



A statement on  
the ecological  
crisis by  
Freedom Road  
Socialist  
Organization

## We Can't Save the Planet without Flipping the Historical Script

Freedom Road Socialist Organization is a national organization that is working to build a strategic alliance between the working class and the movements of oppressed peoples of color to create a socialist society based upon peoples' needs, equality, peace, and a harmonious relationship with the planet. Based on our history and our practice, we have developed a unique perspective on the ecological crisis, one which connects that crisis with the US history of genocide, racism and national oppression, and which suggests that we can only solve the ecological crisis through a socialism which truly embodies self-determination, social justice, and genuine social, political and economic equality in all spheres of life.

### **Historical Roots of the Problem**

The ecology of North America, is history writ deeply in its air, land, and waters. That history was diverted from its evolutionary path 500 years ago when colonialism landed in the Americas, first the Spanish, and then the British. History then took a darker turn in the genocide of the indigenous inhabitants, driven by the strictly economic imperatives. Genocide was followed by enslavement as millions of Africa's peoples were stolen to create wealth and economic infrastructure. Enslavement was followed by annexation (from Mexico), colonization (Hawai'i and Puerto Rico), and the super-exploitation of Chinese and Filipino labor.

There is no understanding today of the loss of our forests, contamination of the soil, pollution of the skies, or poisoning of the waters, without understanding the mass murder, slavery, destruction of hundreds of cultures and languages in the Americas. The environmental justice movement began 500 years ago, with the struggle of the Indigenous communities in the Americas.

### **US is the center of the global ecological crisis and climate change**

Today, the United States and its capitalist empire are at the center of the ecological crisis, generating more carbon emissions (and all the nasty toxics that accompany those emissions) per capita than any other nation, especially when

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we include emissions from its foreign military and economic infrastructure (such as the maquiladores in Mexico).

### **Environmental Racism**

Inside the United States, the heaviest environmental burden falls on communities of color and poorer white communities (such as those in Appalachia). This reality is called environmental racism where communities of color and some poor white communities get the very worst of the fossil fuel infrastructure, the freeways, the freight traffic, the oil refineries, the power plants, the chemical factories, the toxic dumps and incinerators, the pesticides and herbicides from agribusiness, etc. Folks who live in those communities suffer from much higher rates of asthma, cancer, respiratory and heart problems, low birth weights, and miscarriages, caused by emissions from this system.

### **The Strategic Center of Resistance**

Because these communities are on the frontline of the fossil fuel system, they have the most experience with its impacts especially the horrendous health impacts, and a great deal of experience with fighting it: whether it is folks fighting

mountain top removal in Kentucky or West Virginia, or folks fighting oil refineries in Houston or Richmond, California. There are literally thousands of local struggles for environmental justice going on in the US.

There are now more than 100 million people of color in the US, many of whom live on the environmental frontline. Polls show a very high percentage of Blacks and Latino/as who support strong action to address climate change compared to the white community. People of color live it, so they get it.

### **What We Can Do To Build a Strong Eco-Justice Movement**

• Recognize the strategic importance of oppressed communities of color to all efforts to achieve our short- and long-term environmental objectives, and to our effort to achieve socialism. Support for the leadership and struggles of these communities must shape the development of revolutionary socialist organizations and the revolutionary movement itself.

• We must help the environmental justice movement to access more resources, to link up their struggles, and to challenge the often negative market-based strategies promoted by most of the mainstream environmental groups.

• The Labor Left and the Environmental/ Ecological Left need to coordinate efforts to support important national initiatives to achieve a Just Transition from fossil fuels to an equitable and democratic clean energy system.

• The Left should stand with the environmental justice community in opposing false solutions to the climate crisis, such as cap-and-trade programs, offset programs, natural gas and/or nuclear power - all the market-based solutions which only benefit capitalism.

• The Left's environmental programs must expand to include support for genuine sovereignty and respect for treaty rights for the Indigenous nations, self-determination for African-Americans and Chicano/as, and equality and comprehensive democracy for other oppressed communities of color.

• Our environmental program must also include support for environmental struggles in the Global South like those of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia and Ecuador, or Via Campesina in Brazil and elsewhere.

• Our socialist program must consistently uphold the rights of oppressed communities of color in the US to self-determination, and genuine equality.

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