

Funders for Just and Equitable Climate Solutions

Index of Social Movement Terms

We invite you to review these key definitions developed by frontline organizations and adhered to by Funders for Just and Equitable Climate Solutions. By sharing an understanding of terminology used by progressive social movements, funders can respond more quickly and effectively to needs on the ground.

Credit: People's Orientation to a Regenerative Economy/United Frontline Table.

Climate Justice

Climate Justice focuses on the root causes of climate crisis through an intersectional lens of racism, classism, economic injustice, and environmental harm. Climate Justice focuses on making systemic changes that are required to address unequal burdens to our communities and realign our economy with our natural systems. As a form of environmental justice, climate justice means that all species have the right to access and obtain the resources needed to have an equal chance of survival and freedom from discrimination. As a movement, climate justice advocates are working from the grassroots up to create solutions for our climate and energy problems that ensure the right of all people to live, learn, work, play and pray in safe, healthy and clean environments.

Energy Democracy

Energy Democracy frames the international struggle of working people, low-income communities, and Asian and Pacific-Islander, Black, Brown and Indigenous communities to take control of energy resources from the energy establishment and use those resources to empower their communities literally (providing energy), economically, and politically. It means bringing energy resources under public or community ownership and/or governance, a key aspect of the struggle for climate justice, and an essential step toward building a more just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient economy.

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice embraces the principle that all people and communities have a right to equal protection and equal enforcement of environmental laws and regulations. Environmental justice recognizes that due to racism and class discrimination, communities of color and low-income neighborhoods are the most likely to be harmed by toxic chemicals and negative land uses, and the least likely to benefit from efforts to improve the environment.

Extractive Economy

An Extractive Economy is a capitalist system of exploitation and oppression that values consumerism, colonialism, and money over people and the planet. The extractive economy perpetuates the enclosure of wealth and power for a few through predatory financing, expropriation from land and commonly accessed goods/services, and the exploitation of human labor. An extractive economy views natural resources as commodities to dig, burn, and dump with no regard for its impact on communities and utilizes oppressive force to undermine democracy, community, and workers.

Food Sovereignty

Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.

Frontline Communities

Frontline Communities are those impacted most by climate change and its root causes including white supremacy, patriarchy and colonization. These communities are embedded in legacy struggles against social injustices exacerbated by extractive and pollutive industries that have been purposely and systemically situated adjacent to their communities. This disproportionate exposure to climate and environmental injustice results in acute and chronic impacts to human and environmental health. Frontline Organizations are those created of, by, and for Frontline Communities, and are accountable to a base of Frontline Community members.

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Green New Deal

Green New Deal pays homage to one of the most exclusionary set of policies in the history of the U.S. Capitulation with the forces of white supremacy prevented Black and Brown people, workers and communities from taking part in programs that created generational wealth for white people, while also contributing to the creation of sacrifice zones and frontline communities via redlining. For these reasons and more, we hold that a Green New Deal must be more than a resolution or set of policies. It must be a tool that builds and sustains grassroots power in a way that supports and scales out existing initiatives, locally, regionally and nationally through translocal organizing models that address and repair decades of discrimination associated with the New Deal. For this to occur, and for the purposes of the UNFT, any Green New Deal must align with the 1991 Principles of Environmental Justice and uphold the principles and tenets of Just Transition, Energy Democracy, and Food Sovereignty, as well as address myriad sectoral shifts including, but not limited to, Housing, Healthcare, Mass Incarceration and Preservation of Democracy. We believe this to be the only way that a Green New Deal can be the vehicle that delivers us to an equitable Regenerative Economy available to, and accessible by, all.

Just Recovery

Just Recovery resists corporations taking advantage and profiting off communities during recovery and instead models people-powered, heart-centered, socially just relief to the long-term organizing and actions that reclaim the right of peoples to define their economies and govern their communities. By organizing directly to meet our needs, particularly in these moments, we exercise our rights, demonstrate our resilience, and resist the imposition of neoliberal policies at every level.

Just Transition

Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste free. The transition itself must be just and equitable, redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there.

Regenerative Economy

Regenerative Economy is based on ecological restoration, community resilience, social equity, and full and fair participatory processes. Rather than extract from the land and each other, this approach is consistent with the Rights of Nature, valuing the health and wellbeing of Mother Earth by producing, consuming, and redistributing resources in harmony with the planet. A regenerative economy values the dignity of work and humanity and prioritizes community governance and ownership of work and resources, as opposed to oppressive systems that devalue people and their labor through violent hoarding by a few. Rather than limit peoples' ability to fully shape democracy and decisions that impact our communities, a regenerative economy supports collective and inclusive participatory governance. It requires a re-localization and democratization of how we produce and consume goods, and ensures all have full access to healthy food, renewable energy, clean air and water, good jobs, and healthy living environments. A regenerative economy requires an explicit anti-racist, anti-poverty, feminist, and living approach that's intersectional and eschews top-down, patriarchal, classist, xenophobic, and racist ideology.

Sacrifice Zones

Sacrifice Zones are communities that are poor and working class Black, Brown, multi-racial and white communities and Indigenous Peoples whose health, wealth, and lives have been sacrificed to advance the profits of corporations that control polluting industries. These specifically include communities impacted by pollution hotspots created by ports, transportation centers, fossil fuel, chemical, manufacturing, and industrial agriculture industries.

Translocal Organizing

Translocal Organizing is a model of collective struggle that fosters the consolidation and diffusion of experiences, resources and wisdom across a given set of geographic space. Rather than viewing spaces of resistance as disconnected, translocalism advances a paradigm of interdependence that fosters a fusion of various local communities and movements. The desired outcomes include the cooperation of communities that are decentralized enough to address and dismantle local challenges, and centralized enough to effect change within larger geographic spaces both regionally and across state lines. Translocal organizing models provide communities with more power and greater ability to scale up and scale out their solutions while informing and influencing local and state governments, which can in turn leverage national transformations necessary to change the rules.