



Date: February 2, 2021

To: Charlotte Pera, President & CEO, ClimateWorks Foundation

From: Climate Justice Alliance Board of Directors Co-Chairs—
Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director, UPROSE; and
Mateo Nube, Co-Founder & Staff Collective Member,
Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project

Re: [2050 Today: Emerging Strategies for a Just, Post-pandemic World](#)

As a national alliance of frontline community-led climate justice organizations, we welcome efforts in the philanthropic community to integrate an equity lens into your grantmaking at the intersection of racial justice and climate justice. We are alarmed, therefore, to see promising initiatives, such as ClimateWorks Foundation’s “2050 Today” virtual event, undermine visions of equity through exclusion of frontline voices. We call on you to partner with frontline communities to co-design what funding equity at the intersection of racial justice and climate justice looks like.

Frontline communities—those impacted most by climate change, and who live with environmental and climate injustice directly caused by extractive industries in and adjacent to their communities, resulting in chronic impacts to human and environmental health—hold unique and compelling wisdom, solutions, and organizing power deeply informed by their lived experience. Frontline communities also hold the vision to connect the dots between our interlinked crises of systemic racism, socioeconomic inequity, and climate change—from root causes to just solutions.

For decades, grassroots organizations—those composed of, by, and for frontline communities—have produced outsized social change impacts, in spite of being chronically and severely underfunded. We welcome this moment that finds more and more funders reflecting on the integration of an equity lens into their grantmaking at the intersection of racial justice and climate justice. However, it is disappointing to see the three-part online convening you are hosting this week bringing together many of the wealthiest climate funders, while leaving out frontline leaders. Not only is this a misstep, it actually perpetuates and causes additional harm.

Your “2050 Today” gathering this week utilizes the language of Climate Justice, Just Transition, and Just Recovery. While we’re pleased that our language and narrative resonates with funders, it feels appropriative, extractive even, and incomplete to use these terms that have their roots in the intersectional movements of frontline communities and labor, without their creators being invited, let alone centered. Our grassroots, frontline leaders can bring the proper context of the

analyses, frameworks, and principles which have built and popularized these systemic change models. Our partners can also bring stories of the practice, success, and continued lessons of these frameworks in action.

One of the core [Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#) (developed by Environmental Justice leaders in 1996, and which still ground the work of grassroots organizations and their alliances throughout the EJ/CJ movement, and to which we hold our movement allies accountable) is *Let People Speak for Themselves*. Above all else, we value, prioritize, and are accountable to the vision, wisdom, solutions, and organizing power of frontline communities.

We are sending this letter to implore you to engage frontline leaders as equitable partners and experts—from design to implementation—in developing strategies around how to fund for a Just Transition. We cannot, will not, be an afterthought. Funders who are exploring how to best fund at the intersection of racial justice and climate justice, how to resource the organizations and communities leading us toward local, living, regenerative economies, can learn by engaging with the very groups that are doing this work and have done this work for decades.

We welcome the opportunity to engage with you in a conversation about how we can move forward together, in equitable partnership, to elevate the voices and wisdom of frontline communities, and move resources to support their climate solutions, which all operate at the intersection of racial justice and climate justice.

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