

PROGRESSIVEINTERNATIONAL

SUNRISE

Organizing for the International Green New Deal

Sunrise
Movement



Contents

PAGE	SECTION
3	Introduction
5	The Sunrise Movement and the Meaning of Internationalism
8	Why Sunrise is Fighting for a Green New Deal
11	How Sunrise is Winning a Green New Deal

Introduction

Fossil fuel industries are driving us into climate catastrophe — and the world’s working class will be forced to pay for their greed. This toolkit helps you organize your community to fight for a Green New Deal and a just transition around the world.

Our future has been held hostage by a handful of oil and gas executives. For decades, they have lied to the public about the dangers of fossil fuel extraction, and bought off politicians to repeat their message. They are internationally organized, infiltrating institutions at both national and international levels to advance their agenda of extraction. Their incredible wealth means their families will be fine, but the rest of us won't.

Young people around the world are organizing to take back their future — and in the United States, Sunrise is leading the way.

Sunrise is a movement of young people working to combat the climate crisis and create millions of good jobs in the process. In just a few years, Sunrise has organized national strikes and direct actions in cities across the United States that have inspired millions to join the fight for a ‘Green New Deal.’

This toolkit answers questions like:

- What is ‘Green New Deal,’ and why should we fight for it?
- How can we organize around the Green New Deal to build people power?
- And how can we use this people power to expand our political power and create a ‘people’s alignment’?

The Progressive International is committed to building a climate movement that is as internationally organized as its opponents in the fossil fuel industry. If you are a climate activist or community organizer that would like to get involved with the Progressive International — or organize actions related to this campaign — please write to movement@progressive.international.



The Sunrise Movement and the Meaning of Internationalism

Sunrise is a movement of young people working to combat the climate crisis and create millions of good jobs in the process. We're building the people power and political power necessary to win a Green New Deal in the United States, which would transition every aspect of our society to stop fuelling climate change and be resilient to the climate impacts that are already locked in – all the while improving our communities, guaranteeing everyone access to healthcare and meaningful work, and leaving no one behind.

We're doing this because our air, water, and home are threatened. For millennia we have depended on a stable climate, which has shaped every part of our way of life. Now, we face the frightening reality that this foundation will crumble within our lifetimes unless we take immediate and decisive action to transform our energy system. Communities across the US and the world are already feeling severe impacts, with working-class people and people of color being hit hardest.

We know that solutions are ready to go, and they'll make our lives better. Wind and solar energy are now cheaper than the polluting oil, gas, and coal of yesterday. If we stop wasting billions in taxpayer money giving handouts to oil and gas CEOs, we can halt climate change and create tens of millions of jobs by upgrading the US's outdated infrastructure. We could enter a new age of prosperity and health and bring forward the people this country has left behind.

But a greedy few are driving us toward catastrophe. This brighter future is being held hostage by a handful of wealthy oil and gas executives who will stop at nothing to squeeze the last bit of money out of the earth. They've gotten away with it by lying to the public and buying off politicians of both parties to stall progress and secure massive giveaways for themselves. Their incredible wealth means their families will be fine, but the rest of us won't.

We will not be divided. To keep up this scheme, they pit us against each other -- by political party, skin color, and where we live. They tell us that one community has to suffer for another to thrive. They say some children must breathe toxic air so that others can have electricity. They say some parents must choose between a dangerous and polluting job, and no job at all. They say climate refugees from other countries are simply not our concern. They divide us up and exploit us each in different ways, while they get massive bonuses. We say no more.

We know that around the world, we are the majority and we will win. Ordinary people everywhere are scared about what the climate crisis means for the people and places we love. We are gathering in classrooms, living rooms, and worship halls across the world. Everyone has a role to play. Public opinion is already with us -- if we unite by the millions, we can turn this into political power and elect leaders who stand up for the health and wellbeing of all people, and we can make the next 10 years the decade of the Green New Deal worldwide.

Here in the United States, we have a special responsibility to tackle the climate crisis as the greatest historical emitter of carbon. Not only do we need to win a Green New Deal here, but we need to [pay our climate debt to the Global South](#). And yet we also know that winning a Green New Deal in one country will not be enough. The climate crisis is a truly global issue, and while any nations keep polluting, all of us will suffer – but more vulnerable nations will be most impacted. Even as we bid for power in the US, we must unite with movements doing the same in other countries to forge a progressive internationalist vision for the 21st century.



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Why Sunrise is Fighting for a Green New Deal

The Green New Deal is a 10-year plan to mobilize every aspect of American society toward 100% clean and renewable energy by 2030, guarantee a living-wage job for anyone who needs one, ensure a just transition for both workers and frontline communities and create economic prosperity for all. It seeks to tackle the climate crisis and the crisis of inequality at the same time.

The goals of the Green New Deal are:

- to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers;
- to create millions of good, high-wage jobs and ensure prosperity and economic security for all people of the United States;
- to invest in the infrastructure and industry of the United States to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century;
- to secure clean air and water, climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, and a sustainable environment for all people of the United States for generations to come; and
- to promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, de-industrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth.

The [Green New Deal Resolution](#) was put forth in the US House and Senate by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey respectively in February 2019. However, the Green New Deal is not a single resolution, a bill, or even a series of pieces of legislation – [it is a governing vision for the next decade.](#)

The Green New Deal draws inspiration from the legacy of the New Deal in the United States - an agenda of massive public investment into social programs in the wake of the Great Depression that helped alleviate extreme inequality and suffering and built the public goods and social safety net we still benefit from today. However, the New Deal left many communities behind, and in particular failed people of color. We understand our responsibility as a movement to make sure in the Green New Deal, no community gets left behind.

A common objection to the Green New Deal is that it is too big, too ambitious – it should just focus on addressing the climate crisis. However, we know from the failure of previous climate legislation that we can't win by crafting inoffensive middle-ground policy. Any practical plan to pass a climate bill needs to build enough popular support both within and outside the Democratic Party in the US, and that means the Green New Deal needs to be something to fight for.

We know that the climate crisis will disproportionately affect

more vulnerable communities, and so any climate policy needs to proactively address the needs of those most at risk. This is not just a moral choice, but a strategic one too – because one of the key ways that economic inequality has worsened and persisted in the United States and elsewhere is through the use of strategic racism to divide communities and stoke fear. Any attempt to bridge inequality must explicitly confront racism if we want to succeed. And that's why the Green New Deal isn't just a wish list of progressive policy – it's good strategy.

By making climate policy less about the polar bears or CO₂, and more about concrete ways to improve our lives and communities, the Green New Deal has succeeded in becoming incredibly popular. Through a bold and visionary narrative, the Green New Deal gives everyone something to fight for. In fact, it's a tool to help communities envision what prosperity would look like.

Now, as the coronavirus pandemic and associated recession sweeps across the world, it is clear that the Green

New Deal is the economic stimulus we need to recover.

Milton Friedman said, “only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around.” The movement for a Green New Deal will have a critical role to play in the months and years of recovery ahead of us, to ensure that in the wake of this crisis, we are rebuilding our economy to tackle the climate crisis and leave no one behind.



How Sunrise is Winning a Green New Deal

Sunrise's strategy to win the Green New Deal has 3 core pillars: building people power, building political power, and building a People's Alignment.

People power

History has shown us the powerful things that ordinary people are capable of when we organize. To win a Green New Deal, we're going to need a critical mass of engaged people taking continued action for the movement to win over the public, shift the political commonsense, and give our political leaders no choice but to step up or step aside.

Sociologist Erica Chenoweth has revealed through her studies that once a movement achieves the sustained and active nonviolent participation of 3.5% of a country's population, no government can withstand accommodating the movement's demands. In the United States, this would look like roughly 11 million people taking sustained

and escalating action demanding a Green New Deal. As such, most of our energy as a movement is spent organizing and mobilizing to win over the public and bring more and more people into the movement.

Mobilizing and moral protest

Our movement engages in disruptive, nonviolent moral protest to bring the injustice of the climate crisis to the forefront. It's a kind of mobilization that forces questions of justice and equity into the public spotlight, making visible the unseen suffering and hidden violence of the climate crisis, and in doing so forces the public and the power-holders to ask themselves: Which side are you on? The side of the people, standing for our right to clean air, clean water, and a secure home – or the side of the fossil fuel billionaires and the politicians they employ? Moral protest actions like this can become 'trigger moments' that elevate the story of the movement to an unprecedented scale, and

allow for massive growth shift in the political commonsense.

Community organizing

When we're not mobilizing, we're doing the work of building power in our communities through our 'hubs', or local groups. In these groups we grow through outreach, one-on-one conversations, and apprenticing members of the movement into ever-more leadership – especially people of colour and working class people who have too often been excluded from leadership in climate movements. We have a focus on 'absorption' – making it as easy as possible for anyone, anywhere, to become part of the movement and begin organizing for a Green New Deal.

Mass training

We know that to grow a movement that can be effective at a massive scale, everyone in the movement needs to be able to act with both unity and autonomy. We can't have bureaucratic bottlenecks where people need to ask permission to take action, but we also need to be able to hold discipline to achieve our

goals. That's where mass training and movement DNA come in.

Through training everyone in this movement in the story, strategy and structure of our movement, we can support people to be able to act in both unity and autonomy. One of the main ways we encourage this is through this set of 11 principles that everyone in the movement agrees to adhere to.

Storytelling

Whether it's capturing everyone's attention at a massive disruptive sit-in, or the way we connect with another person in a one-on-one conversation, storytelling is one of the most crucial skills we leverage as a movement. Through telling stories, we can bridge almost any divide by connecting to common values.

Political power

People power alone will not be enough to win a Green New Deal. That's why as a movement we're also relentlessly working to build political power – a critical mass of supportive elected officials who will go to great lengths to prioritize the health and wellbeing of all people over the

profits of fossil fuel CEOs. One way we do this is by organizing around a few key litmus tests that demonstrate whether an elected official or candidate stands with people or fossil fuel corporations. Tools like the No Fossil Fuel Money pledge and the Green New Deal pledge allow us to hold all representatives to a common standard. We use the effective tactic of ‘birddogging’ candidates – [asking pointed questions in public settings](#) to [push them to side with people over fossil fuel lobbyists](#).

We also do the hard work of getting out the vote for candidates who are prepared to champion the Green New Deal. By running endorsement processes and field programs to turn out our generation for the candidates we deserve in office, [our movement can help deliver the margin of victory in electoral races and unseat politicians who would continue with business as usual, as well as pushing the entire field of candidates closer to the demands of our movement](#).

Then, another important principle of our political engagement is [“no](#)

[permanent friends, no permanent enemies”](#). Our only permanent allegiance is to protecting our communities, our shared home, and our future. We have to make it clear to politicians that our power and support are earned, and not a given. Just because we have supported a candidate in the past doesn’t mean that we will continue to support them in the future if there emerges a viable candidate that is more committed to our values.

A people’s alignment

Ultimately, we know it’s going to take much more than movement, let alone one organization, to achieve the scale of change we need through a Green New Deal. That’s why we’re focused on playing our role in building the People’s Alignment - the suite of groups, movements and institutions that are aligned in seeking justice for all people. We know that the People’s Alignment needs to become dominant and replace the neoliberal ‘Reagan alignment’ that has set the political commonsense for the last 40 years.