

GA 2020 Poster Session:

“Grounding the Green New Deal in Indigenous Values”

The Green New Deal envisions rescuing the diverse peoples of the planet simultaneously with the climate and critical eco-systems. We explore how financial and regulatory initiatives can, and must, be rooted in the experience and dignity of indigenous and working people: How eco-spirituality can inspire both green and equitable economics.



Summary

The Green New Deal, as we envision it at UUs for a Just Economic Community, has 4 key aspects: (1) Green infrastructure and technologies, (2) Worker employment and benefits, (3) Regenerative economies and eco-systems, (4) Sustainable and egalitarian institutions and cultural practices.

To read an overview of the Green New Deal as a comprehensive program, not a detailed legislative agenda, see the excellent House Resolution 109, led by Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text> . For interactive sessions, **click** on <https://uujec.org/ga> and **find zoom links** under “**UUJEC 2020 Poster Session**”. Let us know what’s going on in your congregation or region, how you think UUs could help save the planet, or frustrations that keep you awake at night. Or just “ask a stupid question”, listen, and learn.

To check out UUJEC’s recent work, see the viewable presentations from our DC conference last September on “Advancing Economic and Climate Justice as a Moral Issue: Building a Movement for a *Green New Deal*” (<https://uujec.org/gndconference>). This was a follow up to our Action of Immediate Witness at the 2019 Spokane GA “Build the Movement for a Green New Deal” (<https://www.uua.org/action/statements/build-movement-green-new-deal>)

Economic and Technological Challenges

For a sober, scientific assessment of the daunting economic and technological challenges, read the book “Our Renewable Future: Laying the Path for One Hundred Percent Clean Energy” by Richard Heinberg and scientist David Fridley. Facing the looming decline of fossil fuels and the relative inadequacy of renewables, the do-nothing approach is leading toward civilizational collapse, while the Green New Deal will yield a much softer landing. As we collide head-on with nature’s limits-to-growth, profit-hungry neo-liberal capitalism will fail, as the wake-up calls become ever more fast and furious: 40 years of escalating economic inequality, the financial crash of 2008, the election of 2016, numerous climate catastrophes, now the coronavirus pandemic – and these are just the beginning.

Equity Challenges

Escalating inequality has led to suspicion and a lack of trust in many institutions, especially rebellion against elite institutions and cultures. Only tangible benefits to restore a broken social contract will renew trust in climate and health science. This is why the Green New Deal is committed to social benefits and equitable practices that have a demonstrated track record in other countries. Under consideration are universal health care, a jobs guarantee, a universal basic income, social housing, free college, better working conditions and wages, much stronger taxes on higher income and wealth, serious aid for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, worker-oriented trade regimes, de-financialization and de-monopolization, stronger support for public and cooperative enterprises, and more. Until the equity challenge is met, expect more political upheaval, scapegoating, and conspiracy theories.

Indigenous Roots

Survival will demand an even more jarring cultural and spiritual transformation. “Dominion over Nature” will be revealed as a deadly mirage, as the yellow-brick road of progress is overwhelmed by a wasteland of dying ecosystems and ravished “resources”. Unless we come to realize that “we’re all in this together”, even the “last man standing” may fall by the wayside. Unfortunately, the politics of division and domination is deeply embedded in the history of civilizations.

Yet, indigenous peoples embody an entirely different ethic: survival of the community, where sharing and mutual sacrifice are mandatory, especially during hard times. In other words, an egalitarian ethic of mutual reciprocity, all based on a reverential give and take with local eco-systems. Our survival will also depend on developing a reverential give and take, but between a complex web of cultures and a complex web of eco-systems (Gaia). Please bring your insights on how we can be revived by our indigenous heritage.