolationism, 4–7

Jackson, Mississippi, 126–127
Janey, Kim, 2
job training, 59–64
jobs, 51, 67–69. *See also* employment insecurity
jobs blackmail, 51
Jones, Van, 69
judges, Koch Industries and, 37t
Juneteenth, 66

Kagan, Elena, 15
Kammen, Dan, 112
Kansas City, Missouri, 106–107
Katrina (Hurricane), 131
Kelly, Esteban, 68
Kendi, Ibram X., 12, 132
Kenner, Dario, 18, 23
King, Martin Luther Jr., 44, 67, 83
King, Tolani, 116–117
Klein, Naomi, 77
Koch, Charles, 25–26, 28
Koch, David, 24–26, 28
Koch Industries, 25, 26, 28, 99–100
Kochland (Leonard), 38
Kochtopus, 36–40, 37t, 39t

Labor Network for Sustainability, 64
labor unions, 25, 27–28, 65
landfills, 84
language, importance of, 79
lawyers, Koch Industries and, 37t
Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, 116–117
Leonard, Christopher, 38
"Letter from Birmingham Jail" (King), 44
LGBTQ political candidates, 139–140
life expectancies, declining, 80–81
listening, 135
LivableStreets Alliance, 108
livestock, 86, 88
loans, 96
lobbying, 31, 37t, 77
Lorde, Audre, 133

Los Angeles, California, 97, 111
Lucas, Quinton, 106–107
Luxembourg, 107
Lyft, 104
Lyme disease, 76

Mackie, Erica, 60–62
Madrid, Spain, 99
malaria, 75
Manuel, Kanahus Freedom, 125–126
Maria (Hurricane), 112–113
Markey, Ed, 48, 121
Marshall, Thurgood, 14
Massachusetts, 33. *See also* Boston, Massachusetts
Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), 106
Mayer, Jane, 38
McCarthy, Gina, 78–80
McClain, Mildred, 82
McConnell, Mitch, 66
McGovern, George, 141
meat-based diets, 88
media, 37t
mental health, 80–81
Merkel, Angela, 73
Miami, Florida, 123
Microsoft, 125
migration, forced, 76, 112
minimum wage, 67
mistrust of government, 35
mobility, 94. *See also* public transportation
Moms 4 Housing, 118, 127
Mothers Out Front, 134
Movement for Black Lives, 133
Murray Energy, 53

Nashville, Tennessee, 99
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 40–41
National Association of Home Builders, 124
National Black Caucus of State Legislators, 82
National Low Income Housing Coalition, 111
National Organic Program (USDA), 90
National Wildlife Federation, 83
National Women's Political Caucus, 143
Natural Resources Defense Council, 78–80
Nelson, Sara, 64

New Economy Coalition, 68–69, 138–139
New England Women in Energy and Environment, 63
The New Jim Crow (Alexander), 122
New York City, 97, 98, 100, 111
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), 100
New Zealand, 73
nitrogen fertilizers, 88
"Nitrogen Management and the Future of Food" (Socolow), 87–88
Nixon, Richard, 143
Norway, 73
nuclear power, 88
nutrition, 86–90
NYPIRG. *See* New York Public Interest Research Group

Oakland, California, 116–119, 117f
Oakland Community Land Trust, 118
Obama, Barack, 135
Ocasio-Cortez, Alexandria, 3, 24, 48, 52, 64–65, 120, 121, 143
occupations, 116–117
O'Connor, Sandra Day, 14
Oil Change International reports, 31
oil industry, 53, 84–85. *See also* fossil fuels
Okollet, Constance, 131
Omar, Ilhan, 3, 17f, 119–120, 143
organic farming, 87–88
original sin, 66
Owens, Lisa, 121–122

pandemics. *See* COVID-19 pandemic
Paris Climate Agreement (UN), 115
pathogens, 75
Pathways to a People's Economy tool kit, 69
Patterson, Jacqueline, 40–41
Peabody, 30
Pelosi, Nancy, 56, 58
people-first approach to climate, 10–11, 16–17
People's Economy Policy Toolkit, 138–139
People's Justice Guarantee, 122–123
Piñera, Sebastían, 104–105
plant-based diets, 86, 88
police, 37t
political alignment, 57
political instability, 76
polluter elite
  challenging, 33–35

climate denialism and, 28–30
fossil fuel subsidies and, 30–33
Kochtopus and, 36–40, 37t, 39t
overview of, 18, 23–24
power of, 24–28
public trust and, 42–43
resisting, 40–41
pollution, 72, 74, 78
Poor People's Campaign, 67
populism, 49
Powder River Basin, 53
Prakash, Varshini, 55–58, 55f
The Precariat (Standing), 49
precarity, 48–50
Presidential Forum on Environmental Justice, 82–83
Pressley, Ayanna, 3, 16–17, 17f, 93–95, 97–98, 108, 122, 137–139, 143
prioritization, 136–137, 144
prisons. *See* incarceration
privatization, 122
processed foods, 88
protests, 38, 100, 104–105
Pruitt, Scott, 83
public health
climate change as emergency of, 72–76
disparities of in United States, 80–81
ending injustices in, 84–85
food, nutrition, climate and, 86–90
Gina McCarthy and, 78–80
interconnected emergencies of, 72–76
moving past technological innovations in, 90–91
new power dynamics and, 82–83
resisting corporate influence and, 77–78
universality of, 91–92
public investment, reclaiming power of, 50–53
public transportation
automobile culture and, 95–97
Boston and, 105–106
funding for, 94–95, 99–100
future of, 97–98
overview of issues, 93–95
public trust, 35, 42–43
Puerto Rico, 42–43, 112–113

racism, opposite of, 12

rail, high-speed, 101
Rankine, Claudia, 132
reclamation, 8–9, 17–18
Reflective Democracy Campaign, 16
renewable energy
  COVID-19 pandemic and, 74
  job training innovations and, 59–64
  jobs and economic prosperity and, 58–59
  organic farming and, 88
  transportation and, 100–101
renewable resources, 7
reparations, 64–67
research, 6, 137–138
resistance, 8, 17–18, 40–41, 44–45, 125–126
resistance homes on wheels, 125–126
restructuring, 9, 17–18, 64–67
roads, 107–108
Robinson, Mary, 10, 131–132
rooftop solar mandates, 115
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 67
Rowan Institute, 140, 140t
Royal Dutch Shell, 30
Rustin, Bayard, 67

sacrifice zones, 77
San Francisco, California, 100, 124–125
Sanders, Bernie, 13, 24, 48, 120
Sandy (Hurricane), 120
Santiago, Chile, 98
Schaaf, Libby, 118
science and engineering, 6, 137–138
Seaport District (Boston), 124
Seattle, Washington, 100, 111, 124–125
Secwepemc tribe, 125–126
self-driving cars, 103–104
Service Employees International Union, 64
Sestak, Joe, 82
Seymour, Richard, 49
Shapiro, Gabe, 63–64
shipping, 101
Siddiqui, Sumbul, 2–3, 17f
silence, 133
slavery, 66
Smart Growth America, 108

Smith, Barbara, 133
Socolow, Robert, 87–88
solar geoengineering, 32–33
solar power, 60–62, 101, 115
Solberg, Erna, 73
solidarity, 134
Sotomayor, Sonya, 14
the Squad, 3, 143. *See also individual members*
Standing, Guy, 49
Steyer, Tom, 82
Straphangers Campaign, 100
subsidies, 30–33, 54
Sun Edison, 61
sunlight reflection strategy, 32–33
Sunrise Movement, 47–48, 55–58, 134
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), 86–87
Supreme Court, 14–15, 31
Sustainable City pLAn, 50
synergy gas and diesel products, 34
Syrian refugee crisis, 76
system change, 136

Takano, Mark, 97–98
tax exemptions, 51, 54
taxes, 105
technical language, 79
technology, 90–91, 102
tent cities, 111
Tesla, 103
think tanks, 37t
Thomas, Sharena, 116–117
Thompson, Stacy, 108
threat multipliers, 5, 76, 113
Thunberg, Greta, 16, 97–98
Tiny House Warriors, 125–126
Tlaib, Rashida, 3, 138–139, 143
TOD. *See* transit-oriented development
training programs, 59–64, 140
trams, electric, 101
Trans Mountain pipeline (Canada), 125–126
transit. *See* public transportation
transit-oriented development (TOD), 108
transportation. *See also* public transportation
  COVID and, 97–99

emissions and, 94
global injustice and, 104–105
Green New Deal and, 108–109
innovations beyond technical, 102–104
renewable energy and, 100–101
social innovations in, 105–107
Tribal Program, 62
Trump administration
electric vehicles and, 101
Environmental Protection Agency and, 83
fossil fuel industry and, 31
Gina McCarthy and, 78–79
infrastructure investments and, 107–108
lawsuits challenging policies of, 34–35
SNAP and, 86–87
trust (public), 35, 42–43

Uber, 104
Uganda, 131
"Unbought and Unbossed" campaign slogan, 141, 142f
understanding, importance of, 132–133
unions, 25, 27–28, 65
United Nations Climate Change Conference, 98, 104
United States Supreme Court, 14–15, 31
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 116
universities, 37t, 38–40, 39t, 115
University of Kansas, 38
UnKoch My Campus, 38–40, 39t
unlearning, importance of, 132–133
Urbana, Vida, 121
US Department of Agriculture (USDA), 87, 89, 90
US Federation of Worker Cooperatives, 68
US Green Building Council, 115–116
utilities, housing and, 114

vacant properties, 116–119
Victory Institute, 140
voting, 123, 134–135

wages, 67. *See also* employment insecurity
walkability, 97, 101
Walker, Dominique, 116–117
Warren, Elizabeth, 24, 82–83
"We Build" training program, 61–62
"We Give" circle of donors, 62

We Should All Be Feminists (Adichie), 12–13
wealth warriors, 37t
Wedgewood Properties, 116–118
Weiner, Scott, 112
Wells, Ida B., 133
West Nile Virus, 75
West Oakland, California, 116–119, 117f
Wiesel, Elie, 133
Williamson, Marianne, 82
women, 11–15
Women in Solar Initiative, 61
worker-owned cooperatives, 54
Wu, Michelle, 106, 108

yellow vest protests, 105
Youth Climate Strike, 47

Zuckerberg, Mark, 82

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