

Just Transition Principles: Shift to Carbon-Neutral Communities without Leaving Anyone Behind

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”

-Laudato Sí, Pope Francis, 2015

Overcoming the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic are deeply interconnected with our vision of a just world. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic reflect the impact of structural racism and inequality in our country. We have a choice: The inevitable transition will either exacerbate pre-existing inequities or become an opportunity to build a more just future. We choose a just transition -- a shift to healthy, thriving, carbon-neutral, resilient communities without leaving anyone behind.

We recognize our complicity in an economy that is destructive for the natural world and that heightens existing racial, gender and class inequalities, environmental degradation and power imbalances. That compels us to build institutions that are equitable, just, compassionate and sustainable for current and future generations.

Rooted in the labor movement, and now adapted to the climate crisis we are facing, a just transition embraces the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and lays out a path toward eliminating environmental degradation, global poverty, and gender, economic and racial inequalities. It ensures the creation of jobs in the growing clean energy sector that provide workplace safety and security. It seeks to prevent regression in economic status for all workers, including those currently employed in the fossil fuel industry, while at the same time eliminating poverty. It honors and promotes people who live and work on the land as well as traditional local economies and rural areas. It respects tribal sovereignty and the right of all communities to shape their economic future. It invests in Black, Brown, Indigenous and low-wealth communities.

A just transition must be implemented strategically across all industries and sectors, while taking into consideration the different needs of individual communities and geographic regions. It must recognize the full cycle of harm to communities and Earth, which begins with extractive industries as foundational to economic growth and ends with damaged communities and a warming world.

We therefore call for:

- pathways to renewable energy, energy efficiency, and economic opportunities that advance racial and social equity in both rural and urban communities
- justice and accountability as we eliminate hunger, violence, and poverty

- assistance to communities recovering from climate-related storms, droughts, and wildfires
- climate finance and assistance to enable low-emission, lower-wealth communities and countries to build resilience and adapt to a warming world
- high-emission communities and countries to transition toward net-zero carbon, zero waste economies
- participation by most affected communities through all stages and all levels of the transition, including women, African Americans, Latinos, indigenous peoples, migrants and other historically oppressed groups