From a War Economy to a Green Economy

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Panelists: Moderated panel discussion with Elizabeth Perez, President of GC Green; Cindy Weisner, Executive Director, Global Justice Alliance; and Dr. Rudra Kapila, Senior Policy Advisor for Carbon Management, ThirdWay. Mac Hamilton, Advocacy Director at WAND moderated the discussion.

Problem: Climate change, energy security, and economic stability are inextricably linked. The way we use energy to power our economy and transport people and goods is creating the greenhouse gas emissions that are directly tied to the increasing global temperatures and changing climate. Climate change has contributed to rising sea-levels, more frequent and severe weather events, and longer periods of drought, all of which have put communities at risk and cost U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars. The volatile nature of global energy markets, paired with the modern tactics that both state and non-state actors use to weaponize energy resources and infrastructure, also put our economy and society at risk.

Based on the conversation, our panelists had the following policy recommendations:

- **Push for legislation that supports a clean energy transition.** Our reliance on oil is oftentimes the reason we find ourselves in conflict time and time again. Putting clean energy ideas into action involves job creation in local, state, and national capacities. When you’re talking to your constituents, connect the climate change programs you’re working on to the interests of the individual. What do these efforts mean to them in terms of water/air quality, jobs, education opportunities, etc.? Keep efforts and workforce local so the local communities can directly see the impact. Bring the larger project to the individual.

- **Center affected and underserved communities when drafting climate and environmental legislation.** The technologies and projects being used to address climate change should be designed to integrate the needs and concerns of climate-impacted communities from the very start. We have an opportunity to listen to solutions coming from the ground, telling us that we need to do an absolute u-turn and trust in new ways to address the climate crisis and the economic, political, and democracy challenges that are all connected. Visit the underserved communities that are protesting, understand their priorities, befriend them, understand their challenges and their practices. Use that lived experience to inform your policies. It’s important to involve these communities at the front end to shape a better world and address climate change. Decision making on environmental issues cannot exclude those who are most vulnerable.

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- **Employ a multilateral approach to the climate crisis.** We need both grassroots and intergovernmental approaches. Simple additions like farmers markets help to make a difference, but these changes must be accompanied by international cooperation in policy and goal setting.
- **Collaborate with local climate and environmental grassroots organizations.** Trying to create a collective agenda that is visionary and transformative, that doesn't create short-term solutions but introduces real solutions to the crises we are facing, begins at the grassroots level but requires organization and collaboration. We need to find creative ways to meet the needs of the people and the planet.