

NUMBER 42

WINTER/SPRING • 2021

FIRST ISSUE OF VOLUME XVIII



NEWSSTAND \$5<sup>00</sup>

# GREEN HORIZON

*Magazine*

.....AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL PUBLISHED BY THE GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION.....

## THE ROARING TWENTIES



## TABLE *of* CONTENTS

Does BLM + EM = LM? . . . . .	2
<b>PETER SCHWARTZMAN</b>	
The Green Horizon Team . . . . .	2
Roaring Redux? . . . . .	3
How to reverse global warming by 2050 . . . . .	4
<b>DENISE BRUSH</b>	
The Activist Journey . . . . .	8
<b>GREG GERRITT</b>	
Campaign Exit Interview . . . . .	12
<b>HOWIE HAWKINS</b>	
Re-thinking US Green Party Experience . . . . .	16
<b>JOHN RENSENBRINK</b>	
Working the Media as a Green Candidate . . . . .	18
<b>SAM PFEIFLE</b>	
Recent Developments in the US Colony of Puerto Rico . . . . .	21
<b>OLGA SANABRIA</b>	
Sex, Gender and Backlash in the Green Party . . . . .	24
<b>THISTLE PETTERSEN</b>	
Gender in Politics . . . . .	26
<b>DAWNMARIE CRONEN</b>	
Establishment of the Green Eco-Socialist Network . . . . .	28
<b>DAVID COBB</b>	
Responses to David Cobb . . . . .	29
<b>JOHN RENSENBRINK, LINDA CREE, STEVE WELZER</b>	
Poems and musings from Charlie Keil . . . . .	35
Israel's Role in Training US Law Enforcement . . . . .	36
<b>JUSTINE MCCABE</b>	
Haikus . . . . .	38
<b>TED BECKER AND PAULA FISCHER</b>	
Sustainers . . . . .	39

# Does BLM + EM = LM?

**S**eemingly, there are two major movements active right now. The first, “Black Lives Matter” (BLM), highlights the grave injustices that people of color (POC) have endured for several centuries and still endure. The second, environmentalism—aka, the Environmental Movement (EM)—demands that humans stem the violence against all forms of life and begin to live in harmony with nature.

Do these movements have anything in common? Must they work in separate domains? Well, recall the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), which lasted from the mid-1950s through the 1960s. Recall when the first Earth Day occurred and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was launched—in 1970. Yes, the CRM laid the groundwork for the EM (as well as other key movements—women's and GLBTQ)! These huge movements are, thus, integrally connected.

We can see the overlap and interconnection most vividly, perhaps, by considering another movement: environmental justice. EJ is a fast-growing component of mainstream environmentalism. Yet it owes its origin to POC who, in the early 1980s, used non-violent direct action to protest the dumping of PCBs in a rural (minority) community of North Carolina. More recent examples of EJ struggles can be found in

Flint, Michigan (water contamination) and New Orleans (climate justice).

But . . . aren't nearly all environmentalists White and well-off and most BLM activists people of color? "Not at all," says research into these questions. In fact, since POC bear the brunt of the worst of environmental degradation (especially globally), it is no surprise many care deeply about environmental issues and express this concern through demonstrable action. And, as anyone who has been to a BLM event can tell you, there are many Caucasians who are advocates for the justice that BLM demands. Stereotypes and preconceptions are sometimes hard to overcome.

In the end, struggles to bring justice and equality are indelibly part of the same whole. The sooner we come to understand this, BLM and EM advocates can more explicitly connect their struggles and bring real peace and sustainability into a nascent LM movement (Life Matters)!

*This is excerpted from an article (<http://solarutopia.org/onehuman/archives/279>) by Peter Schwartzman, Prof. of Environmental Studies at Knox College in Galesburg, IL. Peter has served for ten years as Alderman, Ward 5, in Galesburg and is currently a candidate for mayor.*

## THE TEAM

PUBLISHED BY THE GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION • WINTER/SPRING 2021 • VOLUME EIGHTEEN #42

EDITORS

John Rensenbrink: john@rensenbrink.com  
Steve Welzer: stevenwelzer@gmail.com

#### **MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION**

**INQUIRIES,  
SUBMISSIONS,  
DONATIONS,  
LETTERS:** GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION  
P.O. Box 2029  
Princeton, NJ 08543 USA  
[Green.Horizon.Foundation@gmail.com](mailto:Green.Horizon.Foundation@gmail.com)

*Green Horizon Magazine* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index, which is available from:  
Alternative Press Center, PO Box 33109, Baltimore, MD 21218.

**GRAPHIC DESIGN:**  
[www.ShawnPawlak.com](http://www.ShawnPawlak.com)

**LOGO DESIGN:** Sean Hill

#### **EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE:**

**MEMBERSHIP & BOOKKEEPING**

**MEMBERSHIP & MARKETING  
MANAGER, HARDCOPY:**  
Charlene Swift

## SOCIAL MEDIA & WEBSITE: Deanna Taylor

# Roaring Redux?

A hundred years ago the production of alcoholic beverages was illegal. Yet the booze flowed freely. So did credit during the 1920s. The Federal Reserve System had been established in 1913. It initiated monetary stimulus that eventually drove the stock market to unprecedented heights by 1929.

Easy money. Record high asset prices. Sound familiar?

Late capitalism is characterized by a whole layer of economic activity—Big Finance—that’s akin to the machinations and ethics of a casino. For example: Wall Street speculators gamble by borrowing shares of stock to sell short. “Naked shorting” occurs when dealers allow more shares to be counted as borrowed than the number of outstanding shares that actually exist! It’s supposed to be illegal. Yet it recently was responsible for the vertical ascents and reverse-vertical crashes of prices of certain selected stocks whereby canny insiders made millions in a couple of days while members of what brokers call “the retail public” lost their shirts.

Easy money and flowing credit feed speculation. They also exacerbate inequality. After all, ninety percent of paper assets are owned by the wealthiest five percent of the population.

The financial world was awash in credit during the last Roaring Twenties. Fortunes were made by those with first access to capital, but once the retail public started to participate in the stock market mania prices went parabolic and a crash became inevitable. Fast forward to the 2020s. Note that the Federal Reserve started implementing unprecedented stimulative policies (“Quantitative Easing”) in the wake of the Great Recession over a decade ago. Interest rates went to zero and stock prices went to the moon. Growth in the real economy—that tied to real production and consumption on “Main Street”—was tepid during the recovery from the recession. Wages have mostly stagnated. But Wall Street has done just fine.

When a disconnect develops between the prices of financial assets and the underlying real values they’re supposed to represent, a crisis is brewing. That’s where things stand in 2021. The Federal Reserve’s radical policies gave an artificial sheen to economic performance under Obama and Trump. Joe

Biden might not be so lucky. Limits have been reached. Federal budget deficits associated with COVID relief efforts arguably were necessary, but meanwhile, combined with Trumpian tax cuts, the percentage of federal debt relative to GDP has doubled in the last five years.

Can we make it until 2029 before the house of cards all comes crashing down (again)? Not likely. The next roar we hear from Wall Street will be one of panic and distress, and we might be hearing it very soon.

\* \* \* \*

Money and power used to characterize the United States. It was during the 1920s that our country emerged as a global leader and a cultural force.

A century later we led the world in COVID infections.

A contemporary phenomenon is the MAGA cult which, in an utterly misguided way, expresses a sentiment that our Greatness is in the past.

When we think back to the 1920s, images of flappers and jazz might come to mind, but it was also a decade of the kind of aggressive US hegemony-seeking that would eventually lead to what Paul Kennedy terms “imperial overstretch.” Now, in our time, financial debt, civil unrest, and political turmoil are

indicative of how the country has been straining. Instead of trying to “Make America Great Again” during the 2020s we should be wanting to Make America Green. Priorities must turn away from financial and geopolitical dominance toward ecological and communitarian regeneration. Let Wall Street deflate, let the military atrophy. All the grandiosity and paper wealth has been distorting the economy. All the roaring about “Greatness” did nothing to enhance the well-being of the people. And it sure was stressful on the planet. So let’s now turn our backs on the old visions of affluence and glory. Let’s make the upcoming Twenties the decade where we start coming back down to solid Earth.

— SW

*Needless to say, Green Horizon hasn’t made a dime on the stock market boom. The only way we speculate is to consider what kind of social change may be possible in the medium-term and long-range futures. And we’re certainly not on the receiving end of the Federal Reserve’s largess.*

*Simply: we depend upon our Sustainers to sustain our project. Over a hundred individuals and households (see list on page 39) appreciate our coverage of the Ecology and Green politics movements to the extent of sending in annual checks. Some even set up recurring monthly donations via PayPal. All contributions are tax-deductible because our sponsoring organization, Green Horizon Foundation, is a 501(c)(3).*

*We’re the only print magazine left committed to the distinctive green-alternative focus that we embody. We appreciate every dollar contributed and we recognize each check as a token of support. Many come in with notes or inquiries and we always respond.*

**PLEASE KEEP THEM COMING:**

**Green Horizon Foundation, PO Box 2029, Princeton NJ 08543**

**or: [www.Green-Horizon.org/donate](http://www.Green-Horizon.org/donate)**

# How to reverse global warming by 2050

REVIEW BY DENISE BRUSH

*Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming.*  
Paul Hawken, editor. Penguin Books. 2017.

One hundred solutions for reversing global warming are listed; 80 of them were derived from computer models and then ranked by number of tons of carbon dioxide reduced over a thirty-year period ending in 2050.

Although this book was published in 2017, it is still very relevant today as the world is struggling to find solutions to climate change while dealing with a global pandemic. This thought-provoking oversized paperback edition of *Drawdown* was edited by Paul Hawken and written by a staff of dozens of scientists, writers, and research fellows, many with international reputations. After the book was published, many of the staff remained to continue work on developing and promoting these solutions as part of a non-profit foundation called Project Drawdown. On their website they define their mission and what they mean by the term:

“Founded in 2014, Project Drawdown® is a nonprofit organization that seeks to help the world reach ‘Drawdown’—the future point in time when levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere stop climbing and start to steadily decline.” ([www.drawdown.org/about](http://www.drawdown.org/about))

The goal of the *Drawdown* book is to describe one hundred solutions for reversing global warming, which are divided into eight sectors: Energy, Food, Women and Girls, Buildings and Cities, Land Use, Transport, Materials, and Coming Attractions. Each solution was modeled as part of one of fourteen computer models and then ranked by number of tons of carbon dioxide reduced over a thirty-year period ending in 2050. The modelers made many assumptions about world population, economic growth, and other aspects of the future, most significantly that there will be no worldwide carbon pricing mechanism put in place in the next thirty years.

There are several caveats to keep in mind about *Drawdown*. It describes an international suite of solutions, some of which only apply to specific locations such as the tropics. The book only modeled and ranked eighty of the solutions, with the Coming Attractions section devoted to twenty more solutions which were not ranked. Many of the solutions overlapped or described different aspects of the same solution, giving the unfortunate impression that they were differentiated just to achieve the goal of one hundred solutions.

## ENERGY

The section on energy describes eighteen solutions. It also includes one of the seven stand-alone essays that are scattered throughout the book. The first one is a historical essay on early nineteenth century scientist Alexander Von Humboldt, who the book credits with being the first person to describe climate change. These essays help break up the encyclopedia-like format of the book, which consists of one hundred two- or three-page articles, each with a couple of photographs.

Renewable energy is a big part of the drawdown solution suite. The first energy solution covered, Wind Turbines (onshore), is ranked #2 overall. Onshore wind is estimated to save 84.6 gigatons of carbon dioxide worldwide by 2050, with another

15.2 gigatons saved by offshore wind power (#22). Micro Wind (small scale wind power generation) is a separate solution ranked #76. Similarly, there are multiple solar energy solutions – Solar Farms (#8), Rooftop Solar (#10), Concentrated Solar (#25), and Solar Water (#41). It seems likely that all the solar solutions together would have ranked higher than #8.

Some lower-impact but intriguing energy technology solutions include Geothermal (#18), Wave and Tidal (#29), In-stream Hydro (#48), and Methane Digesters (#64). Several energy solutions are included because they are already being pursued globally, even though they have serious drawbacks – Nuclear Power (#20), Biomass Energy for liquid fuel (#34), and Waste to Energy conversion (#68). The remaining energy solutions all pertain to electricity, which will be increasingly important in the next thirty years – Cogeneration (#50), Grid Flexibility and Energy Storage (#77), and Microgrids (#78).

## FOOD

Two of the top drawdown solutions relate to food: (reducing Food Waste, #3, and Plant-Rich Diets, #4. Both these issues are well-known among Greens and are likely favorites of many of this magazine's readers. The fact that the Project Drawdown models ranked their impact on reversing global warming so highly speaks to the overall credibility of the rankings. The only other food solution that is not about agricultural methods is Clean Cookstoves (#21), which are a critical technology in places where daily cooking over a fire is still commonplace.

Several of the other fourteen food solutions highlight the benefits of combining different types of agriculture, although the reasons for their effects on global warming are not well explained. The highest ranked of these solutions at #9 is Silvopasture. Grazing cows among trees apparently has significant synergistic effects on global warming. Tree Intercropping (planting trees among crops) is #21 and Multistrata Agroforestry is #28. Agroforestry is not explained at all until an essay much later in the book, but it is clear that the farther away we get from clearcutting and monocultures in agriculture the better off the planet will be.

Regenerative Agriculture, an increasingly popular set of farming practices which rejuvenate the soil rather than wearing it out, is ranked at #11. Related solutions include Conservation Agriculture (#16), Managed Grazing (#19), Farmland Restoration (#23), and Improved Rice Cultivation (#24). Tropical Staple Trees (#14) are fruit and nut trees that grow in the tropics as perennials, not annuals. They are highlighted as a good drawdown solution for tropical countries because they have a high yield of edible food, sequester carbon at

a high rate, and can be added to existing cropland. Composting (#60), Farmland Irrigation (#67), and Biochar (#72) also make contributions to drawdown goals.

## WOMEN AND GIRLS

There are three drawdown solutions listed in the Women and Girls section: Women Smallholders, Family Planning, and Educating Girls and Women. Women Smallholders only ranks at #62 and is about giving women in low-income countries access to credit and land ownership. It is not clear why women would be more likely to use farming practices that help reverse global warming if given the chance to manage their own farms.

The connection between the solution and the problem is even more tenuous with the other two solutions. The book claims that Family Planning (giving women access to birth control) would rank #7 overall and Educating Girls and Women would rank #6, which seems hard to fathom. While access to birth control and education for women are both important, they are not direct methods of drawing down carbon worldwide. I felt that it wasn't made clear why they should be included in a list of such solutions.

## BUILDINGS AND CITIES

The fifteen solutions in the Buildings and Cities section are ranked relatively low, even though most are well-known existing technologies and design practices. The top-ranked solution is District Heating (#27). This solution involves heating entire neighborhoods with one HVAC system, which is popular in European cities. While District Heating is unlikely to catch on in the individualistic USA, it's being implemented in a number of ecovillage communities and several cities in North America are doing a related thing—connecting water mains to geothermal heat pumps (<https://ilsr.org/geothermal-jay-egger-episode-111/>).

**The top-ranked solution  
in the Buildings and  
Cities section is District  
Heating (i.e., heating  
entire neighborhoods with  
one HVAC system), which  
has been implemented  
extensively in Europe and  
in a number of ecovillage  
communities in the US.**

Walkable cities (#54) are a favorite solution of today's urban planners worldwide, closely related to #59, Bike Infrastructure. Reduced driving in walkable cities is estimated to eliminate 2.92 gigatons of carbon by 2050. Landfill Methane (using the methane produced by landfills as a fuel, rather than wasting it) ranks #58.

Among building-related solutions, Insulation is ranked #31, higher than many more high-tech solutions, and Household LED Lighting is #33. They estimate that switching to LED lighting will save 7.81 gigatons of carbon over the next thirty years. Commercial LED lighting comes in at #44. Heat Pumps (#42) and Building Automation (#45) are other building solutions that exist today but need to be used more widely.

Smart Thermostats (#57) and Smart Glass (#61) are new technologies expected to become widespread in coming years. Smart Glass is a high-tech window glass that changes color based on the temperature of incoming radiation, reducing energy use by 20%. Green Roofs, which reflect heat and sunlight by using light-colored roof materials and/or some vegetation coverage, ranked #73, and Water Distribution (water leak management) ranked #71. Net Zero buildings (#79) and Retrofitting Buildings for Energy Efficiency (#80) ranked last in the list of solutions, which is unfortunate since they use existing technologies that can be implemented fairly easily, but they are on the list.

## LAND USE

Land use is an essential component of the overall drawdown solution suite. The top-ranked solution in the land use category is Tropical Forests restoration (#5), since one of the largest contributors to global warming is destruction of tropical forests. Restoration of Temperate Forests is close behind at #12, with the authors highlighting recent progress in North America. A related solution is the restoration and protection of Peatlands (#13), which occur in Ireland, Northern Europe, Russia, Canada, and Indonesia. This effort is in its infancy and requires getting people to switch from peat to renewable energy for heating.

Afforestation (#15)—creating new forests—is another important solution although it must be done right to be effective. Forest Protection, closely related, is ranked at #38. The protection and restoration of Coastal Wetlands (#52) is critical for sequestering carbon and avoiding emissions just as protecting and restoring forests is, but there are fewer coastal areas worldwide than forests. The solution titled Indigenous Peoples' Land Management, ranked #39, is a collection of solutions that various indigenous peoples have historically used to manage land in a way which sequesters more carbon and reduces deforestation.

A land use solution which is also a materials solution is Bamboo, #35. Bamboo is a fast-growing plant that produces a very strong building material, competitive with steel and concrete. Plus, it sequesters carbon while using less fossil fuel in the manufacturing process. Perennial Biomass, #51, is a technology solution with pluses and minuses. It is certainly better to use non-food perennial crops like switchgrasses to make liquid fuel for airplanes than to compete with food crops. But in the long run liquid fuel needs to be phased out entirely.

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation, or “transport” as the book calls it, is the lowest contributor to drawdown as a sector (45.78 gigatons carbon

reduction collectively by 2050). Electric vehicles are appropriately the top-ranked solution at #26. It now looks likely that electric vehicles will be ubiquitous by the end of the 2020s and gasoline-powered vehicles will be gone by 2050, so it was disappointing that the book assumed that ships, trucks, airplanes, and even cars will still be powered by fossil fuels in 2050. This disparity may be an indicator of how much more seriously climate change is taken now than it was only three years ago. *Drawdown* modeled only fuel efficiency improvements, not replacement, of Ships, Trucks, Airplanes and Cars, and even so ranked these transportation types at #32, #40, #43, and #49 respectively.

The book is more optimistic about the increased role of Mass Transit (#37), High Speed Rail (#66), Ridesharing (#75), and Electric Bikes (#69) worldwide over the next thirty years. This is primarily due to their continued growth outside North America, although there are several high-speed rail projects being planned in the US. An interesting solution for today's readers was Telepresence

(#63), referring to people participating in meetings or school remotely. The large number of people working and attending school remotely in 2020 had a noticeable impact on global emissions that showed Telepresence to be a legitimate solution.

Reduced driving in  
walkable cities is estimated  
to eliminate 2.92 gigatons  
of carbon by 2050.

## MATERIALS

The materials sector only has seven solutions but contains the #1 ranked solution, Refrigeration. Refrigeration is the #1 drawdown solution because the hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) used for refrigeration and air conditioning worldwide are a major contributor to global warming. It's stated on page 164 that “their capacity to warm the atmosphere is 1,000 to 9,000 times greater than that of carbon dioxide.” The good news is that there was a global agreement in 2016 to phase out use of HFCs by 2030. The bad news is that “ninety percent of refrigerant emissions happen at end of life.” This means that proper recycling and disposal is critical.

A land use solution which  
is also a materials solution  
is Bamboo (#35).

The other materials solutions are Alternative Cement (#36), Water Saving – Home (#46), Bioplastic (#47), Household Recycling (#55), Industrial Recycling (#56) and Recycled Paper (#70). Like many issues in *Drawdown*, recycling is separated out into three solutions, none ranked very highly individually but potentially with more impact together. The fact that saving water in the home ranks as high as #46 out of 80 says that there are still some things individuals can do to help reverse global warming.

Unfortunately, the book did not identify many solutions to significantly cut back the use of fossil fuels for plastic in consumer goods and building materials. There is research happening now on “green chemistry”-based manufacturing processes which will

be part of that solution, although it was not mentioned. But there is at least a nod to this issue in the articles on Alternative Cement (made from coal waste products and other waste sources) and Bioplastic (made from various types of biomass).

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

The final twenty solutions to reverse global warming were not modeled or ranked because the data was not available to do so. Two are still in the experimental research stage: Artificial Leaf (artificial photosynthesis) and Direct Air Capture of carbon dioxide. There is no discussion of other “carbon capture and storage” technologies.

For energy, coming attractions are Smart Grids, Solid State Wave Energy, and Hydrogen-Boron Fusion. Smart grids will be coming soon, because their adoption is mostly a matter of economics and public policy, not technology. Engineers are still working to make Solid State Wave Energy and Hydrogen-Boron Fusion feasible.

Building solutions of the future include Living Buildings and Building with Wood. Living buildings, which exist now but are expensive, produce “net positive” energy, water, food, and waste. Building with Wood sounds more like a solution of the fire-prone past but it is becoming increasingly popular in the Pacific Northwest. They use cross-laminated wood, which makes it strong enough for tall buildings.

Two of the transportation solutions are already in the final test phase: Autonomous Vehicles (driverless cars) and Smart Highways (highways which generate electricity, such as Solar Roadways). The third transportation solution sounds more like science fiction: Hyperloop is Elon Musk’s plan to send travelers between cities in closed pods in a partial vacuum, like hydraulic containers at the bank drive-thru. Musk’s other wild ideas have become reality though, so who knows?

The coming attractions for the food sector are mostly spin-offs of existing agricultural practices described in the book: Perennial Crops, Intensive Silvopasture, Pasture Cropping, Ocean Farming, Microbial Farming, and feeding cows with seaweed (titled “A Cow Walks onto a Beach”). As they get into the land (and ocean) use sector, solutions start getting more exotic. The final chapter of *Drawdown* begins with a discussion about restoring mammoths (or their available cousins) to the northern European steppe. Counter-intuitively, studies have shown that the presence of grazing animals encourages grasses to grow (and sequester carbon). Then there is Enhanced Weathering of Minerals, which involves spreading powdered rock over large parts of the

landscape. Slightly more practical solutions include Industrial Hemp (an historic industry which is becoming legal again), and Marine Permaculture, “reforesting” the ocean with kelp forests.

## CONCLUSIONS

*Drawdown* is a fascinating survey of potential solutions to reverse global warming. The book makes a good case for their top five chosen areas of impact: Refrigeration, Wind Turbines, Food Waste, Plant-Rich Diets, and Tropical Forests. The choice of what to leave in or out, and the way they chose to break up topics into multiple related solutions, made a big difference in the rankings. If the two Women and Girls solutions which they ranked #6 and #7 had been left off, Solar Farms would probably have ranked #6.

How and whether to model solutions to estimate their future impact also significantly affected the results, although the dozens of global experts working on it probably did as well as anyone could. In only three years since the publication of the book there are several solutions in “coming attractions” that are already close to reality. But *Drawdown* is a dynamic project, not just a one-time analysis; the dashboard on the *Drawdown* website is updated regularly.

There is an interesting section at the end of the book discussing the impacts and projected costs of three different scenarios for adoption of the solutions outlined: Plausible, *Drawdown*, and Optimum. The Plausible scenario is the most realistic based on current politics and is the one used in the main body of the book to quantify the impact of each solution. The *Drawdown* scenario models a technology adoption rate that could achieve drawdown by 2050, while the Optimum scenario assumes 100% adoption of renewable energy by 2050 and achieves drawdown by 2045. The top few ranked solutions do change places in the *Drawdown* and Optimum scenarios, but the

authors emphasize that all eighty solutions are needed to achieve drawdown. Interested readers can learn more about Project *Drawdown* at [www.drawdown.org](http://www.drawdown.org).

**The book makes a good  
case for their top five  
chosen areas of impact:  
Refrigeration, Wind  
Turbines, Food Waste,  
Plant-Rich Diets, and  
Tropical Forests.**

**Drawdown is a dynamic  
project, not just a  
one-time analysis;  
the dashboard on the  
*Drawdown* website is  
updated regularly.**



**DENISE BRUSH**

is the founder of Transition Town Glassboro, an affiliate of the international Transition Towns movement. She serves on the Borough of Glassboro Green Team and is an active New Jersey volunteer with Food and Water Action. Denise is the Engineering & Earth Sciences Librarian at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ.

# The activist journey

## *An introvert's eccentric activism*

BY GREG GERRITT

*You cannot heal ecosystems without ending poverty,  
you cannot end poverty without healing ecosystems.*

I started my environmental journey as a misplaced 14-year-old stumbling upon a book about endangered species; my initial public event was convening my high school for the first Earth Day in 1970.

When I'm gone, I'm sure the work will go on fine without me; I'm hopeful that the next generation of activists will do an even better job than ours did.

Often I casually comment about my work that it reminds me of the saying used in the late great TV show *Mythbusters*, “don’t try this at home, we are highly trained professionals.” I am not a professional, mostly an old educated hippie radical, and folks of my generation usually received much less training than activists today (as I’ve noticed when attending Sunrise training sessions). But with my eccentricities, perhaps formal training would have actually reduced my effectiveness. I tend to do things that most activists do not try to do, and I tackle issues most avoid.

I did not start out to be an activist confronting real estate developers and industrialists—and the governmental policies that enable a distorted local economy—by using data from the UN, the World Bank, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis; but somehow that’s where I ended up. I think it was the result of my figuring out early on (circa 1986) that the Green Party, in order to win elections, needs to present credible plans for local prosperity. Focusing on economic development puts one in the position of directly confronting the most powerful people in the community, right where it hurts (their wallets), and tackling some of the most powerful political memes in the modern world.

Sometimes I think my job is to keep ahead of the mainstream. Here are just a few examples:

When I was the research director for the first Ban Clearcutting Referendum in Maine, people had started to talk about forest practices, but I was also, using US Forest Service data, directly confronting the fact that in Maine wood was being cut 20% faster than it was growing, on average, each year. I pinpointed the counties facing massive forest depletion. When a paper mill and its woodlands were sold, I called attention to the fact that the company buying the property did not have enough wood on the land to keep on running the mill for more than a few years. Fifteen years later the amount of wood being cut in Maine was just about equal to what grew each year. Clearcutting was way down, and the total volume of wood being cut had been reduced by 20%.

When Rhode Island proposed to build a container port, I represented the Green Party at the stakeholder process. I worked closely with many of the advocates opposing the port but was the only one discussing how it related to deforestation, the destruction of forest communities, and the damages to our own Rhode Island economy. The project eventually cratered when it became obvious that the supposed developers had simply conned most of the state’s political elite and had no ability to produce what they said they would. If built, the port would have opened right at the beginning of the Great Recession and might have bankrupted the state.

Several of us started a project to enable RI to produce more compost so it could continue its urban agriculture renaissance. At the conferences I convened for the Compost Initiative I was the first person in the state to openly discuss the need

**In 1984 I helped found the first state Green Party in the US, the Maine Greens, and then became the first Green to run for state legislature.**

to raise tipping fees at the central landfill. Eight years after hearing me discuss this, the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Resource Recovery was finally able to raise tip fees as his last major action before retirement. He acknowledged that my very early advocacy was what paved the way for him to do it. We now have a growing compost industry.

#### **ANTHROPOLOGY, CARPENTRY, GREEN PARTY**

I started my environmental journey as a misplaced 14-year-old in 1967 stumbling upon a book about endangered species. Gradually the modern world crowded out the Miocene mammals I thought I would study. My initial public event was convening my high school for the first Earth Day in 1970. I gave a presentation that day which focused on the New Jersey Meadowlands. At the time, the Meadowlands were primarily being used as a dump (check with Jimmy Hoffa, reputed to be buried there!), but now when you drive the NJ Turnpike there are signs highlighting restoration projects—and clear evidence of such.

In college I began to really look at ecosystems, global and local. I embarked upon a wildlife program, but then realized it was not going to help me save endangered species, as the problems were all caused by humans. Similarly, the forest practices being taught in the early 1970s—and often still taught—lead to the destruction of the forest, something I discussed on the stump 25 years later during Maine's first Ban Clearcutting referendum campaign. I called out the misguided practices in 1971 with some rather graphic language, but what really got me tossed from the wildlife program was my refusal to take a class in economics. This is sort of ironic as my focus for the last 30 years has been economic development, but I am really glad I got to study it on my own, at a time when I was ready, and did not have to endure the neoliberal indoctrination. I ended up studying Anthropology so I could figure out why we humans were messing up so bad.

The great thing about Anthropology is that it covers so much ground, from the evolution of early hominids to what people around the world do differently and similarly in the 21st century. I was able to weave together almost all the things I was interested in. While not a mainstream part of the discipline in the 1970s, today Anthropology departments are often central to Sustainability Studies—which makes sense, as a discipline

that compares how people live on the land, and (in spite of legacy racist roots) today acknowledges that forest people are the real land stewards; they have so much to teach the rest of us about sustaining communities and our planet.

As the economy changed in the 1970s—with the rise of neoliberalism and with degradation of the planet accelerating—support for social science research faded away with the militarization of federal research dollars and the financialization of everything. So I dropped out of school and hitchhiked around for a year to see the country. Then I moved to the woods and practiced hardscrabble homesteading while running a carpentry business, helping the elderly in my community with small projects. Hitchhiking rural Maine with my tools on my back, I got to talk to all kinds of folks, including many who had deep roots in rural communities. And I learned a ton of practical skills in addition to carpentry, like business operations, wood lot management, soil conservation, water management, road building, composting, and gardening—while having plenty of time to write and hours to walk in the woods and practice my speeches. I developed a variety of skills and knowledge that would later ground my work in Providence and move me towards solutions that might not have been on the table when I started advocating, though now are mostly mainstream. Today who is against expanding the urban forest, more community gardens, or community compost in the city?

My activism evolved right along with my knowledge of the land, construction, and the economy. In 1984 I helped found the first state Green Party in the US, the Maine Greens, and I became the first Green to run for state legislature in 1986. The policy wonk in me always came out in campaigns. As much as I enjoyed door-to-door campaigning, I really liked writing and explaining policy.

I ended up running for office three times in 16 years. My last campaign, for Mayor of Providence in 2002, was recognized as an excellent issue campaign offering positive community-affirming policies and critiques of mainstream policies that were well-researched and practical, even if not what the real estate interests or the voters in any great numbers, wanted. The eventual winner of the election touted that he was going to bring to Providence some experts from Harvard who were working on the Russian economy—to which I replied that these were the same people who totally tanked the Russian

economy with their neoliberal fervor! He never said that in my presence again. My best press coverage was for suggesting that Rhode Island take all of its massive number of dumped tires and build earth ships for housing all the people struggling with high rents. While I received 4% of the vote in a four-way race, it raised my profile as a policy advocate in the community. Immediately after the campaign ended I started working for the Environment Council of Rhode Island, while keeping all my other projects going.

### SOLID FACTS AND GOOD DATA

These days the protection of front-line communities is a critical part of environmental activism and environmental justice in general. I grew up middle class in New York City and as a teenager in the suburbs. I lived in Maine for 25 years, and now I'm in a middle class, mostly white, neighborhood in Providence, RI. But I know something about front-line communities because a town where I resided in Maine was targeted for a nuclear waste dump. I saw how the community rose to meet the threat. We may not have been an Environmental Justice community, we were not rich, but there were some resources available and the law in Maine said we got to vote on whether or not the dump would be built. These days I also apply front-line status to the communities who will undergo great transformation as we wean ourselves from the fossil fuel industries that they depend upon for their daily bread. If our solutions do not help producer communities to move forward, then they are inadequate solutions.

Since 1993, when I volunteered with the Maine Economic Growth Council (and suggested they consider calling themselves the Maine Prosperity Council) I've had a project that focuses on creating sustainable prosperity in communities. For the last ten years it's been based in Rhode Island. ProsperityForRI.com is where I post my writings on economics and politics. Evidence continues to pour in that growing the economy on a planet with diminishing and depleting resources, disappearing forests and emptying aquifers, is ultimately going to fail. The growth obsession increases the poverty of the marginalized, destroys entire cultures, and massively overheats the planet. What we needed in 1993, and still need today, are policies that help communities prosper rather than just filling the coffers of the rich (with a bit trickling down to everyone else). Ronald Reagan set the tone, and politicians of both stripes continue to cater to the whims of the rich despite overwhelming evidence that lower taxes on the wealthy and reduced environmental and health regulations do not speed up economic growth.

This fight about growth is critical, as it is the major obsession of the political class and they are guided by neoliberal ideology rather than facts. Have you ever tried to explain to a state legislator or some land development quasi-state agency that lower taxes for the rich is bad for the environment and the

economy when they just do not want to get it? As I said, you might not want to try this at home, but if you really have the facts, and a track record of authoritatively being able to marshal the facts, sometimes they just have to sit and take it. And maybe someday act upon it. Sometimes I think what I am doing is viral marketing, letting people hear it from me, knowing that they will not act accordingly, but setting them up so that a few years down the road—when the proposals I've been offering are much more mainstream—they will be ready to act more expeditiously.

This kind of work requires one to be disciplined and do their homework. As a carpenter in my youth, I pretty much had winters off so I could spend all winter reading on topics I might never have approached, like business management and key modern industries like technology and automobiles (I have always, since childhood, thought of cars as one of the things most responsible for the destruction of ecosystems on planet Earth; so I do not have a driver's license and do not drive). If you are going to challenge the powerful, you better have good data and have it at your fingertips—false claims or a lack of attention to detail reduces your credibility.

### FINAL THOUGHTS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ursula K. LeGuin has always affected my thinking. Her book, *The Word for World is Forest*, is a reminder how important forests are for the future of Earth. People occasionally ask me about the fact that I list 'forest gnome' on my business card. I tell them that if we destroy the forest and the forest people, we are essentially doomed. Moreover, forests have influenced my thinking on almost every issue I work on. Even my understanding of economics is strongly influenced by how fast healthy forests grow. The basis of almost all my writing is what I ponder as I walk in forested landscapes.

The Green Party has been a key part of my evolution as an activist. The connecting of the issues via the Four Pillars (Ecology, Equality, Democracy, Peace) and the Ten Key Values—and the clear understanding that all of these were intimately connected and intertwined—has been integral to my activism and community work ever since I first heard about the German Greens winning parliamentary seats in 1983. Right then I said we needed a party like that here in the US, and I jumped in at the first whiff. That was in 1984 in Maine. These days the Green Party has strength in some places around the country, places with a long-term tradition of making space for alternative parties. But in most of the country it remains marginal. Ideologically, its recent direction has been problematic, in my opinion.

Another facet of my work revolves around my part-time day job running the office of the Environment Council of Rhode Island. While much of my job there is bookkeeping, communications, events planning, and fundraising, I have always managed to keep a hand in policy formulation, while deferring

to the Board so that they can be the public spokespeople. Doing that has allowed me to continue to work on policies that ECRI cannot touch and to take more radical stands than the coalition can. But in some ways the best part of the job is the mission to foster and nurture the environmental community by helping new groups get started and helping new activists connect to the current action. I have to keep up with nearly every environmental issue in order to be able to refer folks who are looking for information and help. I need to have a familiarity with every organization in the coalition (about 60 of them!) and help the small organizations work with the larger ones. And I've always helped the environmental community connect to the wider progressive policy agenda, fostering environmental justice in Rhode Island well before ECRI was ready to embrace it.

The last thing I want to include in this narrative of my evolutionary journey is the Moshassuckcritters. It started as an effort to document a population of tadpoles in a rainwater-fed mudhole. It grew from there into an effort to understand the entire ecosystem of the rainwater pool and the animals that inhabit it seasonally, especially the Fowler's Toads. It has since turned into an exploration of green rainwater management and a video project documenting all the wildlife in the North Burial Ground. And when the pandemic hit, it expanded again to include new places and more critters. The deep knowledge of local wildlife it has given me is well worth it, but more importantly it has improved my powers of observation, which I have been able to transfer to all of my other projects.

I think the following have aided me in becoming more effective:

1. A broad knowledge base of history, economics, anthropology, evolutionary biology, geology, climate science, conservation biology, animal behavior, business management, politics, and organizational dynamics.
2. An ability to communicate effectively; both written and oral. On a good day you do not want to follow my rally speech, I have studied American speechmaking and love to give stemwinders. My writing is clear and easily read. The ability to explain complex topics in straightforward manner and how things connect in English, not jargon, means I can be effective in the halls of government, in back room plotting, and as a door-to-door campaigner. As an essayist, I am probably wordy in my early drafts, but even my long, detailed research compendiums are readable and move the world forward. And letters to the editor are one of my art forms. You need all of this and more if you are to communicate effectively. I might have more effect if I used social media more, and the long essay less, but I have always felt social media would be a mind-suck for me and I would not spend enough time writing or producing videos. I need to produce and will let the work stand on its own, not by its popularity. If it is good enough, it will be found eventually.

As activists age I think they gain perspective on how much really can be changed during the course of just one lifetime. Regarding our generation, much of what we idealistically tried to do has not worked out. War is still ever-present, as are hunger, poverty, disease and lack of democracy. Justice is in short supply. I have always tried to work hard but also be aware of the nature of the challenges we face—and acknowledge that when I am gone, nothing will be fully resolved, and the work will go on. I'm sure it will go on fine without me, and I'm ever more hopeful that the next generation of activists will do an even better job than ours did. I work with younger activists quite a bit; they are much more ready for the work than I was at their age, so that gives me a lot of hope.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge many of the people who helped me to become who I am as an activist. My wife Kathleen Rourke, in addition to everything else she does, reads my writings and lets me know if I miss the mark. I almost always agree with her judgment. She has also been willing to put up with an eccentric introvert dust magnet for many years. John Rensenbrink has been steadfast in his vision for the Green Party and its holism. The volunteer leadership of the Environment Council of Rhode Island have been willing to put up with a bit of a luddite who is still mostly baffled by computers and says things in public that they are not allowed to talk about (things that put me in a place where I can help many different people move forward to protect the planet). Jimmy Freeman taught me about new kinds of activism. Peter Simon allowed me to teach with him in a place I would never have been invited without him. Katherine Brown allowed me to use my knowledge of agriculture and compost to be a part of Rhode Island's urban agriculture renaissance. Jack Witham helped me connect to the woods and to Maine and to the value of long-term observations. Tony Affigne taught me about Rhode Island and about racial politics, and he keeps me connected to things I might drift away from but probably should not. Jody Jones told me very clearly that what I needed to do to help the planet and my community the most was to be Greg. I thank all of them and the many more folks I worked with and sojourned with along the way.



**GREG GERRITT**

is the Administrator of the Environment Council of Rhode Island, leading the RI Compost Initiative for which he received a 2012 EPA Region 1 Merit Award. Greg's blog is [ProsperityForRI.com](http://ProsperityForRI.com). He is the steward for his local watershed organization Friends of the Moshassuck. Greg helped found the Green Party of the United States and the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island. He was the Green Party candidate for Mayor of Providence in 2002.

# Campaign Exit Interview

BY HOWIE HAWKINS

400,000+ votes was pretty good considering that we faced our most difficult circumstances to date with respect to ballot access, media access, and attacks from progressive influencers desperately willing to settle for any Democrat to replace Trump.

Jill Stein made the Green New Deal the Green Party's signature issue that is now debated in the political mainstream.

Having completed my job as the Green Party's 2020 presidential candidate, an exit interview might be helpful . . .

## HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE GREEN PRESIDENTIAL VOTE IN 2020?

Our 400,000+ votes for 0.3% of the total vote falls in the middle range of Green presidential results. That is pretty good considering that the larger political context and dynamic of this election was the most difficult we have ever faced. 2020 was a referendum on Trump. We competed with a militant lesser-evilism among progressives that was desperately willing to settle for any Democrat to replace Trump.

The larger political context of presidential races each year has always determined Green results far more than our candidates, message, or campaign execution. Greens generally do better when running against an incumbent Democrat who disappoints progressives than an incumbent Republican who scares progressives. Until the Greens are a major force in American politics and rooted in the political system with thousands elected to local offices and, on that foundation, to state legislatures and the US House, our presidential ticket will be like a cork bobbing in the sea of the larger political dynamic of that year. There are no shortcuts around building a mass-based party at the grassroots that can be our ship to steer our own way through these strong currents.

Some have suggested that running a celebrity is the shortcut to instant competitiveness. We have done that. We had an incomparable celebrity in 2000 with Ralph Nader. Nader had nearly universal name recognition and huge public favorability as an accomplished progressive reformer known as an advocate for the people. 2000 also had a more favorable two-party competition dynamic with Nader running for an open seat against Al Gore, the heir to eight years of Clinton centrism, and a not-yet-scary George W. Bush running as a "compassionate conservative." Yet Nader still only received 2,882,955 votes for 2.7%. We got our second-best result in 2016 when there was also an open seat and the two major party candidates were the most unpopular in polling history. Jill Stein received 1,457,216 votes for 1.1% in 2016.

Our worst results were 0.1% in 2004 (119,859 votes) and 2008 (161,797 votes). 2004 was like 2020: progressives wanted any Democrat as the lesser evil to Bush. 2008 was also unfavorable because progressives were attracted to the prospect of electing the first African American president after eight years of Bush's wars, his incompetent response to Katrina, and the 2008 financial crash. Greens did better in 2012 when many progressive voters were disappointed in Obama's cautious centrism while Romney ran as a not-so-scary traditional Republican. Jill Stein received 469,627 votes for 0.4% in 2012.

400,000+ votes is significantly higher than the Green ticket received in the unfavorable dynamics of 2004 and 2008 and close to the vote the Green ticket received under the more favorable dynamic of 2012. Given our limited ballot access in 2020—30 ballots, down from 45 in 2016 and 37 in 2012—we can take heart that the hard-core Green vote has grown. It's a base we can continue to build upon.

## IF THE LARGER ELECTION DYNAMIC IS SO OVERRIDING, SHOULD GREENS KEEP RUNNING PRESIDENTIAL TICKETS?

Even as a small party it is still important for the Greens to run a presidential ticket for practical political and party-building reasons: to advance our policy demands, to recruit new Greens, and to secure ballot lines.

Green presidential campaigns have been successful in pushing policy demands into the national dialogue. Nader popularized economic justice policies that would draw broad support for Bernie Sanders 15 years later, including Medicare for All, tuition-free public college, a higher minimum wage, and progressive tax reform. Stein made the Green New Deal the Green Party's signature issue that is now debated in the political mainstream. While we were not able to give voice to our demands in the mass media in 2020, we did get millions of views on social media and added thousands to our lists of supporters, especially among young people.

Our lower vote lost us six of the 21 ballot lines we started the campaign with. We will be able to recover those ballot lines with the hard work of ballot petitioning. The harder work will be the year-round grassroots canvassing and issue campaigns that will enable Greens to become a major force in American politics by electing more local and then state and federal legislative candidates as we go into the 2020s.

Last year we faced our most difficult circumstances to date with respect to ballot access, media access, and attacks from progressive influencers. Ballot petitioning was more difficult in the COVID pandemic. With the competitive primary, many state parties waited until the convention nomination on July 11 to start petitioning, which was too late in many states. The Democrats were more aggressive than ever before in challenging Green ballot petitions and succeeded in removing us from the ballot in Montana, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Political hacks in both parties voted on these cases on election commissions and court benches along partisan lines without regard for the facts and the law. What kind of democracy has the governing parties administering their own elections? We must demand elections be administered by a nonpartisan independent agency like other electoral democracies do.

The media blanked out the Green campaign to an unprecedented degree, not only the corporate media, including NPR and PBS, but also the progressive media like Democracy Now!, Thom Hartman Program, The Nation, The Intercept, and Common Dreams. What little coverage we did get was slanted to portray the Greens as irresponsible spoilers for Biden or worse, a "Republican op" as MSNBC's Rachel Maddow pontificated.

Progressive professors, pundits, and politicians who had endorsed Nader in 2000 continued their drift to the right in 2020. In 2004, they had demanded that the Greens adopt a Safe States Strategy of only voting Green in safe states. Now in 2020, in a series of Open Letters in progressive media (that would not print our rejoinders), they pushed a No States Strategy of voting for Biden everywhere.

This retreat to the right by progressive thought leaders reveals their profound lack of confidence in the viability of their professed socialist or progressive politics. They counseled people to rely on the neoliberal Democrats to defeat the neofascist Republicans. Neoliberal Democratic policies have created the economic hardships and apprehensions that have provided fertile ground for the neofascists to cultivate the growth of their movement with racist

scapegoating and conspiracy mongering. Instead of fighting the far right with the left's own program, progressive pundits supported the neoliberal wing of the two-party system of corporate rule.

## WHAT DOES BIDEN MEAN FOR THE GREENS AND PROGRESSIVES IN GENERAL?

Progressive Democrats got beaten as badly as the Greens in 2020. The Democrats underperformed in the US House and Senate and state legislatures. If as few as 21,462 Biden voters had gone for Trump in Arizona, Georgia, and Wisconsin, he would have been installed in the presidency again by the Electoral College even though he lost the popular vote by 7.1 million. After the corporate Democrats closed ranks to defeat Sanders, progressives closed ranks behind Biden. Progressives made no demands on Biden and didn't raise progressive demands in their own voice. Biden ran an economically tone-deaf campaign like Clinton in 2016. With no progressive economic message coming from the Democrats, the field was left open for Trump's pandering economic demagoguery. The economy was the top issue for voters (35%), especially those who voted for Trump (83%). One-third of voters making less than \$50,000 voted for Trump. The results across the board were similar to 2016. The Democrats may have defeated Trump, but they did not defeat Trumpism, which is fully supported by one of the two major parties and well-entrenched in Congress, the state legislatures, and a presidential vote that grew by 11.2 million votes from 2016 to 2020.

Biden and the corporate Democratic leadership are blaming progressive Democrats for the party's underperformance in 2020 as Biden stuffs his administration with deficit hawks and war hawks. With inadequate solutions to the people's pressing economic problems, Biden's corporate centrism will lay the table for gains by reactionary Republicans in 2022 and 2024. Meanwhile, the climate is collapsing and the new nuclear arms race is accelerating. We need a viable Green Party now more than ever. Greens need to be ready to bring in progressives who become disappointed in Biden.

Greens have won over 1,200 elections over the years and currently have 110 elected to office; 22 were elected in 2020, highlighted by Emmanuel Estrada's victory to become Mayor of Baldwin Park, just east of Los Angeles. Franca Muller Paz came in second with 36% in a three-way race for a Baltimore city council seat in a city where the council has been a one-party Democratic dictatorship for nearly 80 years. In another big city council race on the other side of the country, Jake Tonkel won 46% in a two-way race for San Jose city council. Moving up the ballot to the higher stakes US Senate races, Madelyn Hoffman received more votes than any Green candidate in a statewide vote in New Jersey ever except for Ralph Nader in 2000. Lisa Savage received a significant 5% for US Senate in Maine. These and other 2020 results for our down-ballot candidates give us reason to believe we can build the Green Party into a major party by building our political base from the bottom up.

## WHY DID YOU AND ANGELA WALKER CAMPAIGN AS ECOSOCIALISTS?

The most important reason is to put forward real solutions to the life-or-death issues of climate, poverty, racism, and war. We can't solve our problems under capitalism. We need system change. We can frame the case for ecosocialism around the Four Pillars of Green politics.

**ECOLOGY:** We will never reverse the pending planetary environmental collapse as long as we have a capitalist economy in which relentless growth is structured into the economy by the competition for profits. Capitalist firms must grow or die. This capitalist growth imperative is devouring the biosphere, cooking the planet, and destroying agricultural foundations of human survival. Ecological sustainability requires social ownership and democratic planning of the major systems of production in order to meet everyone's basic needs within ecological limits.

We say *ecological* socialism because nineteenth and twentieth century socialism was focused on increasing production to end poverty. We now have more than enough productive capacity to end poverty. The problem now is equitably distributing production that is sufficient to meet basic needs and in a sustainable steady-state balance with the ecosystem.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE:** We will never reverse extreme and growing economic inequality as long as capitalists exploit workers for profit and extract more unearned income as rent and interest. Capitalists pay workers a fixed wage and take the rest of the value workers' labor creates as profit. Capitalists take more unearned income as rent and interest in excess of the costs of production due to their exclusive ownership of access to resources, such as land sites, natural resources, intellectual property, and market monopolies.

The injustices of racism and sexism are structured into capitalist exploitation of labor. Racism was invented by capitalists to divide and conquer African and European laborers as early capitalism grew by exploiting both slave and wage labor. The much older oppression of women was adapted to systematically pit male and female workers against each other. Replacing capitalism with the economic democracy of socialism is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for ending racism and sexism.

In an ecosocialist economy, public provision would cover public goods, such as infrastructure and utilities, and economic rights, such as health care, education, and a guaranteed income above poverty. Personal income would be equitably distributed because earned labor income—where workers receive the full value of their labor—would replace unearned capital income.

**NONVIOLENCE:** We will never have a secure peace as long as capitalism's competitive economic structure generates international conflicts and wars. Nuclear-armed capitalist states—including the US, Russia, and China—compete for resources, markets, cheap labor, and geopolitical military

positioning. If we don't replace capitalism's nationalistic competition with socialism's international cooperation, sooner or later these conflicts will end in nuclear annihilation.

**GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY:** We can't have political democracy without the economic democracy of socialism. Progressive reforms will never be secure as long as the wealth is concentrated in the hands of a super-rich oligarchy. Their concentrated economic power translates into concentrated political power. They use that power to resist and roll back progressive reforms. Democracy needs socialism.

The other reason for campaigning as ecosocialists is that the Greens need to bring an ecosocialist perspective into the growing public discussion of socialism. Socialism used to be a conversation stopper. Over the last decade it has become a conversation starter. Gallup polls now show growing numbers view capitalism unfavorably and socialism favorably, with 39% of all adults having a favorable view of socialism, including 51% of younger adults under 40.

The Gallup polls frame socialism as social programs, as New Deal liberalism based on economic growth and taxing the rich to fund the programs. It is not the classical socialism of common ownership and democratic administration of the economy. This New Deal liberalism exemplified by Bernie Sanders seeks to reform growth-driven capitalism, not replace it with a sustainable steady-state economy in balance with the environment. That is why the Greens need to bring the ecosocialist perspective to the new socialism discussion.

## WHY DID YOUR CAMPAIGN EMPHASIZE THE WORKING CLASS?

That's where the votes are. Working people are nearly two-thirds of the electorate. They vote in relatively low proportions because they don't feel the major parties know who they are, what they need, or care about them. The working class vote, which includes a majority of people of color and young people, are the future mass base of the Green Party in the US. The Greens have policies on economic justice, environmental protection, and clean government that appeal to working people.

But a good message is not enough. We can't just preach the message and expect it to win over people who don't know us or trust us. We have to build personal relationships with the people we want to organize. Most working-class non-voters are alienated from politics, not apathetic. Our local parties need to be systematically engaged in year-round "deep canvassing" conversations with working people where they live and work, listening to their concerns, building relationships, supporting their struggles, and linking their concerns to the Green policy platform.

When working people know who the Greens in their communities are, when they see us consistently active on the issues that concern them, then they will see the Green Party as their party. We need to be more than activists who just mobilize

## What kind of democracy has the governing parties administering their own elections? We must demand elections be administered by a nonpartisan independent agency.

our existing base. We need to become organizers who are strategically building a broader mass base, a majoritarian base, in our cities and towns.

### DOES THE MIDDLE CLASS HAVE A ROLE IN THIS STRATEGY?

Absolutely. We want to unite the many against the few: the working and middle classes against the capitalist ruling class.

This question came up during the Green primaries when I called for a COVID relief policy that cancelled rent and mortgage payments while the federal government paid the rents and mortgages for the duration of the emergency. Some of my opponents argued that, as socialists, we should just cancel rent and mortgage payments and let the businesses that depend on those payments fend for themselves.

That simple-minded “socialist” policy would have driven many businesses out of business—small landlords, community banks and credit unions that hold mortgages, and other small businesses and self-employed trades people that service rental properties. That would have driven the economy into a deeper depression with more lost businesses, lost jobs, and lost consumer demand. The private equity sharks from BlackRock, Blackstone, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley, which have become the nation’s biggest landlords after buying up distressed property on the cheap since the Great Recession, would further concentrate their ownership of rental housing.

The class structure is more complicated than just workers vs. capitalists. The US has large and diverse middle classes that include about one-third of the population, ranging from small business people, farmers, and self-employed trades people to supervisors, technicians, scientists, and other professionals in the upper-middle strata of the corporate hierarchies now prevalent in the public and non-profit as well as private sectors. The class structure is further complicated by the fact that many working class people have both labor income and capital income from small rental properties and pensions and other financial investments.

Karl Marx was clear about the politics of class alliances even if some of today’s “socialists” are not. As he wrote in an 1868 letter to Engels, “the petty-bourgeoisie can maintain a revolutionary attitude toward the bourgeoisie only as long as the proletariat stands behind it” (Hal Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution: Volume 2, The Politics of Social Classes*, p. 302).

A “socialist” demand that would have pushed the mom-and-pop landlords into alliance with predatory real estate speculators like BlackRock and big rich landlords like Donald Trump and

Jared Kushner in order to get the rental income they need to survive is a good way to lose the class struggle.

A serious ecosocialist politics needs programs to help the struggling middle classes, including:

- protections for locally-owned small businesses against monopolizing national chains;
- technical and financial support for worker and consumer cooperatives that democratize management, equitably distribute co-op income according to contribution, and anchor ownership in local communities;
- public power, banking, broadband, and transportation utilities that provide efficient public avenues for private commerce by small business;
- public services like universal health care and child care that take those items off small business budgets.

We need a Green New Deal for agriculture and rural reconstruction. It would replace corporatized and chemicalized agribusiness with agroecology by family farmers. It would outlaw absentee-owned corporate farming. It would give farmers access to their own farms through a new homestead act. It would subsidize farmers’ transition back to organic agriculture. It would guarantee a living income above the costs of production through parity pricing for all agricultural commodities. It would build a stable diversified rural economy with green manufacturing in regional cities and towns using local farm products.

It is politically crucial that the Greens provide a constructive program for the old middle classes based in small businesses, self-employment, farms, and rural America if we are going to defeat neofascist reaction. The far-right messaging machine explains middle-class people’s economic adversities and worries with racist, anti-immigrant, and conspiracy delusions that cultivate victimhood, resentment, anti-scientific irrationalism, and Republican votes. The Democrats have no counter-narrative and program. They have consistently supported the big banks and corporations, particularly the agribusiness monopolies that have gutted the economies of rural America. This rural devastation will continue with Biden’s appointment of big ag lobbyist Tom Vilsack for a second stint as Secretary of Agriculture. The Greens can win over many in rural America with a Green New Deal for agriculture.



**HOWIE HAWKINS**

was the Green Party presidential candidate in 2020. A retired Teamster in Syracuse, New York, he has been active in movements for civil rights, peace, unions, and the environment since the 1960s. He has been a Green since participating in the first national Green organizing meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota in August 1984. Running for Governor of New York in 2010, he was the first US candidate to campaign for a Green New Deal.

# *Re-thinking* U.S. Green Party Experience

BY JOHN RENSENBRINK

We need to do some  
“out of the box” thinking.

Early on, the New Zealand  
Green Party shifted their  
priority from running  
candidates to changing  
the electoral rules.

I believe that we Greens in the United States need to shake ourselves up. At this juncture we need to do some “out of the box” thinking. The sticking point is how we’ve been thinking about elections and how we’ve been treating them and ourselves.

At first, in the early days, we ran candidates and strove for ballot access. This continues in many states. We were happy with that and rightly so. “Look, we’re a party,” we said, as if pinching ourselves that we could do this.

We kept doing this, running for state house, for governor, US Senate, for Congress. We also ran in local races for non-partisan office. Here we could win and did win a lot of races right across the country. But for partisan offices we did not do so well. In fact, we did poorly and continue to do so. Yet we continued to try to scale the wall. We soon realized the wall was deliberately placed there by the major parties. But we kept running anyway.

As we kept losing, we soothed ourselves and swallowed our pride. We said we were raising issues, raising consciousness, educating the voting population and the world in general. For many this came to be the reason we ran. This approach seems to have gained ascendancy within the party. The conversation among ourselves has moved away from dwelling and examining new approaches to winning. It has moved instead to lots of discourse and steady wrangling over ideological conflicts; or the fullness and adequacy of our platform statements; or whether to make alliances with this group or that one; or listing our aspirations; or declarations of what we stand for. For some, a single issue is dominant.

Each one of these various pathways is useful, though each one has already been taken up by dedicated movements, to which we attach ourselves. But should they, or any one of these, be central to our purpose? Some Greens follow one. For some a different one is uppermost. For still others it’s a multiple pursuit of several. Thus, focus for the party as a whole wavers. Electoral politics merely becomes one of many interesting things to do—by some, not by others.

Many of us get revved up for candidate after candidate running for partisan office. As noted, they lose. It’s hard to say this, but the loss is especially felt as sad because we regularly throw ourselves into a race with thunderous cries of: “We are going to win!”

Here we encounter a brutal dilemma. Unfortunately, the people we want to come thronging to vote for us are a-political. Many are turned off to politics. Many are half-hearted about it. Many turn to the Democratic Party in frustration. They also thus remain apprentices in the ways of politics. To motivate them we generate special enthusiasm. We have to! We say that this time it’s different. We can win this. We will win this!

There’s not very much reality in what we propel out there. Our emphasis on the “issues” falls flat. Who are we? We have no clout to make our claims and promises credible. We are not politically credible; our bold assertions that “we will win” are politely disregarded. Or dismissed as embarrassing.

## We should advocate for constitutional amendments that would shift power to, and balance power among, local and state governments and local citizen assemblies.

### WE CAN DO BETTER

A clue is provided by the early history of the New Zealand Green Party. They shifted their priority from running candidates to changing the electoral rules under which their candidates were running. They allied with others to institute proportional representation. They were soon winning seats and participated in the governing process.

An analogy for us is for our state parties to prioritize Ranked Choice Voting. There have been efforts in that direction. But for decades we have shouldered on with running losing races under an electoral system that shuts us out. So far, we have gained RCV for federal offices in Maine, a minor accomplishment given that the old system still prevails for all state offices and for governor. But the state Green Party continues to look for and run losing candidates for state office in futile pursuit of mythical victory. Even Fred Horch's valiant campaigns for state House and Senate, the most recent of which he lost by a mere few hundred votes, still ended in defeat. His campaign ran a stupendously thorough and dedicated race but was still blunted by an entrenched Brunswick Democratic Party.

All the more reason to shift our electoral priorities. We should concentrate on changing the rules. There are non-partisan movements fighting for new rules that include RCV. We have not made serious efforts to ally with them. To do that, however, a state Green Party has to choose to make changing the rules a full and top priority and on that basis it can and will look for and court allies. So far, the only state Green Party that is making RCV its top priority is the Rhode Island Green Party. It has pulled away from the Green Party's National Committee and is seeking a new direction.

### THERE IS MORE: NEW AMBITIONS

There is more that we can do in addition to shifting our priorities and courting allies in the endeavor to change the electoral system. We can become a fighter for change in the Constitution of the United States. This can be done partly through championing new amendments and partly through improving existing amendments. The new amendments that I would look for would be those that would end the concentration

of money and power at the top where it is vested in just a few hands. Such amendments would in fact dissolve mega-corporate power and the power of big bureaucratic dominating agencies. The new amendments would decisively shift power to, and balance power among, local and state governments and local citizen assemblies.

Our targets for change should be, I feel, both oligarchy and hierarchy. We've been aware of and taken stands against oligarchy but we have not been truly aware of and taken a resolute stand against hierarchy. Hierarchy blunts democracy at the core. It blunts our awareness causing us to think we have overcome classism, racism, and sexism. Invidious ranking creeps in with the seemingly democratic and egalitarian reforms that are dear to our hearts. The silent drift to hierarchy muscles in, blinding us.

We can shift the priorities: put the horse in front of the cart. We can get the rules changed. We have the great opportunity to go shoulder to shoulder with movements that are fighting for an electoral system that evens the ground and enables citizens to be free to vote their conscience. One may say that RCV will not give us ground to win outright. But consider that for a candidate who is in a race where the votes they get will decide who wins—that is winning! A party can build on that. Proportional Representation can be a further step.

We can look for and practice new opportunities for citizen action. We can put our Green Party in the forefront. I've suggested that one good way is to fight for changes in the US Constitution. There are models for that in many state constitutions and they may surprise you. And surprise the country. A country that longs for new and better leadership.



**JOHN RENSENBRINK**

Co-editor of *Green Horizon*, John lives in Maine, is professor emeritus of government at Bowdoin College, co-founded the Maine and U.S. Green Parties, is founder and member of the latter's International Committee, and the author of *Against all Odds: The Green Transformation of American Politics* (1999). His latest book is *Ecological Politics: For Survival and Democracy* (2017).

We have the great opportunity to go shoulder to shoulder with movements that are fighting for an electoral system that evens the ground and enables citizens to be free to vote their conscience.

# Working the Media *as a Green Candidate*

BY SAM PFEIFLE

RCV offers some unique opportunities for breaking through current barriers to entry in the mainstream press.

Firing off an email that berates a reporter for screwing up a story won't get you anywhere.

From October 2019 through the November 2020 election, I had the distinct honor of serving as Media Coordinator for Lisa Savage's campaign to unseat Senator Susan Collins here in the great state of Maine. While we were officially "unenrolled" (i.e., not party-affiliated) because that made it easier for us to get on the ballot, we were listed as "Independent Green" on the ballot, and Lisa began her campaign as a registered Green and pledged during the campaign to re-enroll as Green should she win.

So, while we were not running as an official member of the Maine Green Independent Party, we were certainly pegged as the "Green" candidate by state and national media, and I think our experience extrapolates to Greens across Maine and, to some extent, the United States. If you Google "green candidate 2020," Howie Hawkins comes up first, Lisa's campaign comes up second.

Hopefully, you heard about the campaign, regardless of where you are in the country. I thought I'd offer some thoughts on what we did right in terms of spreading our message through the mainstream media, how we could have improved, and how other Green campaigns might find more success with mainstream outlets that have traditionally given Greens short shrift.

Of course, we had some unique circumstances. Susan Collins was among the most high-profile senators up for re-election in a year where there was a huge amount of focus on "flipping the senate," so the media spotlight was on the race from the start. Plus, Maine is a state with a history of victorious independent candidates, including a sitting senator in Angus King; therefore so-called "third-party" candidates are quite common. And Maine is a small state with few media outlets, so developing relationships with individual reporters is not particularly difficult.

Most unique, however, was the nature of the race itself: Running under a ranked-choice voting (RCV) system gave us a leg up on most Green candidates, as we could quickly get past the "spoiler" tag and move on to talking about the issues, instead of endless discourse on the horse race and which candidate we might be helping with our candidacy. Not only is ranked-choice voting a good way to open races up to non-corporate-party candidates, it also changes the narrative of the race in fundamental ways: Rather than focusing on which candidate Lisa might steal votes from, there was lots of talk about which candidate our number two votes might help.

This positive reflection on the candidacy, rather than negative, opened any number of doors for us. We were invited to early candidate forums, even before the primaries were settled. Some Democratic Party candidates even encouraged our candidacy! And while we were ultimately excluded from the fifth debate in our race, we were openly invited to the first four and largely given equal time.

Many media members seemed to quickly understand that a ranked-choice race encourages voters to learn about all the candidates in the race, so as to rank them all down the ballot. Obviously, many others weren't so quick to embrace change, and we still had our fair share of headlines that framed the race as simply Democrat vs. Republican; but whenever that happened, it was an opportunity for us to educate.

## SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR MEDIA

### ATTENTION IN AN RCV RACE

It's important to remember that a huge portion of the mainstream media at this point is young, inexperienced, and overworked. While it may be tempting to slam the media for being in the pockets of corporations, in my experience most of their coverage decisions are based in ignorance and panic. They mostly just follow basic templates for covering campaigns and don't have a lot of time for thinking or learning new things. They're often filing multiple stories a day, working multiple beats, and having to figure out production and other issues.

And that deadline is looming. You can use this to your advantage.

#### STRATEGY 1:

Educate, don't argue. The big-money campaigns mostly boss the media around. They know it's a reporter's job to cover the big campaigns and so they tell them when and where they're going to be, give them their statements, and then maybe give them a little present by actually answering a question or two.

Small campaigns don't have that luxury. What they can do, however, is help the reporters sound smart by educating them on the intricacies of campaigning and why the big-money campaigns are doing what they're doing.

And when you educate, make sure you do it with the "compliment sandwich." While it can be enraging to see an article where your campaign has been ignored, firing off an email that berates a reporter for screwing up a story won't get you anywhere. They'll just think you're a jerk. It's vital to first acknowledge that you've read the whole piece by letting them know you appreciated a detail they included, then let them know you were disappointed not to have been able to contribute certain thoughts because the piece might have been stronger with those little-known details, and then thank them for their time in reading your message and wish them well.

If you can point them to something in a finance report, or in a voting record, or in a business relationship that they didn't already know about and that will make them look smart in the future, they'll remember you fondly and ask you for comment in the next piece. In an RCV race, we often found success by pointing out how the RCV nature of the race might change voting habits or make a traditional strategy actually counter-productive.

For example, the conventional wisdom is that you shouldn't say nice things about your opponent, but we found research out of Australia that shows suggesting a #2 vote and saying nice things about an opponent actually increases your chance of winning. We handed that information to a local reporter, along with our strategy for a #2 suggestion, and it generated a feature article with us as the lead angle. It was a huge success for our campaign and opened the doors for a number of radio appearances.

#### STRATEGY 2:

Make their jobs easy. Consider the demands being put on reporters nowadays: Not only do they have to write and/or produce their pieces, but they also have to post to social media, find images and video to go with the story (often acting as their own cameraperson), track down sources who never answer the phone anymore, do all their own fact-checking (copy editors are becoming more and more scarce), and often work a second job, because the pay is so poor, especially for TV and radio.

If you can take some of those pieces off their plates, you will find yourself getting more and better coverage.

Your website absolutely must have multiple professional-quality headshots of the candidate, in both portrait and landscape format, in high-resolution size, and both standalone and interacting with potential voters. Your campaign logo must be easy to download in .png, .tiff, and .jpg formats. Your campaign bio must be concise and easy to cut and paste (not in a .pdf, for example). And it all must be easy to access on a mobile device.

You'll find many of the corporate-party candidates actually upload generic "b-roll" video to YouTube and Vimeo so PACs and reporters can use it in ads and stories. You should do that, too.

You should also make sure that there is a clear media contact, with an email address, a phone number and a Twitter handle (reporters love Twitter), *and that person should always answer the phone*, regardless of unknown number or what the area code is. Remember that most TV reporters, especially, move around a lot and will likely have a mobile number from three states ago.

Also, the candidate must commit to saying "yes" to every single media request, especially early on—even if it's a 15-year-old YouTuber; even if it's for TikTok; even if that person appears to have zero followers. It doesn't matter. First, it's good practice for the candidate. Second, these things build on one another. YouTubers follow each other. Reporters follow YouTubers. Reporters follow other reporters. Once you're somewhere, there's a chance you'll be everywhere.

But you have to be somewhere first!

Finally, you need to have at your fingertips a ready supply of "experts" who support your policy positions and will be available to provide third-party validation for you. Pre-screen that they're willing and able to talk to media on short notice, have headshots and contact info readily available, and make sure to include them in press releases and other social media broadcasts. Every reporter has their go-to sources. They're likely to be standard, mainstream folks. You need to provide reporters with better and easier alternatives. In many of our press releases, we even provided quotes from these sorts of community leaders, small-business owners, and advocates right in our text, using them as third-party validators as well as indicating to press that they'd be good people to interview.

In an RCV race, this comes into play when you're making your "I'm not a spoiler" arguments. Quickly supply political analysts who have thought about how RCV affects races and who will supply rational arguments that support your position. But don't try to control their message or suggest to them what to say; that will backfire. Find smart people and let the power of your ideas and RCV be enough guidance for them.

#### STRATEGY 3:

Tailor your message to your audience. One of the best decisions we made on the Lisa Savage campaign was keeping our social media and traditional media communications separate and handled by different people. Obviously, small campaigns have to consolidate roles, and this may be a luxury you can't afford, but splitting these two roles ensures that you're communicating directly to reporters, which is different from communicating to potential voters.

Social media enables the latter. Reporters and other influencers may see those messages, but ultimately they're tailored toward getting someone to vote for you. You're making an appeal that your plan for the future is the one that best matches that voter's desire for what the future will be.

In an RCV race, this is particularly powerful, and we encouraged voters at every chance to "vote their values." Rather than telling them what was bad about the other candidates, we focused on our policy positions and suggested to people that they learn about all the candidates and then rank them in order of how closely what the candidates were proposing lined up with what they wanted to happen.

This is not, however, the way to win coverage with a journalist, especially those who have been trained in a newsroom or went to journalism school. People who consider themselves professional journalists often don't even vote, as not voting makes them feel like they can retain objectivity. For these people, you're trying to convince them you're worthy of coverage—that you're newsworthy—not that you're more worthy of votes. Thus, what you're looking to establish with this audience is that your policy positions are different from those proposed by others in the race in substantive and meaningful ways and that your candidacy has a real chance of winning votes and mattering in the race.

So, first, you need to outline policy positions with real substance. Hopefully, any Green campaign has that from the outset; then it's simply a matter of distributing them to press on a regular basis. But, second, you need to demonstrate markers of legitimacy. It is "news" when you hire staff; when you make advertising purchases (even small ones); when you hit even relatively small fundraising goals; when you earn endorsements; when you visit places and those places demonstrate that they want to hear from you.

Those aren't things you'd necessarily broadcast on social media, or that are likely to go viral, but they're indications to press that you might matter and that you're playing the game to win.

Many reporters have internalized that "third-party" candidates are basically just ego-driven wannabes who can't simply let the "real" candidates fight it out like normal. RCV allows you to break through that internalization and demonstrate that, hey, the #2 votes from third-party candidates just might decide this election, so maybe you should let people know who these other candidates are and why anyone might vote for them. Then, you provide them with those indications that you're "for real."

At the beginning, it might just be numbers of volunteer hours contributed in the last month, or doors knocked on, or farmers' markets visited—anything to demonstrate the "realness" of the campaign.

#### LOOKING FORWARD

In no way is ranked-choice voting a panacea that will undo the corporate hold on our elections. There are many other reforms needed before there's a level playing field for us Greens. However, it does offer some unique opportunities for breaking through current barriers to entry in the mainstream press.

With victories in Alaska and New York City, and established bulkheads here in Maine and in cities across the country like Oakland, Minneapolis, and Boulder, there will be increasing opportunities for Greens to make in-roads and establish themselves as viable candidates, with the RCV nature of the race itself supplying supporting evidence.

Overcoming the "spoiler" tag is crucial for the long-term viability of the party and its ideals. As long as races are seen as the exclusive domain of one of the corporate parties, we Greens will always be seen as interlopers and ancillary to the true nature of the race. With RCV, however, we become an integral part of the race and no longer have to worry about zero-sum arguments.

No longer will support for a Green be equal to lack of support for another candidate. Voters will be able to support both candidates and the campaigns should be more substantive and policy-focused as voters see they need more time to discover the nuanced differences between two candidates who both support their basic positions.

Of course, the hope is that this improves our national discourse in general and as a whole. If we can make it harder to cast races as "good vs. evil" binary oppositions, that should increase the quality of debate and discussion—and create a national political conversation that can engage with subtleties.

That was our experience in Maine. My hope is that it translates to a bigger, eventually national, stage.



**SAM PFEIFLE**

is a writer living in Gray, Maine. He is a former Chair of the Maine Green Independent Party's Press Committee, currently serves as the Chair of the MSAD 15 School Board, and was recently the press coordinator for the Lisa for Maine campaign. He can be reached at sam@westgraycreative.com.

# Recent Developments in the US Colony of Puerto Rico

## BACKGROUND

The people of Puerto Rico are not merely United States citizens living in Puerto Rico (with five million in the United States as a result of migration). Puerto Ricans are a Latin American nation whose territory is an archipelago in the Caribbean Sea with the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Cuba to the west and the Eastern Caribbean mainly English-speaking countries as its neighbors on the east. It is a nation whose vernacular is Spanish, whose national identity has been forged during more than five hundred years, whose people share a common history and culture and who have historically struggled for independence.

Between 1493 and 1898 it was a colony of Spain against whose tyranny it rose in a quest for independence in the *Grito de Lares* of 1868 which consolidated its nationhood. Puerto Rico gained a great degree of autonomy from Spain in 1897 one year before the United States invaded and militarily occupied the island in 1898 as war booty after the Spanish American War. After two years of a United States imposed military government a civilian colonial government was allowed with governors appointed by Washington. In 1917 the United States imposed its citizenship on the whole Puerto Rican nation.

A District of Puerto Rico Federal United States Court imposes United States laws on the Puerto Rican people to this day. In 1952, with the establishment of the Free Associated State (Commonwealth) government, Puerto Rico adopted its own Constitution after United States congressional approval. As a result, Puerto Rico was granted limited self-government over limited local matters and its fiscal decisions.

Throughout, Puerto Rico has endured social displacement, destruction of its agriculture, cultural aggression, extreme migration, dependence, military occupation (especially our island municipalities of Vieques and Culebra), degradation of our environment and natural resources, racism, and discrimination. Besides this, we have no control over vital areas such as our borders, migration and immigration, international relations and commerce, monetary issues, maritime laws, customs, labor relations and trade union organization, airspace and transportation, communications, and other areas.

In recent years, especially since 2016, instead of moving toward decolonization, Puerto Rico's already tiny extent of self-government was totally eradicated after adoption by the US Congress of the PROMESA Law which mandated a Fiscal Control Board appointed by then-President Barack Obama to oversee the process of straightening out Puerto Rico's finances and the restructuring and repayment of its huge (and unaudited) public debt.

In a further assault of the Puerto Rican people, the fiscal board has imposed draconian neo-liberal austerity measures that have crushed workers' rights, deregulated the private sector, privatized state property and dismantled institutions that are pillars of Puerto Rican society such as public education and the University of Puerto Rico—all in order that the public debt and Wall Street be paid.

These measures, as well as a recession dating back to 2006, recent natural disasters such as Hurricanes Irma and María and the early 2020 earthquakes, and then the COVID-19 pandemic, have set Puerto Rico back to the days of extreme poverty, hunger and stagnation that prevailed before the dawn of the Free Associated State, industrialization, and the relative social and infrastructural advances it brought. These advances were unsustainable due to the US and foreign interests taking precedence

BY OLGA I. SANABRIA DÁVILA

The United States invaded and militarily occupied the island in 1898 as booty after the Spanish American War. A District of Puerto Rico Federal Court imposes US laws on the Puerto Rican people to this day.

Instead of moving toward decolonization, Puerto Rico's already tiny extent of self-government was totally eradicated after the US Congress adopted the 2016 PROMESA Law which mandated a Fiscal Control Board appointed by then-President Barack Obama; the Board has imposed draconian neo-liberal austerity measures in order that the public debt and Wall Street be paid.

over the interests of the people of Puerto Rico and the lack of power of the Puerto Rican nation over its affairs.

The present scenario, with its lack of opportunity for the young, its lack of a viable economic model and drastic migration, makes decolonization an urgent matter for the people of Puerto Rico. Our environmental issues, also impacted by the colonial status and lack of powers, include deforestation, urbanization, poor planning, fresh-water contamination with sea water, water pollution in general, air pollution, waste disposal, industrial residue such as ashes, and weak natural resources oversight, among others. In the areas of climate change and global warming Puerto Rico is particularly impacted as a small tropical island-country, yet is powerless to engage international mitigation programs or global negotiations on climate change. Meanwhile, climate and atmospheric events in Puerto Rico are ever-more intense as demonstrated by Hurricane María, and rising sea levels are eroding coasts and beaches and impacting enormously on seaside communities.

## PUERTO RICO'S 2020 ELECTORAL RESULTS SENT SEVERAL IMPORTANT MESSAGES

Last November's elections in Puerto Rico for the governorship, the colonial Senate, House of Representatives, municipal mayors and the Resident Commissioner in Washington—and its misleading, manipulated status referendum—had mixed results, but clearly reflected a changing political landscape and the continued decay of the Free Associated State (Commonwealth) colonial government structure.

New political and social forces made inroads toward breaking the two-party system. The Pro-Independence Party (PIP by its Spanish acronym) garnered 14% of the vote, more than twice its support in the previous elections—its best result in more than sixty years. The Citizens Victory Movement, a recently established electoral party long in the making with the representation of diverse social, community and political movements organized as numerous networks, won a surprising 18% of the vote; while *Proyecto Dignidad* (the Dignity Project), another new, somewhat fundamentalist, political organization, won 7%.

After the elections, five political parties will now be represented in the Puerto Rican legislature, historically dominated only by the pro-Commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PPD by its Spanish acronym), the annexationist New Progressive Party (PNP by its Spanish acronym) and the pro-independence PIP. Thus, Puerto Rico's colonial political parties, the PPD and PNP, will now have to operate with a weakened majority. The six legislators the new forces elected will join with an independent legislator and have the possibility of aligning to force the colonial parties to negotiate in regard to myriad issues and bills of law. New legislators include several women and Puerto Rico's first elected Afro-descendent lesbian legislator, Ana Irma Rivera Lassen, who won an at-large seat. Women are now a majority in the Senate.

The pro-annexationist PNP governor elect, Pedro Pierluisi won with a mere 32% of the vote, while the pro-Free Associated State (Commonwealth) PPD won 31% and a very slim majority in the legislature. Only a fraudulent vote-count in San Juan kept the MVC's very progressive mayoral candidate, Manuel Natal, from the capital's top post, which was taken by the annexationist candidate with a very slim margin.

The decay of the colony's governmental structure and its corruption were in full display in the 2020 electoral process. Shortly before the contest the PNP took advantage of its two-chamber majority to adopt a new electoral law which lent more hierarchy in the electoral process to the governing party and included new rules, including for advance and absentee voting. A new electoral commissioner was appointed thereafter due to the incompetence of the former incumbent. The COVID-19 threat moved many thousands to vote in advance and the absentee vote was greater than usual. However, the procedures for counting these categories of the vote under the new law were not in place, nor were the personnel and resources due to budget cutbacks. Voting is manual and the vote count is electronic with outmoded technology. All these factors contributed to an extremely chaotic pre- and post-election scenario with vast recounting, ballot misplacement, unbalanced vote scrutiny, other irregularities, and fraud by the governing party. It should also not be overlooked that voter participation is dwindling.

Despite these vicissitudes, the electorate sent a clear message that straight ballot voting is now history in Puerto Rico and that vast colonial party majorities may also be a thing of the past. This message is a continuation of recent electoral events where the Puerto Rican people have channeled discontent at the polling stations. According to some commentators, in the 2020 elections results reflected the massive base movement that forced resignation of former governor Ricardo Rosselló. In a 2012 consultation 54% of participants rejected the present colonial status at the polls.

## NEW POSSIBILITIES REGARDING PUERTO RICAN DECOLONIZATION

In the November 3 "Statehood: Yes? No?" referendum the statehood status option won 52%. The referendum was mandated by a law adopted by the outgoing PNP majority legislature and designed to favor statehood (the annexation of Puerto Rico to the United States). Monies (\$2.5 million) designated several years ago by the US Department of Justice for a status referendum were requested by the Puerto Rican government for this year's referendum. However, these funds were tied to approval by the Department of the status options to be presented. The referendum did not meet the Department's requirements and thus Puerto Rican government funds were used.

Clearly, Puerto Rican decolonization cannot take place under the aegis of the Puerto Rican colonial political parties and under the conditions established by the US Department of Justice.

Three of the political parties to be represented in the incoming legislature, as well as in many municipal legislatures, the PIP, MVC and Proyecto Dignidad, favor the solution of the colonial status issue by way of a Status Assembly (also referred to as a Constitutional Status Assembly). This would be a procedural mechanism for the people of Puerto Rico to decide its future political status from among non-colonial options outside the Territorial Clause of the US Constitution (which extends the plenary powers of the US Congress to Puerto Rico). In the past the PPD has also favored a Status Assembly. That mechanism for deciding Puerto Rico's future status has also steadily gained ground within Puerto Rican civil society. The model for the Assembly, as developed by the Puerto Rico Bar Association, calls for the Puerto Rican legislature to adopt a law mandating and establishing the guidelines for the organization of the Assembly with elected delegates deliberating on the issue in negotiation with the United States and a final consultation of the Puerto Rican people.

For many years, United Nations resolutions calling for the decolonization of Puerto Rico under General Assembly resolution 1514(XV) of 1960 have noted "the debate in Puerto Rico on the implementation of a mechanism that would ensure the full participation of representatives of all sectors of Puerto Rican public opinion, including a constitutional assembly on status with a basis in the decolonization alternatives recognized in international law . . .".

At present the initiative of a Status Assembly of the people of Puerto Rico, in order that they exercise their right to self-determination, has been developed in US House of Representatives Draft Bill of Law 8113, entitled "Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020." Bill 8113 was presented in August 2020 by US Congresswomen of Puerto Rican descent Nydia Velázquez and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, both New York Democrats. In several areas this draft bill of law, which has space for improvement, is consistent with decolonization proposals advanced in Puerto Rico including that the initiative originate with the people of Puerto Rico, that the Puerto Rican legislature has the authority to convoke a Status Assembly, that delegates elected to the Assembly address only non-territorial political status alternatives, and that the process be in negotiation with, and binding on, the United States. The bill also situates the issue of Puerto Rico in the context of international law as it mentions the UN General Assembly resolution 748(VIII) of 1953 and Article I of the International Civil and Political Rights Pact which the United States has ratified.

Although its future is uncertain, Draft Bill of Law 8113 is a noteworthy step regarding United States responsibility to facilitate a decolonization process for Puerto Rico, as historically the position of the government and politicians of the United States has been that they would respect the decision of the people of Puerto Rico regarding their future political status without offering options for the process toward such a decision.

## THE PRO-STATEHOOD CIVIL RIGHTS NARRATIVE

While the decolonization of Puerto Rico depends on the work of diverse forces on the island and implementation of applicable international law, US leftists, progressives and liberals also have a responsibility regarding Puerto Rico decolonization—after all, it is their government that holds Puerto Rico sequestered as a colony. In addressing this responsibility these forces should bear in mind that the issue is more than one of civil rights and equality.

In the case of the Puerto Rican people, their rights must be respected as those of a nation, not as United States citizens who reside in Puerto Rico and whose struggle is to overcome their status as second-class citizens. As a nation, Puerto Ricans have rights that are recognized under international law, including the inalienable right to self-determination and independence. The solution to our second-class citizenship is decolonization, not statehood. (A distinction should be made between immigrants seeking citizenship and equality, and one nation imposing its citizenship on another.)

The pro-statehood narrative, which has made inroads, not only emphasizes equality under United States citizenship rather than Puerto Rican rights as a nation, but the crux of the argument is that statehood is equivalent to civil rights for Puerto Ricans and equivalent to decolonization. Actually, statehood for Puerto Rico would be the culmination of the colonial status it has withstood for almost 125 years while struggling for its decolonization and independence. Despite the pro-statehood narrative, annexation of Puerto Rico to the United States constantly faces staunch opposition within US governing circles.

The present fluid situation regarding Puerto Rico does not preclude the messages of the 2020 elections. It is clear the Puerto Rican people are increasingly aware of the need for change and that decolonization is urgent. They are increasingly aware that the process for deciding on the future political status must have a level playing field for all the options. Hopefully, as the international community assumes its role more actively, so will leftists, progressives and liberals in the United States increasingly support the decolonization of Puerto Rico under international law—as the US Green Party already does in its political platform.



OLGA I. SANABRIA

has worked on the Puerto Rico colonial status issue for many years as an independence supporter. While maintaining close community links, she has worked garnering solidarity for decolonization internationally, especially at the United Nations. Ms. Sanabria has also worked as a journalist, a translator, and in several entities at the United Nations. She has taught as an adjunct professor at City University of New York (CUNY) and holds a CUNY bachelor's degree in journalism and a Juris Doctor from the Hostos Law School in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. She presently lives in San Juan.

# Sex, Gender and Backlash *in the Green Party*

BY THISTLE PETTERSEN

Grounded in existing international treaties endorsed by our party's national platform, the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights reaffirms the feminist understanding of sex as the basis for women's oppression.

Gender identity ideology is not only wrong about the objective reality of one's sex, but its adoption as public policy is harmful to the sex-based rights and protections women have fought for to become equal citizens in society.

The topic of sex and gender has never been more contentious. Who would have thought, thirty years ago, that a popular trend would take hold in our society that denies the material reality of sex and promotes instead the ideology of "gender identity"?

While declining to take a position on these questions, the Dialogue not Expulsion (DnE) Caucus has organized within the national party to demand a conversation. Our party publicly affirms Respect for Diversity, Grassroots Democracy, and Feminism as key values. Yet it nonetheless engages in "cancel culture" to shut down such discussions at every turn. Women have been sanctioned and expelled from the party's National Women's Caucus for discussing women's rights. The DnE Caucus has documented multiple abuses of the party's values on its website.

I joined the DnE caucus and then became a Green Party member in my state of Wisconsin in March of 2020. I was active with the Campus Greens when I was in school in the early '90s. Later I would co-found Madison Action for Mining Alternatives (MAMA), organizing with the group for five years. My political values are reflected in what the Green Party promotes, but until this past year I felt disillusioned and frustrated with American party politics.

What changed was the Georgia Green Party's February 22, 2020 endorsement of the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights. This document was penned by Sheila Jeffreys, Heather Brunsell Evans and Maureen O'Hara and is promoted by the Women's Human Rights Campaign (WHRC). Since its March 2019 release, the Declaration has collected over 13,000 signatures from individuals around the world and almost 300 organizational endorsements.

Grounded in existing international treaties endorsed by our party's national platform, the Declaration reaffirms the feminist understanding of sex as the basis for women's oppression—and counters the assertion that this oppression is grounded instead in "gender identity."

As feminists, we understand that gender is a tool for patriarchal oppression. We believe it is gender (sex-based stereotypes), not biological reality, that we must reject in our efforts to end the oppression of women and to free men from their assigned roles as our oppressors.

Gender identity ideology is not only wrong about the objective reality of one's sex, but its adoption as public policy is harmful to the sex-based rights and protections women have fought for to become equal citizens in society.

No matter how much a man feels, believes he is, or identifies as a woman, it is simply impossible for him to actually be or become an adult human female. Even with plastic surgeries, or opposite sex hormones, one's sex is determined at conception and remains either male or female based on chromosomes, gametes and the reproductive systems associated with our sexed bodies.

Women have unique needs. Public policy must tell the truth about the differences between males and females. Women need secure, safe spaces when targeted by men's violence. Women and girls have a right to boundaries, privacy and dignity when changing, showering or tending to menstrual health in public facilities. In addition, girls and women deserve equity in access to competitive sports, etc.

As a radical feminist vitriolically persecuted by trans rights activists in my hometown of Madison, WI, I immediately was drawn to help defend the Georgia Party from attacks made by trans-activist Greens.

The backlash the Georgia Green Party faces for signing the Declaration has spilled over to target women who have risen to speak in defense of the feminist positions taken by the Georgia Party. Violent threats and doxxing of these Green women (including past candidates of our party) has been tolerated and celebrated without consequence in official party channels. These women have been silenced and banned from these same channels for having the temerity to speak up in their own defense.

On December 24, 2020, Margaret Elizabeth of the Lavender Caucus filed a complaint with the Accreditation Committee, seeking to dis-accredit the Georgia Party, a member in good standing since before the national party's FEC recognition. If this complaint is taken seriously by the Accreditation and National Committees, the Georgia Green Party is at risk of being expelled.

The fear that affirmation of women's rights harms the civil rights of people who believe in transgender and nonbinary identities is a fallacy that undermines the Green Party's commitment to feminism. Ironically, the vehemence aimed at those who defend the rights of women undermines the assertion by trans activists that there exists no conflict between the rights of women and the rights of men who identify as "trans" or "non-binary."

Feminism is simply the body of thought and action that is designed by and for women to break free from male violence and male-dominated culture. Methods of violent social control enacted by men and male institutions have injured and oppressed women for at least five thousand years. Feminism is about fighting back against male supremacy and male domination. Our resistance to patriarchal oppression has always been portrayed as hostility towards men. Now our understanding of biological reality is seen as hostile by all who insist that womanhood is a feeling, denying the material reality that it is based on being female.

"Wait. There are people who don't believe womanhood is based on being female?" you may ask. Yes. These people generally fall under the umbrella of what is called "trans activism"—seeking "rights" and services for people who do not believe biological sex determines whether you are a man or a woman. Some of the services they seek are plastic surgeries to alter appearance, cross sex hormones and puberty blockers to prevent normal adolescent development.

Trans ideology erases womanhood, which undermines the entire project of feminism itself. If we are unable to define what a woman is, we lose the language to defend women's rights. If sex isn't real, how can one have a sexual orientation? Trans activism is misogynistic and homophobic at its core. And yet the political left, including the Green Party, mouths support for the rights of women, lesbians and gay men, while advocating policies no

less destructive to our well-being than those advanced by our political opposition.

Surely a feminist party can acknowledge that we have a problem when 70-75% of publicly elected offices are held by men. Surely we must understand our obligation to encourage women to run for office and to support them in that endeavor. Facing a future of catastrophic climate change, civil unrest, endless wars, economic and ecological collapse, it is important to put women into positions of power, to hear the concerns of the other half of our species. Yet our party's National Committee has recently considered multiple proposals that would allow any man to self-identify as a woman or as "nonbinary," to seek election to internal party roles set-aside for women, or to compel the thought and speech of others to affirm these men's denial of their sexed bodies.

The issue of women's representation is specifically addressed in Article 6 of the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights and is of particular import to the Green Party. Those proposals which would change national party policy to include men in leadership roles meant for women must be rejected. Men do not become women with the claim of a non-male "gender identity."

*Article 6: Reaffirming women's rights to political participation on the basis of sex (a) States "shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country". (CEDAW, Article 7). This should include forms of discrimination against women which consist of the inclusion in the category of women of men who claim to have a female "gender identity."*

In conclusion, the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights is an important document to consider and discuss—and to endorse when exploring the ongoing problem of sexism in our society and in our political institutions, and particularly in the Green Party.

If the Green Party is, with any integrity, to claim Feminism as a key value, it is imperative that we respect women's spaces and boundaries, and that we acknowledge that being female has social significance when living under an entrenched system of male rule, as we do today in the USA.



THISTLE PETTERSEN

is a member of the Wisconsin Green Party and former member of the national party's Women's Caucus. She is a founder of Women's Liberation Radio News (WLRN), a radical feminist news and analysis collective that produces a monthly radio program with a women's world news segment, music, interviews and commentary. Thistle holds a B.A. degree in Sociology from Augsburg University in Minneapolis and an M.A. from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in Spanish Literature.

# Gender in Politics

DAWNMARIE CRONEN INTERVIEWS  
CYNTHYA BRIANKATE

Feminism is about more than women's rights to be treated as equal to men, and all individuals who live a feminine life deserve the same rights and protection.

We're trying to help society gracefully transition outdated terminology into the modern acknowledgment of gender diversity.

**G**ender identity and biological body parts are two different topics that many people conflate as being the same. Political correctness and gender diversity within a political party are searching for a new balance within what used to be a binary, male-dominated culture. To create a new environment of cooperation all individuals must first agree on terminology and definitions of what role gender has in politics.

The Georgia Green Party endorsed the *Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights* as part of a platform amendment in February 2020. The basic premise of that document was that women, adult human females, are oppressed based on biological sex and a female is narrowly defined by her reproductive ability. I find this very facet of the document discriminatory against all females, who, for whatever reason, are unable or do not wish to procreate. Feminism is about more than women's rights to be treated as equal to men, and all individuals who live a feminine life deserve the same rights and protection.

The National Women's Caucus (NWC) embraces women from all aspects of life, and transgender women are accepted as women in the Green Party. That is why this gender debate has become so heated—there are individuals who want to rewrite gender definitions in politics to discriminate against transgender, non-binary or gender-nonconforming individuals.

I am the current Secretary for the National Women's Caucus. I am one of many concerned individuals who are trying to help society gracefully transition outdated terminology into the modern acknowledgment of gender diversity, despite the challenges this creates within a legal and political system that only offers two gender options, male and/or female. 2020 has given our way of life a lot of unexpected surprises and plenty of people time to think about the ways modern society has changed gender roles in politics.

The NWC stands for the rights of *all* women, including transgender women. We oppose hate and violence in all forms and believe in free and safe gender expression. We strive to make the world a more safe and accepting place for people of all gender identities and expressions.

We recognize that anyone who in any way steps outside stereotypes of gender expression may be at risk. Violence and murders of transgender individuals happen frequently when transphobia, homo/biphobia, racism, classism/economic discrimination, anti-immigrant bias, anti-sex-worker bias, ableism and other oppressions including misogyny come together to make a deadly combination for too many victims of gender-based hate crimes. We also recognize that a disproportionate number of murders are of Transgender Women of Color (TWOC). Trans women are attacked and killed, as are trans men, intersex, non-binary, or gender-nonconforming people, because their killers can't fit them into their narrow definitions of gender.

To best illustrate the transgender experience I interviewed Cynthyra BrianKate, a transgender woman who has been a Green Party member for many years.

Cynthyra: "I am so active in the Green Party because the Pillars, Values and Platform clearly affirm my womanhood. I care about our environment and I am grateful people have an alternative choice to the big corporate parties. The anti-trans attacks started with Georgia Green Party leaders' introduction of anti-transgender state platform amendments. They were adopted with the goals of stripping me and my trans sisters of the right to be called women in the Green Party and denying transgender and gender-

## The National Women's Caucus stands for the rights of all women, including transgender women.

nonconforming young people gender-affirming medical care, even when denying such care causes youth suicide. Now there's a climate of hate, fear and misinformation about women like me. GPGA's leaders and the authors of these documents claim to be protecting women and girls. What they are really doing is saying they don't want to recognize transgender women as women and are demonizing trans women as a threat to children. It all seems to be about punishing transgender women and trans and gender-nonconforming youth for merely existing."

*The Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights* is extremely biased against transgender individuals. The title alone screams they don't want trans women to be considered women. The Declaration's authors and their supporters state that a person can only be biologically male or female. Cynthia BrianKate is intersex, like many others, and has a body that is biologically between male and female. Many intersex individuals are gender-fluid, or do not fit the gender assumptions made at their birth. Some intersex individuals are also transgender.

One *Declaration* author publicly said she has no problem with the idea of transgender teens committing suicide because she doesn't even recognize transgender teens exist. There are more intersex children and adults who are publicly coming out as intersex or transgender every week. There are definitely more than three gender categories in the gender spectrum, and gender identity does not always match anatomy. Many homeless shelters and crisis centers have seen the need to revise programs to include the large number of trans youth and rape victims who need their services.

Cynthia: "I know personally what it's like to have felt suicidal as a trans teen in a time and place where I had no real resources. I've spent entire nights counseling trans teens on a crisis and suicide-prevention hotline so they wouldn't feel suicide was the only escape from bullies. Schools need better anti-bullying and empowerment programming to help all students to feel comfortable in expressing their gender identity."

GPGA's amendments also include demanding that the US Congress remove transgender protections from the Equality Act, even though that would contradict the US Supreme Court's *Bostock v. Clayton* decision saying you can't fire someone for being transgender.

Cynthia is trying to change this climate of pain, misgendering and suicide for trans, intersex, and gender-nonconforming youth. She pleads for our help in changing the way our society treats transgender people. "Almost every time a transgender woman is murdered the killer says, 'It wasn't a woman,' and by insisting transgender women aren't to be called women,

GPGA encourages misgendering women like me. This has a chilling effect on transgender women daring to speak up and be ourselves. I'm not sure all my sisters are as stubborn as I am. I wonder how many women don't speak up in our party or have left the Green Party since last year. Ever since February 2020 I've had to defend my womanhood in this party. Even though every rule we have says I'm a woman, any haters who don't respect this have been emboldened by GPGA and they feel fine coming out and attacking me throughout the party for openly being a trans woman. I was even asked for my state ID to confirm my gender. It's like being a deer in the forest seeing signs nailed to trees saying, 'Open Hunting Season thanks to GPGA.' It is wrong to be zapped with hate speech every time I say I'm a woman. While most Greens are good and kind, the haters are a small minority, but a very vocal one, capable of inflicting pain."

How Cynthia defines gender identity: "It is your sense of who you are and doesn't necessarily match what's seen between your legs. Gender identity can't be defined by someone else but only by you. I know I'm a woman in my heart and mind and soul. And I will use all three to make sure the Green Party stays a party where women like me are welcome."



**CYNTHYA BRIANKATE**

is a transgender woman and intersex chimera (biologically between male and female, which can result when siblings merge in utero). She has been an educator, advocate and activist on gender and sexuality diversity for over 20 years. Cynthia serves as a Vice-Chair of the Green Party of Suffolk, NY. She is an Alternate Delegate to the National Committee of the US Green Party, a member of the GPUS National Women's Caucus, Lavender LGBTQIA+ Caucus, and forming Disability Caucus and is an adviser for the Young Eco-Socialist (YES) Caucus. Most recently she has spoken at the United Nations-sponsored Women Included Project, the GPUS 2020 Annual National Meeting, and organized the Transgender Day of Remembrance panel webinar ([https://www.gp.org/national\\_green\\_party\\_womens\\_caucus\\_releases\\_statement\\_supporting\\_transgender\\_day\\_of\\_remembrance\\_and\\_hosts\\_webinar\\_event\\_nov\\_20](https://www.gp.org/national_green_party_womens_caucus_releases_statement_supporting_transgender_day_of_remembrance_and_hosts_webinar_event_nov_20)).



**DAWNMARIE CRONEN**

was born a Green, and has been interested in politics since 1994 when they visited Washington DC via Close Up, an organization that educates young people about our government. DawnMarie is currently co-chair of the GPUS Eco-Action Committee, Secretary of the National Women's Caucus and is a Michigan delegate to the National Committee.

# Establishment of the Green Eco-Socialist Network

BY DAVID COBB

**A**s a reader of *Green Horizon*, you already know that our current social, political and economic systems are fundamentally flawed. You already know that we need new systems that reflect the Four Pillars of the international Green Party: Peace, Justice, Democracy and Ecology. The purpose of this essay is to suggest the best way to accomplish that.

I believe that the best way to create these new systems is for the Green Party of the United States to embrace eco-socialism—publicly, explicitly, and unapologetically. It is in that spirit that I am excited to share with you information about the emerging Green Eco-Socialist Network (GEN).

## WHAT IS THE GREEN ECO-SOCIALIST NETWORK?

GEN is a dues-paying membership organization of Green Party members who self-identify as unapologetic revolutionaries. We want to build the Green Party into a functional, revolutionary eco-socialist political party that is serious about taking and exercising state power and using it to help facilitate the end of capitalism and the creation of an eco-socialist society.

By “eco-socialism” we refer to a transformational economic and social system based on:

- social ownership (not state ownership) of the instruments of production and exchange,
- production geared to meet human needs,
- all production decisions made democratically by the workers and affected communities themselves,
- all major social decisions made democratically by society as a whole,
- an end to patriarchy, racism, imperialism and all forms of oppression and top-down power and privilege, and
- all decision-making guided by the need to restore and maintain the health of our natural ecosystem.

We recognize that there are some Green Party members who disagree with us, and we are committed to engaging in political discourse/debate toward our goal in a respectful, comradely manner.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe that capitalism—a system based on private ownership of the instruments of production and exchange, and the exploitation of wage labor—is the fundamental cause of poverty, privation, militarism and war, environmental devastation and most of the other crises confronting human society today. Capitalism is inherently racist, sexist, divisive and oppressive in its origins and in its operations.

We support the eco-socialism plank that was introduced into the Green Party platform in 2016 and support further identifying and branding the party as the party of eco-socialism. We want the Green Party to become a political expression of, and explicit advocate for, the broader movement for eco-socialism already rising in the US, sometimes under other names, such as the movement for a “solidarity economy” or “cooperative commonwealth.”

We can and do support immediate changes that can tangibly improve social, economic and environmental conditions while helping facilitate the revolutionary

We believe that capitalism is the fundamental cause of poverty, privation, militarism and war, environmental devastation and most of the other crises confronting human society today.

transformation for which we are striving. (Non-reformist reforms.) We want Greens to run for office, not as an end in itself, nor to operate the existing government “better,” but to gain state power for the purpose of dismantling capitalism and its corollaries (imperialism, militarism, racism, patriarchy), and empowering its successor institutions.

We believe the Green Party must be a mass-based party that is politically and financially independent, recognizing that political independence can look different from state to state, and even across local communities in the same state. We make a clear distinction between the leadership of the corporate parties (who are part of the problem), and their rank-and-file membership (who we want to convince to vote for and join the Green Party).

We believe Greens must engage in real political struggle in a respectful, comradely manner. We reject the dominator-style “with me or against me” tendency that exists within some circles.

## WHO WE ARE

The current Steering Committee (David Cobb, Mel Figueroa, Margaret Kimberly, Gloria Mattera, Michael O’Neil, Peter Schwartzman, Rich Whitney) is a group of long-time Green Party organizers. At the moment we are self-appointed, and we have made a public commitment to holding an election for a democratic Steering Committee as soon as we reach 100 dues-paying members.

We have made a commitment to create GEN as a place where people can work together and authentically struggle over ideas even as we build a friendly and loving community. We want to create an atmosphere where we can share ideas and

experiences (what is working in your local and why? what isn’t working and why?).

We wish to deepen our understanding of what eco-socialism means, what forms it may take, and how to create it—both amongst ourselves and in the party as a whole. We want to engage in internal self-education about capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy/racism and imperialism, and how they are interconnected.

We want to improve our basic organizing skills and become better advocates for the society we wish to create.

So if this sounds exciting, we invite you to join us. If this sounds intriguing, we invite you to reach out to us with questions and/or comments. We can be reached at steering@eco-socialism.org.



DAVID COBB

is a “people’s lawyer” who has sued corporate polluters, lobbied elected officials, run for political office himself, and been arrested for non-violent civil disobedience. He helped co-found the Green Party of Texas, and managed the Nader 2000 campaign in that state. In 2002, he ran for Attorney General of Texas, pledging to use the office to revoke the charters of corporations violating health, safety and environmental laws. In 2004, he was the Green Party nominee for President, forcing a recount in Ohio that helped launch the Election Integrity movement. In 2010, he co-founded Move To Amend, a campaign for a constitutional amendment to abolish “corporate personhood.” In 2016, he served as the campaign manager for the Stein/Baraka presidential campaign. He currently works at Cooperation Humboldt and serves as the co-coordinator of the US Solidarity Economy Network and on the Collaborative Design Council of Transition US.

# Responses *and* Commentary

## REGARDING THE INITIATION OF A GREEN ECO-SOCIALIST NETWORK

### Green Economy Yes. Eco-Socialism No.

BY JOHN RENSENBRINK

Hi David,

You have created an Eco-Socialist Network. I am impressed, but also critical. For a time I thought this was a good way to go. I no longer think so.

Eco-Socialism tries to straddle two roads, one towards a Green Economy and one towards Socialism. Its purpose and meaning are not clear, though it leans towards Socialism. Consequently, Green Socialists like it. Green non-Socialists do not.

As a Green non-Socialist, and after dialoguing with Steve Welzer and Linda Cree, I have named our Goal “Green Economy” to express a clear and forthright Goal, based on the Key Value of Community-Based Economics in a context of Ecological Wisdom, Respect for Diversity, Decentralization, and Grass Roots Democracy.

Green Socialists hang back at this point. They are critical and ask what does or can Green Economy do about the mega-corporations? They believe that our Green Economy is only local, that it has no answer to the need to socialize the mega-corporations, much less nationalize them, take them over.

But the answer can be found in the related principle of subsidiarity as a vital part of a Green Economy. This is based

**Eco-Socialism tries to straddle two roads, one towards a goal I call “Green Economy” and one towards Socialism. The Green Economy is concordant with the tide of history towards local control and Community-Based Economics.**

— JOHN RENSENBRINK

on levels of functional activity, each level doing tasks that are necessary and appropriate for it to do. Tasks which the local level cannot handle are taken up by intermediate and central levels. There is a central authority, or Green Administration. The Green Administration, among its tasks, takes on the job of socializing the mega-corporations. It is also within its powers, though this is debated, to directly take over the most toxic corporations.

The Green Economy offers, and is a name for, a holistic and effective way for Greens to move forward in the world of thought and action. Socialism and Green Socialists claim to do the same but are hampered, and held back, by their fixation on taking over the mega-corporate economy as if that were the next and best and only thing to do, thus ignoring and in fact throwing up barriers to the historic tide of history towards local control, Community-Based Economics, and related Key Values. In all this, eco-socialism is caught wanting to pursue both, straddling two roads that widen steadily from one another. The strain on legs, knees, and hips becomes insupportable, to use a household way of saying it.

The Green Economy is rooted in the Green Party’s key value of Community-Based Economics. It includes municipal ownership of utilities, multiple forms of business ownership, non-profits, worker owned business, worker owned cooperatives, bio-regional mapping, and grass roots governing bodies. These things are already in place for the most part in many parts of the country. Green Economy can and will give them a timely boost and it gives Greens an historic opportunity to help and evolve it further.

A big drawback to Eco-Socialism is that it doesn’t seem to be able to shed its troublesome affinity to what Socialism has tended towards; that is, centralization, nationalization, bureaucratic top-down administration, and mass democracy. Socialism’s record seems to be one of taking-over what capitalism has created. In that sense it is reactive, ameliorative, and reformist.

We need something better than Eco-Socialism. Naming what we want and specifying the substance of what we want is the challenge now. In a word, we need a real alternative to both Capitalism and Socialism. The Green Economy fits this need very well. Other names and substantive specifics are I am sure out there. Let the dialogue be sustained!

*John Rensenbrink is a co-editor of this magazine and author of Ecological Politics (2017).*

# The Heart of Green Economics

BY LINDA CREE

It may come as a surprise to some newer Greens that the roots of today’s Green Party go much deeper than those of liberals, progressives or socialists of any stripe. Many of the paradigm-shifting insights that underlie our Ten Key Values come from strains of Native American thought brought to our party by early Greens such as John Mohawk (Seneca) and Walt Bressette (Ojibwe).

These teachings confound the dichotomy of capitalist vs. socialist and left vs. right. Instead, they lend themselves to the currents found in bioregionalism, deep ecology, and voluntary simplicity, as well as to critiques of industrialism and unrestrained economic and population growth. They help to form the basis for a profoundly Deep Green and different take on politics and economics, a take that is “neither left nor right, but out in front.”<sup>1</sup>

Today, when “Green” is being conflated with “Eco-socialism” or simply “Socialism,” we would be wise to ponder exactly why early Greens felt a new political party was needed. If Green is synonymous with “Socialist,” couldn’t Greens have simply joined the Socialist Party?

Those of us who identify as Deep Greens generally say that a Green economy is different from a Socialist economy. But are we not anti-capitalist also? Don’t we also want the huge corporations broken up, the obscene wealth of the 1% redistributed, and the bloated and destructive military machine radically scaled down?

The answers, of course, are yes, yes, yes and yes. In our view, however, if we are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, the economy Greens promote should not be an Eco-socialist economy but a uniquely Green economy.

Despite their many differences, both capitalist and socialist economic theories enshrine systems that are highly materialistic and utilitarian in outlook. Linear ideas of “progress” and “technological advancement” underpin these theories. Both see nature as resources to be exploited by humankind, although eco-socialists are more cognizant of the value and vulnerability of the natural world to industrialized cultures and, therefore, of the need to bring the environment into economic calculations more. Importantly, however, the *moral* sphere in both capitalist and socialist theories is limited to humans.

And now we’ve come to the heart of the matter, so let’s say it again. Insofar as they are concerned with moral responsibilities, neither capitalist nor socialist economic theories concern themselves with moral obligations beyond human beings. They are completely and unapologetically anthropocentric.

This is where Green Economics posits a radically different economic approach, an approach that is centered on affirming Life and our place in the web of life rather than outside of, or somehow “above,” the rest of the natural world. Unlike the anthropocentrism of capitalist and socialist economic theories, Green Economics is biocentric, or literally “life-centered.”

**Many of the paradigm-shifting insights that underlie our Ten Key Values come from strains of Native American thought [which] confound the dichotomy of capitalist vs. socialist. They help to form the basis for a profoundly Deep Green and different take on politics and economics, a take that is “neither left nor right, but out in front.”**

— LINDA CREE

Potawatomi author and scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer tells a story that may help illustrate what is meant by biocentric economics:

“I once met an engineering student visiting from Europe who told me excitedly about going ricing in Minnesota with his friend’s Ojibwe family. He was eager to experience a bit of Native American Culture. They were on the lake by dawn and all day long they poled through the rice beds, knocking the ripe seed into the canoe. ‘It didn’t take long to collect quite a bit,’ he reported, ‘but it’s not very efficient. At least half of the rice just falls in the water and they didn’t seem to care. It’s wasted.’ As a gesture of thanks to his hosts, a traditional ricing family, he offered to design a grain capture system that could be attached to the gunwales of their canoes. He sketched it out for them, showing how his technique could get 85% more rice. His hosts listened respectfully, then said, ‘Yes, we could get more that way. But it’s got to seed itself for next year. And what we leave behind is not wasted. You know, we’re not the only ones who like rice. Do you think the ducks would stop here if we took it all?’ Our teachings tell us to never take more than half.”<sup>2</sup>

Green Economics is not about machine values of efficiency, productivity and speed; it is about extending the moral sphere and constantly assessing the impact of our actions on *all* life. As John Mohawk puts it: Indians were constantly imploring the Europeans to rethink their relationship with nature. “You’ve got it wrong. You’ve got to be fair.” And what did they mean by that? “The Indians raised the question of fairness not about human to human; they asked about human to land, human to animal, human to everything.”<sup>3</sup>

Such grounding in Ecological Wisdom means a Green Economics must question much that’s taken for granted in other economic approaches. Take the idea of scale. Greens understand that giant industrial projects are just as destructive to the environment whether they are done under capitalism or eco-socialism. Green Economics must not only concern itself with who is making the decisions behind such projects. It must also ask: Is it morally defensible to place a mega wind farm on a major migratory bird path? Or, can there be any justification

for clearcutting and destroying the homes and home territory of bobcat and loon, trilliums and black bear? Or, what right have we to pollute the waters all life depends on? Green Economics must be committed to bringing our economies back to human scale and local control, not just for the sake of human beings, but for the sake of the many fellow creatures we inhabit this Earth with.

In forgetting that we are only one strand in the great web of life, modern humans have sought to appropriate the entire Earth and all it contains for their own exclusive use. Human supremacism reigns, accepted unquestioningly by both capitalist and socialist economists even as they strive to deal with the disasters it has led to.

The inescapable truth is that arrogant anthropocentrism has set us on a course of impoverishment, enslavement, and eventual species suicide. We desperately need a better perspective. There can be no Social Justice without Earth Justice. Green Economics must take into account the needs of All Our Relations and recognize that the health of our planet and our long-term survival absolutely depend upon our ability to create an economics that is biocentric rather than anthropocentric.

Biocentric Green Economics respects and celebrates the deeply interdependent and interconnected nature of all life on Earth. It is this biocentrism, this willingness to think outside the box of the Western paradigm, that can make the Green Party the most radical, the most subversive, the most revolutionary, and the most urgently needed force in politics today.

#### NOTES:

1. Quote attributed to Petra Kelly, co-founder of the German Green Party and one of the early foundational Green visionaries.
2. Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 2013, pp. 181-182.
3. Mohawk, John. “Subsistence and Materialism” in *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples’ Resistance to Globalization*. Jerry Mander and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Eds.), San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006, p. 28.

*Linda Cree is a longtime Green and retired educator who lives in the rural woods of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. She enjoys her family and the forests and waters of her home territory and hopes the children of tomorrow will also have the opportunity to live where wolves howl in the night and monarchs and trilliums brighten the days.*

# De-growth by design, not disaster

BY STEVE WELZER

I was among a group of Deep Greens who issued a Declaration in the pages of this magazine two years ago. It said the following about socialism:

"The Green perspective has emerged as an alternative to all the old ideologies—conservatism, liberalism, nationalism, capitalism, socialism, etc."

"[In regard to the term 'eco-socialism'] we believe such a label channels our thinking into old ruts."

"Green politics arose on the basis of a new-paradigm critique of the industrial state. That paradigm is, in some ways, more radical than socialism."

"The problematic 'progress and development' trajectories of our civilization pre-date capitalism and have been evident in every attempt to implement socialism in the modern era. On this basis we believe that the source of the problem goes deeper than simply economic relations."

Those are important and insightful comments, but I've since come to think that they were written in reaction to a certain type of eco-socialism, a Red-leftist variant. That particular orientation to the idea of eco-socialism is prevalent—so it was not surprising, though I feel unfortunate, to see that it characterized the Green Party's national campaign in 2020. But upon examining the movement more closely I've noticed that there are other orientations . . . Greener orientations.

Deep Greens need to acknowledge the recent emergence of a new New Left as indicated, over the last ten years by (for example): the Occupy movement (2011); the popularity of *Jacobin Magazine* (established 2010); the dynamic growth of the organization Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) since 2016; the resonance of the Bernie Sanders campaigns in 2016 and 2020.

There are several ideological currents within this new New Left. The main one is the kind of left-social democracy exhibited by DSA; but another strong current is eco-socialism. There's an eco-socialist caucus within DSA; the youth group of the Green Party renamed itself "Young Ecosocialists;" and now we have the initiation of the Green Eco-Socialist Network.

I believe an important and healthy general transition of the left "from Red to Green" is in process, but it will take time to accomplish. After all, the Red-leftist ideology developed over a period of more than a century and was extremely influential for a whole historical period. Its failure was broadly disappointing. For that reason I'm sympathetic when some Greens recommend that we avoid any association with socialism. I felt that way myself for many years—and I remain somewhat skeptical. To date, most implementations of socialism have resulted in a misguided concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the state, with problematic consequences.

But I've come around to thinking that a period of eco-socialism might be needed in order to de-fang the utterly ruinous globalized industrial capitalist system—and open pathways toward the process that I call "the greening of society."

The critical discussion about *how* to subvert The System is ongoing.

## THE SYSTEM

*"The U.S. and the U.S.S.R., I understood, were the two portions of the Empire as divided by the Emperor Diocletian for purely administrative purposes; at heart it was a single entity, with a single value system."* — Philip K. Dick, *Radio Free Albemuth*

The System, currently, is comprised of capitalism in conjunction with the industrial state. During the twentieth century it had a supposedly "Second World" alternative. We can debate which world was worse, but it was instructive to see in 1990 that the Soviet people didn't make much of a fuss when theirs collapsed.

The heart of The System is the industrial state irrespective of economic relations. Our liberation depends upon deconstructing it—devolving power, culture, identification, and meaning back to sane-scale polities, institutions, and technologies. The capitalist system may be the current manifestation of what's problematic, but a more comprehensive perspective recognizes that we're talking about a civilization gone haywire over a period of millennia.

That insight can be the basis for an alternative kind of eco-socialism, a more sophisticated one, devoid of the Marxist delusions about where humanity has been and where we're headed. I would not be averse to seeing the Green Party associated with an eco-socialism that embraces an ultimate bioregionalist vision—concordant with our key values Decentralization and Community-based Economics. In his recent essay, "Socialism and the Green Party," theorist B. Sidney Smith asserts that the transformational policies in the Economic Justice and Sustainability section of the national Green Party's platform, taken altogether, "should be understood as a project to soften our landing from the crash of industrial civilization, and to provide a means of working toward sustainable ways to live with a greatly reduced use of energy overall . . . In the near term, and for at least the foreseeable future, it is relentless and sometimes rapid de-growth that will characterize the human economy. Population and economic activity alike will be on the decline until some sort of equilibrium is once again reached. The economic challenge of the future is no longer managing growth or limiting its harm, but instead ensuring that the catabolism of de-growth is managed in such a way as to ensure economic and social justice, and preserving as much as possible a viable future for humanity."

Simplicity Institute co-founder Samuel Alexander, a research fellow at the Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, similarly talks about eco-socialism within the context of "de-growth and devolution by design rather than disaster. To resolve the mounting

I remain somewhat skeptical, given socialism's problematic track record to-date, but I've come around to thinking that perhaps a period of Green-influenced ecosocialism might be needed in order to de-fang the utterly ruinous globalized industrial capitalist system—and to open pathways toward "the greening of society."

— STEVE WELZER

social and ecological crises, the world's wealthiest nations need to initiate a process of planned economic contraction, in order to leave some ecological room for the poorest to meet their needs." His idea of "by design" includes both micro-level initiatives to build the new society within the shell of the old and macro-level governmental policies to foster such—while, at the same time, directly addressing the dominance of the mega-corporations. The latter would involve an eco-socialist program to use any and all tools in the mitigation arsenal: effective regulation; high taxation; anti-trust enforcement (even to the point of breaking up the goliaths); and socialization.

Socialization might sometimes involve nationalization, but more often would mean municipalization or the creation of community-based public utilities and cooperatives. In all cases the objective would be the eventual re-localization of economic life—an ultimately bioregionalist proposition.

On this basis I've joined the Green Eco-Socialist Network. I hope to find there some Deep Green co-thinkers who can influence its current discourse and presentation.

Here's what I mean: in his article in this issue Howie Hawkins shows how Red-leftism still looks favorably on progressive development: "We say ecological socialism because nineteenth and twentieth century socialism was focused on increasing production to end poverty. We now have more than enough productive capacity to end poverty. The problem now is equitably distributing production." This is reminiscent of what you might hear from a Marxist: "Industrial development created the material basis for equitable distribution." I think a Deep Green would say that both capitalist and socialist industrial development were fundamentally problematic.

The greening of society might involve, might even require, a period of eco-socialist "de-growth by design." The Green Party could recommend such as a means toward an end. But the essence of our ultimate vision should be eco-communitarian. Responding to socialism's universalism and social-engineering mentality, Sid Smith writes: "The Green Party is not a socialist party, not in the sense in which that term has historically been understood. The world we are headed toward is a new one, de-industrialized, de-globalized, as wonderfully diverse both culturally and politically as present-day global commercial society is depressingly uniform. A fire is sweeping the garden, and afterward new things will grow. No one will tell them how."

Steve Welzer is a co-editor of this magazine.

## Regarding the tensions between eco-communitarians and eco-socialists

(excerpted and adapted from *Simplicity Institute Report 16a* by Samuel Alexander)

Greens tend to agree that voting for representatives every two or four years is an impoverished conception of democracy. Citing the key value "Grassroots Democracy," they advocate for a *participatory* eco-egalitarian politics. Their vision is of a localized politics with a global perspective—beyond the state and yet, at times, pragmatically engaged with the state. But there is disagreement about *how*, and *to what extent*, to engage. These points are the subject of vital debates being conducted throughout the movement regarding strategy and ultimate destination.

### SOCIALISM: A SYMPATHETIC CRITIQUE

Marx famously argued, with some plausibility, that the state under capitalism is an instrument of the capitalist class, meaning that politicians (knowingly or unknowingly) tend to enact laws and policies that further the narrow interests of that class. From this perspective, what is needed is a revolutionary movement, driven by the working class, which would overthrow the capitalist state, abolish private ownership of society's major productive assets, and establish social control of most means of production.

Marx believed that he had uncovered the "motive laws of history" and that the inherent contradictions of capitalism would inevitably lead to a "next higher stage." And then the twentieth century happened. Various socialist regimes came to power. The results were generally disappointing, and the left was compelled to re-examine the ideology derived from Marx's system. It was recognized that Marx's vision had been embedded in the nineteenth century "productivist" industrial growth paradigm and that socialism needed to undergo a fundamental revision in order to remain relevant in our era of overlapping environmental crises. A promising theoretical revision, eco-socialism, started to emerge toward the end of the twentieth century; an associated body of scholarship has developed in recent years.

The essential logic of eco-socialism can be summarized: if capitalism has a "growth imperative" built into its structure, and limitless growth is environmentally unsupportable, then capitalism is incompatible with sustainability. Therefore, capitalism must be replaced with a post-growth or steady-state form of eco-socialism that operates within planetary limits. In the most developed regions of the world, this environmental equilibrium must be preceded by a phase of planned economic contraction, or "degrowth."

Eco-socialist and degrowth theory aspire to provide a basis for an advanced and coherent political praxis. But unresolved questions remain, such as: Which alternative ownership

structures should be prioritized? How can the industrial system be downscaled most efficaciously?

### LOCALISM: A SYMPATHETIC CRITIQUE

Eco-communitarians tend to believe that political power is over-concentrated in modern national-scale governments; therefore, socialization of industries by such governments can potentially exacerbate the problem. Moreover, governments beyond a bioregionalist scale are not conducive to a *participatory* form of democracy—they’re too large, too remote, and inherently bureaucratic, often just as socially unresponsive (and sometimes just as ecologically irresponsible) as the corporations. So the best strategy for starting to move in the direction of an eco-egalitarian society is for individuals and communities to *live the new world into existence*, here and now, with a minimum of dependence upon state support.

Communitarians tend to focus on *prefigurative projects*—creating alternative institutions, ecovillages, localist economic structures—for the most part disengaging from the industrial state and its corporate enterprises. While this has much to recommend it, we know that there are many deep and powerful obstructionist vested interests that would work to impede such a movement if it became a significant social force.

### BEYOND (AND BETWEEN)

Eco-socialism recognizes the reality that structures and systems within which we live deeply shape and influence the norms of living that are available to us. It is all well and good for communitarians to try to ignore the state to death, or ignore capitalism to death, but that may be naïve, given that there is an urgency to our predicament.

Even if it would be more desirable for grassroots movements to progressively “build the new world within the shell of the old,” a case can be made that the depth of the transition needed requires a greater degree of centralized state action than the communitarians acknowledge. Establishing things like new public transport networks, new energy systems or new banking and monetary systems are arguably more readily achievable in the short term via state policy. Similarly, in a crisis or collapse situation it could be the case that the state is needed simply to maintain and administer the most basic social services and infrastructure. What Brendan Gleeson calls a “Guardian State” may be required in such times to avoid complete societal breakdown and the suffering that economic or ecosystemic collapse would bring. The idea is that it would be better to plan, design, and start to implement such a functional eco-socialist economy in advance of collapse.

On the other hand, the possibility must be considered that, to the contrary, in a context of crisis or collapse we may *not be able to rely on state administration of the situation*—and thus the focus should be on learning the art of communitarian self-sustenance as soon as possible. Furthermore, eco-communitarians question

the very possibility of a post-capitalist transition driven by the state. We live in a globalized capitalist economy, in which it has never been easier for capital to move from nation to nation. This means the moment any government seems to be mobilizing for an eco-socialist agenda, the perceived threat will induce “capital flight” and/or provoke economic turmoil.

### TOWARD A BIODIVERSITY OF RESISTANCE AND RENEWAL

Perhaps the tensions could be resolved by recognizing that prefigurative efforts at the micro level and transformational statist policies at the macro level need not be viewed as mutually exclusive. There is so much work to be done raising cultural consciousness about the necessity to transcend capitalism and move beyond the ecocidal economics of growth that eco-communitarians and eco-socialists should proceed as allies and view their disparate efforts as complementary.

Fostering a cultural shift in consciousness can take the myriad forms of resisting the most egregious aspects of the status quo via direct action, endeavoring to elect Green candidates pushing for transformational legislation, and meanwhile, at the same time, creating local small-scale examples of new post-capitalist modes of existence. Not only can the small-scale demonstrations function to begin the dauntingly large task of regeneration, they can also be justified on the grounds of being a practical form of education. After all, being exposed to new experiments in living can be one of the most effective ways to engage people about the issues motivating the experiments.

These strategies could galvanize support for an eco-socialist agenda in parliament. Communitarians should appreciate that visions of system change can help people see that “other worlds are possible.” There will be no deliberate transition beyond capitalism—whether eco-socialist, eco-communitarian, or any other way—until more people affirm the potential for liberatory change.

In that light, we might say that we need a flourishing biodiversity of resistance and renewal. The real problem today isn’t so much getting the ultimate vision precise, the real challenge is figuring out how to open up people’s imaginations to the very possibility of alternative modes of existence. Too often we hear that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.

In regard to how a successful transition might transpire: If an eco-communitarian movement were to emerge strongly through countercultural activity, it likely would find it expedient, at some stage, to use the state to advance its agenda. Indeed, if this approach was successful, we can imagine the policies for eco-socialism first decentralizing the state and then encouraging the state to “wither away.”

Revolution today should not be conceived of as some future event where a mobilized citizenry, vanguard party, or class-conscious proletariat storms the Bastille, so to speak, for Empire has no Bastille to storm anymore. Its nodes of politico-financial power are so widely dispersed that the system can evade a

centralized confrontation of the old kind. Consequently, the new revolutionary politics must be immediate and ongoing. We should not aim to destroy capitalism in the future but, rather, *stop sustaining it*, here and now.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this essay has been to try to carve out a space for cooperation between radical, post-capitalist schools of political thought and practice. By unpacking the tensions and antagonisms between eco-socialists and eco-communitarians, it is hoped that the relationship between them can be better understood and the potential for collaborative activism clearer.

In addressing an uneasiness about using the term ‘socialism’ . . . it may seem unnecessary, even lacking in intellectual integrity, to think about how best to “brand” one’s political perspectives. Shouldn’t we just be as clear as possible, even if the culture isn’t ready for us? Despite being theoretically sound, that perspective might be pragmatically or politically naïve. We can’t just be “right,” we also need to be “heard,” and that means being cognizant of the diversity of audiences and the differing vocabularies that may need to be used to maximize our engagement with potential supporters. Admittedly, this is not conceptually neat—there is a tendency to desire a single banner under which the Great Transition should march. But it could be that our broad post-capitalist cause would be best served by using a multitude of vocabularies.

In fact, we see this diversity of expressions already in existence today. Just think of the range of activities and movements that could easily be considered elements of *the greening of society*—the Green politics movement, of course, but also: transition

After various socialist regimes came to power during the twentieth century, the left was compelled to re-examine the ideology derived from Marx’s system. Now ecosocialist and degrowth theory aspire to provide a basis for a new, advanced, and coherent political praxis. But unresolved questions remain.

— SAMUEL ALEXANDER

towns; the divestment movement; sharing networks; intentional communities and ecovillages; permaculture groups; the voluntary simplicity movement; community energy projects; activist and artist hubs; alternative journalism; mutual aid groups; farmers’ markets and community-supported agriculture; re-skilling and re-wilding workshops; progressive nonprofit enterprises and worker cooperatives; and the ever-expanding network of radical environmental and social justice groups that exist across the cultural landscape. Although sometimes beyond conventional political classification, activism in these various forms can be seen already growing out of the ever-widening cracks of a globalized system in decline. None of these movements or approaches has all the answers but, arguably, all of them will need to play a role in moving us beyond the dystopia of capitalism.

*The Simplicity Institute is an education and research center seeking to foster a “revolution in consciousness” that highlights the urgent need to move beyond growth-oriented, consumerist forms of life and envision a Simpler Way at a time when the old myths of progress, techno-optimism, and affluence are failing us.*

# Poems and musings from Charlie Keil

COVIDs 20 and 21 will not be much fun.

COVIDS 21? and 22?? It's up to you!

We have to get agribusiness *out of the rainforests* so that MotherNature can re-balance Herself. SARS, MERS, COVID-19 and one virus after another over the past 30 years or so are telling us that we cannot invade and control rainforests, the “lungs of our planet.”

Until we stop capitalism as the main vector of disease, there will be more and more uncertainty, more and worse pandemics.

Talk to the relevant scientists if you don’t believe me.

We desperately need a Global Organization Of Democracies (GOOD) meeting year-round in Athens and a Women’s Forum meeting year-round in Thessaloniki, in order to focus world opinion like a laser on *Peace and EcoEquilibrio!*

i am the very model of a minor modern generalist  
there's not a major issue on which i don't quite have a twist  
and if you think I'm kidding then just listen to my alarms  
for i can find the nicest words & you can't resist my charms

we need to create world peace in order to find ecoequilibrio  
we need to maintain ecoequilibrio in order to keep the peace  
*humo ludens collaborans* can accomplish what *homo sap sap* can't  
& if you'll memorize this poem we won't have to rave and rant

chill globally groove locally  
scale back tech & pride  
and soon you will find out  
we are all on the same side

# Israel's Role in Training US Law Enforcement

*Promoting militarized enforcement of racial segregation as “counter-terrorism”*

BY JUSTINE McCABE

Police function to  
privilege the security  
of white-Americans  
over non-white  
Americans and that  
of Jewish-Israelis  
over Palestinians.

US law enforcement  
militarization has  
grown in recent  
decades, especially  
since the transfer  
to local police  
departments of  
surplus military  
weapons.

The murder of African American George Floyd by Minneapolis police last year has spearheaded national attention on police brutality, a significant element of US systemic racism. Underreported is Israel's role as "booster" of the militaristic style of US policing we've seen in cities like Baltimore, Chicago, Ferguson, Louisville, and New York—places where Israel has trained law enforcement with its "counter-terrorism" mentality.

Why should Blacks—actually, all Americans—care? Because we don't want to be treated like Israeli police treat Palestinians. And we want to stop US police from enforcing racial segregation.

Like the US, Israel is a settler-colonial state, founded on supplanting indigenous people—with Europeans in the US, Jews in the Israeli case. However, practicing ethnic cleansing a century later, Israel hasn't been as "successful" as America's decimation of Native Americans: at least as many non-Jews as Jews remain in historic Palestine, according to Columbia University Professor Rashid Khalidi.

Still, Israel continues dispossessing Palestinians who, like American Blacks, endure systemic racism and apartheid. Misery, resistance and national insecurity are familiar consequences. Since its inception, Israel has been a "security state." Enforcers are indispensable in sustaining racism, as is the case in our own country. Police function to separate whites from non-whites here, Jews from Palestinians there; to privilege security of white-Americans over non-white Americans and that of Jewish-Israelis over Palestinians. Both employ members of their oppressed groups—"suboppressors" to Frantz Fanon—Black American police and Palestinian Authority police who abuse and detain other Palestinians, including those protesting Israeli occupation.

## MILITARIZED LAW ENFORCEMENT

Unquestionably, US law enforcement has been militarized since its creation, particularly to maintain slavery. However, militarization has grown in recent decades, especially since the transfer to local police departments of surplus military weapons, which encourages excessive force—thanks to Israel's help, especially since 9/11.

American-Israeli anthropologist Jeff Halper elaborates: "Israel provided the US—and particularly the US police and security agencies—with ready-made policies, doctrines, para-military structures, and weaponry they lacked but needed in order to construct an American Security State. Israel provided the model and the hardware."

The main difference, however, is America's theoretical fire wall between domestic law enforcement and the military through the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878—lines blurred by Israel since its founding, according to Halper: "Israel's fundamental concept of itself is of a nation-in-arms, whereby the body politic is so diffused with military and securocratic practices and values that little separates policing, domestic security, intelligence gathering and military operations, either juridical or operational."

Following African American Freddie Gray's 2015 homicide by Baltimore police, Amnesty International reported that, like Baltimore, thousands of police from other US cities and states had received training either in the US or in Israel, a documented human rights violator.

The latter's abuses against non-Jews—both Palestinian Israeli citizens and those living under Israeli occupation—include extrajudicial executions, torture, land seizure,

suppression of free speech/association, and “excessive use of force against peaceful protesters.”

Sound familiar?

Minnesota police participated in these trainings: Minneapolis police in a 2012 counterterrorism training conference hosted by Israel’s Chicago consulate and the FBI; and, according to the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, current Anoka County Sheriff, James Stuart, traveled to Israel in 2019 for security training sponsored by the Jewish Institute for the National Security of America (JINSA) Program.

Did police who murdered Floyd attend these trainings? Was “kneeling on the neck” included? It’s unclear. A British lawmaker was dismissed for endorsing Israeli responsibility for this tactic as an “anti-Semitic conspiracy theory,” and Israeli police spokesman Mickey Rosenfeld denies this practice exists in any Israeli police textbook. Yet it is familiar to Palestinians, according to Harvard Law School rights attorney Fady Khoury, with “plenty of documentation out there of violent arrests that involve kneeling on detainees’ heads and necks,” something Israeli activist Neta Golan has experienced: “When I saw the picture of killer cop Derek Chauvin murdering George Floyd by leaning in on his neck with his knee as [Floyd] cried for help and other cops watched, I remembered noticing when many Israeli soldiers began using this technique of leaning in on our chest and necks when we were protesting in the West Bank sometime in 2006.”

### OPOSITION TO ISRAELI TRAININGS

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) opposes these trainings and support by Jewish groups like the ADL—created to defend Jews from discrimination but now unequivocally defending Israel. Recently, when the ADL’s head, Jonathan Greenblatt, tweeted solidarity with the Black community after the killing of George Floyd, JVP’s Stephanie Fox responded with this meme: “Now would be a good time for the ADL to stop arranging police exchanges with Israel.”

Indeed, JVP and RAIA (Researching the American-Israeli Alliance) developed a project, “Deadly Exchange,” including a database revealing hundreds of US police departments which have participated in these trainings (including erupting Seattle and Portland) supposedly to learn law enforcement strategies from a close ally experienced in counter-terrorism. However, instead of being models for real security promotion for everyone, JVP found “these programs facilitate an exchange of methods of state violence and control, including mass surveillance, racial profiling, and suppression of protest and dissent.”

Deadly Exchange suggests that police intolerance of civil protest encouraged by Israeli trainings may be as harmful to democracy as its brutality is to Blacks. “The delegates thus returned home with technical know-how based in disregard for the right of Palestinians to oppose the Israeli occupation. This entails seeing protest not as a right, but rather as a security threat that must be dealt with through repressive police violence.

Israel’s fundamental concept of itself is of a nation-in-arms, whereby the body politic is so diffused with military and securocratic practices and values that little separates policing, domestic security, intelligence gathering and military operations.

This framing normalized a complete intolerance of protest—in defiance of the First Amendment.”

Popular opposition emerged especially in 2014 amid growing Black-Palestinian solidarity which recognized similar violence against Ferguson’s Michael Brown and Palestinians, especially visible then in Israel’s fifty-day war on Gaza. Demonstrators across the country were chanting “from Ferguson to Palestine, occupation is a crime,” with solidarity echoed in a joint video message: “When I see them, I see us.”

In 2018, Durham, NC was the first city to ban Israeli training of its police, having been among those who sent delegates to Israel—its former Police Chief, Jose Lopez, attended a training in Israel with the ADL, as did its current chief, Cerelyn Davis, who attended while serving as Deputy Chief of the Atlanta Police Department. The ban resulted from a sustained grassroots campaign by the *Demilitarize from Durham2Palestine!* coalition, which opposed these trainings because they encourage US police to terrorize people of color.

### ZIONIST PUSHBACK

Three lawsuits against Durham’s ban by the North Carolina Coalition for Israel claimed discrimination and anti-Semitism. All were dismissed in 2019. But as opposition to racism grows in the US, Israel and Jewish lobbying groups have tried to breach solidarity between Blacks and Palestinian activists, even accusing the Black Lives Matter movement of being co-opted against Israel while “conflating principled anti-colonialist views expressed by anti-racism activists with anti-Semitism,” according to Israeli-American writer Yaov Litvin.

Similarly, head of the Zionist Organization of America, Morton Klein, sees Black Lives Matter as a “hate group,” tweeting on June 6, 2020: “I urge the Southern Poverty Law Center to immediately put Black Lives Matter on their list of

hate groups. BLM is a Jew-hating, white-hating, Israel-hating, conservative Black-hating, violence-promoting, dangerous Soros-funded extremist group of haters.”

Besides American taxpayer funds, trainings are supported by Jewish organizations like JINSA, the American Jewish Committee (Project Interchange), and the Jewish Federations. And strategies for rupturing solidarity are documented in two Israeli reports: Reut Institute and the ADL in 2017; and Reut and the American Jewish Council for Public Affairs in 2019. Both concern fighting “intersectional coalitions”—collaborations among different, oppressed minority groups like Blacks and Palestinians claiming, “This trend undermines Jewish communities’ agendas, including support for the State of Israel.”

Is support for Israel more important than strengthening American solidarity against US racism, including police brutality? At this significant historical moment of growing national, multi-ethnic opposition to US police violence, ridding ourselves of Israeli “assistance” would be a step toward stopping

it. It would also be a step in separating our government from a “special relationship” that not only encourages the terrorizing function of US police but also corrupts genuine American strivings for justice and equality.



JUSTINE McCABE

is a life-long human rights and peace activist. She is the former co-chair of the International Committee of the Green Party of the United States for which she served as a point person on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Dr. McCabe has extensive experience speaking and writing about this issue, including published opinion pieces and letters in venues like the *Hartford Courant* and the *New York Times*. She received doctorates in both cultural anthropology and clinical psychology and has lived and traveled widely in the Middle East, conducting anthropological research in Lebanon and Iran. She has traveled regularly to Palestine where she's spoken at international conferences and conducted respite workshops for humanitarian workers. Justine practices clinical psychology in New Milford, CT.

Producer and director Paweł Kuczynski soon will be releasing a short film that's likely to be of interest to Greens all over the world. “The Ontological Imperative” features our own John Rensenbrink discussing his vision for a better society while meeting with colleagues and presenting a workshop in St. Louis during the Green Party’s 2015 Annual National Meeting. For more information contact: Pawel@Directing.com.

## Two Haiku

A traditional Japanese haiku is a three-line poem with seventeen syllables, written in a 5/7/5 syllable count. Haikus tend to emphasize simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression. Ted Becker and Patricia Lantz have compiled over a hundred into “The Haiku Blues” (Wipf & Stock; Eugene, OR; 2017). They’ve graciously given us permission to share this with you:

*Catastrophe is  
Gaia's immunity. To  
cure our infection.*

And here's one from Paula Fischer . . .

*Be aware: We live  
in a sea of neurosis  
and technology.*



# GREEN HORIZON

## GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION SUSTAINERS FOR THE 2020/2021 CYCLE

Tony & Melba Affigne, Rhode Island	Robert L. Hawk, Vermont	Kathryn Rensenbrink & Jon McMillan, Maine
Steve Baker & Katy Dolan, Florida	Michael Heichman, Massachusetts	Liz Rensenbrink, Maine
Richard Barringer, Maine	Douglas Holden, Minnesota	Rob Richie, Maryland
David Bath, Florida	Fred & Hadley Horch, Maine	Barbara Rodgers-Hendricks, Florida
John R. Battista & Justine McCabe, Connecticut	Joseph Horgan, Maryland	Jeanne-Marie Rosenmeier, California
Ted Becker, Alabama	Clare Howell, Maine	David A. Schultz, Minnesota
Glen Bennett, Rhode Island	Carol Abhi Hudson, Florida	David Schwartzman, Washington, DC
M.J. Berry, Nebraska	Patricia & Brad Jackson, Maine	Peter Schwartzman, Illinois
Brian Bittner, Maryland	Christopher Jones, New York	Tammy Lacher Scully, Maine
Diane Blais, Virginia	Maynard Kaufman & Barbara Geisler, Michigan	Evelyn Seberry, Michigan
Antonio Blasi, Maine	Charles Keil, Connecticut	Roger Sedmont, New Jersey
Bowdoin College Library, Maine	Robert & Kimberley Kinsey, Colorado	Brian Setzler, Oregon
Peter Broeksmits, Illinois	Jim Krosschell & Cindy Dockrell, Massachusetts	Mac (Charles) Sexton, Maine
Charles Brown, Kansas	Paul Krumm, Kansas	Wendy & Mark Skinner, Ohio
Denise Brush, New Jersey	Ellen La Conte, North Carolina	William & Ursula Slavick, Maine
Lisanne Budwick, New Jersey	Joseph Lacayo, New Mexico	Sam Smith, Maine
Caron Cadle & Ray Remshardt, Florida	Hector Lopez, Connecticut	Sidney Smith, Virginia
Dana Cary, Maine	Erik Lords, California	Thom Speidel, Washington
Don Crawford, Illinois	Margie & Bruce MacWilliams, New Jersey	Charlene Swift, Maine
Aimee Cree Dunn & Linda Cree, Michigan	Maine State Library, Maine	Steve Swift, Massachusetts
Rich & Debra Csenge, Utah	Linda Martin, Washington	Deanna Taylor, Utah
Christine De Troy, Maine	James McCarthy, Maine	Jeff & Shirley Taylor, Iowa
Joseph H. de Rivera, Maine	Brent McMillan, Indiana	Lisa Taylor, California
Budd Dickinson, Hawai'i	Raymond Meyer, Iowa	David Thompson & Leslie Pearlman, New Mexico
Jenefer Ellington, Washington, DC	Al Miller, Maine	David & Marilyn Tilton, Maine
Romi Elnagar, Louisiana	Daryl! L.C. Moch, Washington, DC	Victoria Tredinnick, New Jersey
Richard Evanoff, Tokyo, Japan	Jason Murray, Maine	Rachel Treichler, New York
Charles Fall, Oregon	Michael Ochs, Pennsylvania	Rhoda Vanderhart, Alabama
Charles Fitzgerald, New York	Jon Olsen, Maine	Alida Van Pelt, Pennsylvania
Curtis Fitzgerald, California	Rosalie Paul, Maine	John Van Pelt & Karen Blaisdell, Maine
Jonathan Fluck, New York	Leslie Pearlman, New York	Dave Vollrath, Tennessee
Walter & Francine Fox, Pennsylvania	Karen Peterson, Arizona	Brielle Welzer, Maryland
David & Melissa Frans, Maine	Tony & Liz Piel, Connecticut	Steve & Laura Welzer, New Jersey
Bruce Gagnon, Maine	Suzan Preksat, New Jersey	David Whiteman, South Carolina
Greg Gerritt & Kathleen Rourke, Rhode Island	Joshua Roy Pritchett, Georgia	Paul Woodruff, Texas
Paul Gilk, Wisconsin	Virginia Rasmussen, New York	Elie Yarden, Massachusetts
David Greenwood, New Jersey	Greta Rensenbrink & Kat Williams, West Virginia	Margaret & Peter Zack, Maine
Gil Harris, Maine	John & Carla Rensenbrink, Maine	
Holly Hart, Iowa		

*Thanks to all!!*



GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION  
P.O. Box 2029  
PRINCETON, NJ 08543

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 493  
Portland, ME



Printed on 100% post-consumer waste paper made with a chlorine-free process, using linseed oil-based inks.