



IT TAKES
ROOTS
TO WEATHER
THE STORM

THE PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH 2014
A CLIMATE JUSTICE STORY

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The Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) along with its staff, members, and allies served on the leadership team that helped organize the historic People's Climate March and a series of other events during the People's Climate Week, September 20-23, 2014.

Several groups that helped to organize the People's Climate March have shared their stories and perspectives of the march and how they helped to make it a reality. Many CJA members have read and appreciate the contributions they've made to the historical record in the telling of their stories. Contained in the pages of this report is the CJA story. It reflects our understanding, experiences, and analyses in the process of planning and organizing the Climate Week mobilizations, actions and events. We also share lessons we've learned along the way. This report is not meant to be a definitive account of the organizing process; rather to add our voices—the CJA narrative—into the mix.

We invite you to read our story...

The Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) is a collaborative of over 40 community-based groups, alliances and movement support organizations in Indigenous, African American, Latin@, Asian Pacific Islander and working class white communities. In 2013, CJA launched the Our Power Campaign (OPC): Communities United for a Just Transition, a national effort uniting communities fighting fossil fuels and other polluting industries around a common vision and strategy—to transition the economy in ways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the source, restore equity, and put decision-making in the hands of communities.



www.ourpowercampaign.org

Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ) is an alliance of 59 US-based grassroots organizing (GRO) groups organizing to build an agenda for power for working and poor people and communities of color. GGJ focuses on bringing GRO organizations into a long-term process of relationship building, political alignment and the development of transformational leadership. The membership of GGJ adopted a framework in 2011 that calls for a holistic approach to building grassroots global justice: *No War, No Warming, Build an Economy for the People and the Planet*. We weave and bridge together US-based GRO groups and global social movements working for climate justice, an end to war, and a just transition to a new economy that is better for people and the planet. GGJ is a co-founder of CJA and the World March of Women-US Chapter.



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GLOBAL JUSTICE
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www.ggjalliance.org



THE MOMENT AND THE MOVEMENT

WE ARE FACING AN ECOLOGICAL CRISIS OF EPIC PROPORTIONS. THIS MOMENT AND OUR CURRENT CONDITIONS REQUIRE NOT ONLY NEW SOLUTIONS TO OLD PROBLEMS, BUT ALSO NEW STRATEGIES, PATHWAYS AND RELATIONSHIPS TO BRING ABOUT THE BOLD AND LASTING CHANGE NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN LIFE AND HEAL THE PLANET.

A global economic system that relies on unbridled industrial growth, exploitation of natural resources and people, and diminishing controls over waste and pollution have brought us to a tipping point. The vast majority of the world's scientists confirm what we witness and experience every day—that the health of the planet is in jeopardy and humans are to blame. False promises of market-based solutions—for example, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD), Climate Smart Agriculture, Sustainable Energy for All—and costly technological fixes such as waste incineration are being promoted by corporations and embraced by world leaders. At best, these policies will not go far enough; at worst, they will reproduce the exploitative practices that lead to even greater instability, inequality and harm to people and the planet. As the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 21st meeting of the Congress of Parties (COP) in Paris, France this December approaches, it is becoming increasingly clear that the intransigence and false promises of the world's economic and political elites will not solve climate change. A powerful, independent, diverse, global social movement is needed to make the demands and take the bold actions required to make the change we need.

Such a social movement is growing in the United States. Indigenous, African American and other communities of color and working class communities have, despite limited resources, effectively used grassroots organizing, alliance/coalition building and direct action to win significant victories against polluting industries; for example stopping the expansion of oil refineries, shutting down waste and coal incinerators, and preventing life-of-mine permits from being awarded, etc. Their campaigns have prevented massive amounts of new carbon emissions from reaching the atmosphere. These communities have become central to the leadership of a diverse, growing, mass-based climate movement that is needed to win real change. The historic Climate Week and People's Climate March (PCM) in New York City in September, 2014 were important steps in this direction.

Coordinated by a diverse Mobilization Support Team¹ (MST) of about a dozen local, regional and national organizations, coalitions and alliances with additional organizing support from a strong local New York-New Jersey Host Committee, dozens of organizing “hubs”

and ultimately over 1500 organizations, *the PCM was the largest climate march and environmental justice mobilization in history.* Approximately 400,000 people turned out on the streets of Manhattan on September 21st to raise awareness of the increasing urgency of climate change. One of the largest delegations—approximately 19,000 members of the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), plus an estimated 20,000 people from allied grassroots organizing groups—helped highlight how low-income communities are hit first and worst by the floods, droughts and storms and at the same time are cultivating real solutions on the frontlines of the crises; solutions that governments need to follow. And it laid plain that huge numbers of people believe the present federal policy approach is insufficient to avert the crises we are facing. The People’s Climate March also illustrated to the world there is indeed a social movement for climate justice growing in one of the countries most responsible for the greatest ecological crises of our times.

The Climate Justice Alliance played a central role in the planning of this historic People’s Climate March (9/21). The CJA was also key to organizing the People’s Climate Justice Summit (9/22-9/23), had a large contingent at the Flood Wall Street Action (9/22), sponsored the People’s Tribunal (9/23) and organized an action outside the United Nations during the UN Climate Summit (9/23). While ensuring the success of the week, CJA was primarily

concerned with lifting up the visibility and voices of frontline,² Indigenous and communities of color in the march, shifting the center of gravity of the climate movement and strengthening the Alliance itself. The overarching goals of CJA’s participation in the planning and implementation of this climate convergence were to:

PCM was the largest climate march and environmental justice mobilization in history.

- **Build the Bigger We** by strengthening relationships with larger national organizations, linking local priorities to national and global statements of solidarity and connect our campaigns and struggles.
- **Empower Communities and Local Climate Justice Organizations** by raising the visibility of local, regional and national frontline fights; lifting up place-based leadership and expertise; and embedding issues of justice and equity at the core of all emerging narratives and political strategies.
- **Build CJA** by mobilizing members from around the country to participate in the mobilization as a CJA contingent and aligning national gatherings from Detroit to Richmond with the local organizing in New York/New Jersey.
- **Impact Policy in New York** by shaping the climate justice agenda of the New York City Mayor and challenging the New York Governor to ban fracking.

In addition, CJA leadership saw the opportunity to build a political agenda around a “systems change” analysis. CJA members and allies clearly articulated the need to break from the current system of over-exploitation, over-consumption, over-production and extractivism and, in its place, implement the diverse, place-based solutions, practices, methods

¹The central coordinating body for the PCM was the Mobilization Support Team (MST), which included: 350.org, ALIGN, Avaaz, Blue Green Alliance, Climate Justice Alliance, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, Oil Change International, SEIU Locals 32BJ and 1199, Sierra Club, and UPROSE. CJA member organizations were core conveners and organizers of this mobilization: NYC-EJA was a co-facilitator of the New York-New Jersey Host Committee, the main local coordinating body for the PCM, which also included Ironbound Community Corporation in Newark and UPROSE in Brooklyn (both CJA members).

²In the Our Power movement the term *Frontline Communities* refers to communities that are hit first and worst by climate, economic or other crises. Our Power Campaign states: “Communities on the frontlines of climate change are the ones cultivating real, place-based solutions to address the global ecological crises... They are also organizing to stop pollution and poverty at the source, confronting the root causes of the climate crisis.”



and systemic alternatives being created in frontline communities.³ This was particularly important for CJA in light of the PCM's final agreement not to align on specific demands in order to keep the message general and prioritize a bigger tent. CJA's leadership in the planning and coordination of the People's Tribunal, the People's Climate Justice Summit, the PCM, and two aforementioned direct action demonstrations also buttressed the efforts of its members

to build power, as they were able to leverage their membership in CJA to reinforce local efforts. Finally, organizing the PCM raised CJA's level of visibility and established its leadership, historical contributions, and expertise on sources and impacts of climate change and environmental justice. CJA is now a recognized force in this movement that more established or better-known organizations must contend with moving forward.

³ Mary Lou Malig, *Burning the Planet, One Climate COP at a Time* (12/13/14)

BUILDING A WINNING CLIMATE MOVEMENT

The mobilizations, actions and other activities held during the NYC Climate Week are considered important events inside a much broader and protracted movement aimed at addressing the root causes of climate change and building up real community-led solutions. A sober analysis of the historic relationship between the national mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movements reveal the latter has struggled for decades with various forms of racial, economic, gender and now climate injustice both within the movement and outside of it. The environmental justice movement has nonetheless worked to lift up the voices, the resilience and the bravery of frontline communities while organizing to end harm against these communities and the earth. And it has pushed for new ways of relating with one another to bring about greater impact and more substantial change. We uphold the following values and practices toward a strategy that can help us win:

1. A winning climate movement requires the *leadership of frontline communities* most impacted by health, environmental, racial and economic injustices associated with the ecological crises. Further, movement leaders must be guided by a collective vision, a clear understanding of the problem, tried and tested community-led solutions, and strategies that move logically and appropriately from problem to solution.³ The articulation of problems and solutions must simultaneously address crises in the economy, democracy and climate. Finally, campaigns addressing these intersecting crises must employ a range of strategies and tactics that include direct action, mobilizations, and policy advocacy.
2. A winning climate movement needs to be broad-based, *inclusive and diverse*, reflecting all those ultimately impacted by climate change.

It must possess a willingness to struggle through differences to attain greater alignment around strategies, politics and vision, not only among mainstream environmental and environmental justice groups in the movement, but also with other sectors such as labor, youth, faith, economic and racial justice, health professionals and more.

3. A winning climate movement must be *guided by a vision of systemic change that is place-based*, defined by local knowledge and safeguards for human and ecological health. That vision must be strong and cohesive with strategies that build power to scale, power that is bottom-up and rooted in frontline communities of practice. Further, it must support and appropriately scale up solutions; stop the harm from happening (pollution, extraction, etc.); shift the minds, hearts and practices of people around the world to join in this struggle for human existence; and build a strong strategic and compelling argument articulated in a unified voice.
4. A winning climate movement must be *resourced collectively and equitably*. Building a movement like this requires sufficient material, non-material and financial resources to support the capacity of people and movement actors to organize, implement real solutions, fight for systems change, and build the systems, institutions and processes that support this change.
5. A winning climate movement must *link with international allies and social movements* for greater solidarity and impact. The interconnectedness of economic and political systems and the transnational behavior of corporations requires that movements calling for system-wide change and greater government and corporate accountability to humanity and the earth be connected in strategic ways.

6. A winning climate movement requires that *mobilizations and actions be strategically organized, coordinated and timed* to make key advances.

Climate Week activities and the collaborative processes and coordination of the PCM gave us the opportunity to practice and test these principles. Their application impacted the overall outcome of these activities, resulted in important movement advances, and revealed valuable organizing lessons.

The PCM was timed to coincide with the United Nations Climate Summit on September 23 in order to challenge the increasing corporate takeover of UN climate negotiations and the privatization of land, water and air.⁴ Around the world, all eyes were on the United Nations to hear what the nations' leaders were saying about climate. What they saw were over 400,000 people representing a variety of allied movements in the United States voicing concerns over climate change. The March organizers sent a clear message to the world that the people of the United States are willing to take action on climate.

The PCM created space for frontline communities to put forward a vision of local solutions, not just highlight problems. It also helped to open political space for victories to be won on climate policy⁵ and set the foundation to begin transcending the existing cultures of practice and relationships between national environmental groups (henceforth "big greens") and environmental justice groups. The march served as a great model of shared leadership, capacity and resources. It created opportunities for grassroots organizing and climate policy orga-

nizations from the New York region and around the country to collaborate in its planning, laying the groundwork for an ongoing commitment to building a broader, united U.S. climate movement. Connections forged in recent years⁶ laid the basis for relationships between groups that would not have ordinarily worked together. This coming together demonstrated a new willingness to build power for a common cause and a new level of cooperation.

PCM organizers were able to see and experience on a small scale what collaborative resourcing could look like. Though an imperfect process—as it was new to those involved—resources of all kinds were raised, shared, passed on, etc. There was a demonstrated commitment by all, including national allies, to support frontline leadership and participation.

Finally, the PCM provided space for other movement sectors in the United States to participate in the march, elevate their voices and concerns and demonstrate solidarity with others, including student and youth, faith-based groups, immigrant rights organizations, labor unions, health care professionals, scientists and new constituencies who are beginning to see themselves as part of a growing popular movement on climate. Significantly, the PCM provided space for the participation of international allies not only in solidarity mobilizations around the world, but also in all Climate Week activities and actions. They testified in the Tribunal, facilitated and spoke on panels in the People's Climate Justice Summit and participated in the Flood Wall Street and United Nation actions.

⁴ See CJA's Call to Action (<http://www.ourpowercampaign.org/peoples-climate-march/>). Civil society has increasingly been pushed out of the UN spaces by more restrictive rules on participation, while the presence of businesses and corporations has grown substantially.

⁵ For example, according to Wes Gillingham of Catskill Mountainkeepers, "the climate march was a vehicle for showing opposition to fracking. There were a lot of signs about fracking there and good press connecting the issue to the march. One article in the press mentioned fracking as the most abundant of all signs. All of that added pressure to the governor to make a

decision based on political opinion across the state." (email to I. Kilimanjaro 4/20/15).

⁶ For example, several members of the Mobilization Support Team—including staff from 350.org, CJA and Sierra Club—shared (in separate interviews with I. Kilimanjaro) that the first Building Equity and Alignment for Impact initiative started by the Overbrook Foundation was one of the key spaces where cross-sector conversations paved the way for planning around the PCM to take place.



ORGANIZING THE PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH

THE GENESIS

While early exchanges about a 2014 NYC climate mobilization can be traced back to discussions in a number of different movement circles, members of Climate Justice Alliance had their first set of exchanges during a couple of movement strategy sessions held in the Summer and Fall of 2013. At these gatherings—the Extreme Energy Extraction Summit in Minnesota and the Common Ground Collaborative in upstate New York—Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) proposed that members of CJA and other grassroots groups ask the big greens to support a climate justice protest in NYC, led by Indigenous and environmental justice/climate justice communities.”⁷

Then in early January 2014, “when CJA first learned about the Ban Ki-Moon Summit, we [a group of organizers inside CJA] had a discussion with the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EA) about the possibility of collaborating with 350.org to mobilize a street protest around this event. 350.org had already been in touch with Avaaz, the Sierra Club and some other big greens about organizing this protest, and were keen to work with local NYC groups. So when NYC-EJA informed us that they would only engage with the big greens if CJA got involved, we started preparing a pitch to the CJA Leadership Body (representatives of all CJA members groups) as well as the CJA Steering Committee. We also initiated a preliminary call to discuss possibilities with 350.org, the Sierra Club and Avaaz.”⁸ The larger organi-

zations—especially 350.org and the Sierra Club—understood the need to have local NYC base-building organizations involved to establish credibility across the five boroughs. They also had been interested in collaborating with CJA since the merger of the 1 Sky Coalition and 350.org. So, after an initial convening of local environmental justice groups, anti-fracking groups, organized labor and these big greens in NYC in February 2014, the idea for the People’s Climate March was born.

Initially, there was considerable debate among CJA Steering Committee members on whether to take on this monumental task. At the center of this debate was a historical distrust that many grassroots groups had with several national environmental organizations. Specifically, some CJA members had direct experiences of being tokenized, betrayed and their work being appropriated by some of these big greens. There were also differences in strategy, many feeling that the national climate policy agenda controlled by the big greens at times has been fundamentally opposed to the core values of grassroots environmentalism—self-determination, democratic process, and solidarity.⁹ Too often shaped by funder agendas and not popular mandate, the big greens’ policy platforms have focused on market-based solutions agreeable to industry; promoting alternatives to fossil fuels that are not truly renewable; and capital-intensive pollution control technologies. For environmental justice and grassroots groups, such climate advocacy strategies not only exacerbated the carbon pollution burdens, but also served to increase toxic pollutants in the backyards of poor communities, entrenched the market hegemony of the biggest polluting corporations, and avoided naming (and thus failing) to address the root causes of the climate crises. Grassroots and frontline community groups are not only concerned about the storms, droughts and other weather events that characterize climate change in the mainstream narrative, but are concerned about

⁷ According to Ananda Lee Tan, one of the organizers of the PCM, “During the Common Ground collaborative meeting Tom Goldtooth of the IEN suggested that members of CJA, Indigenous communities, environmental justice groups and big greens collaborate on organizing an event around the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples conference in September 2014. This meeting was hosted by Wes Gillingham of Catskills Mountainkeeper, and included representatives from CJA, IEN, GAIA, 350.org, Sierra Club and others.”

⁸ Email from Ananda Lee Tan to I. Kilimanjaro (4/20/15)

⁹ See the Principles of Environmental Justice, written by the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 (<http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>)

what some have called the *dig, burn, dump economy* and its life cycle impacts. This means that naming problems and framing solutions from the point of extraction through dirty production, transportation and waste disposal are critical to addressing climate change.

After much debate, CJA committed itself to the project; its investment evolved and grew exponentially over time largely because of the leadership from local organizations in New York and New Jersey. It became clear that the PCM presented an opportunity for frontline Indigenous communities, communities of color and working class folks to 1) provide leadership in an expanding movement on climate change through the coordination of the PCM; 2) have a say in the direction of the PCM; 3) create space—in the Tribunal, the People's Climate Justice Summit and actions—to make clear demands, especially given the lack of demands in the PCM; and 4) create a platform to be heard, to build strategically with allies to expand and advance this growing movement. The commitment to the Jemez Principles¹⁰ as a guiding framework for the Mobilization Support Team process helped boost the confidence of CJA members and allied environmental justice groups, especially when it became clear that these principles served to make the Mobilization Support Team decision-making process more transparent, democratic and accountable to the community-based leadership of NYC. According to Ananda Lee Tan:

When 350.org staff first asked for introductions to local EJ groups in NYC (back in 2013),

we suggested that they exercise a measure of respect in their dealings with our local partners, especially in recognizing the historic leadership of NYC-EJA members on local climate and environmental justice issues. In the fall of 2013, when early discussions of organizing a march in NYC took place, we advised the national groups that in order to establish credibility in NYC, we needed to partner with NYC-EJA and other local EJ groups first...as these groups had the strongest relationships with both community and political leadership (including the Mayor's office and cops) on such issues.

Later in the spring of 2014, when it became clear that the national groups would have trouble understanding the importance of EJ principles, and were starting to fumble and step on numerous local toes, we suggested that the Mobilization Support Team adopt the Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing as the basis (operating principles) for our collaboration. While all the Mobilization Support Team partners agreed to do so, we acknowledged that [some] groups would not be able to internalize the Jemez Principles in their own operational structures. We also suggested that the local New York-New Jersey PCM Host Committee also adopt Jemez as part of their operational agreements, and provided some 101 advice on how to do so.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF ORGANIZING THE PCM

¹⁰The Jemez Principles emerged from the Environmental Justice Principles, and were developed in the early years of the “global justice” movement, as a set of protocols to help large national NGOs understand, respect and abide by the cultures of practice agreed to amongst grassroots, community groups leading this movement. *Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing were developed to forge common understanding and guide collaborative processes and relationships between people from different cultures, politics and organizations. They were created and adopted in 1996 by a multi-racial group of activists for the Working Group Meeting on Globalization and Trade* (<http://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf>).

¹¹The hub sites allowed people planning to participate in the PCM to coordinate self-organized projects and actions with whomever they wanted around any set of parameters, such as those coming from the same geographic location, the same skills set, a common identity or an issue people cared about most. The online system provided tools for people to communicate and build together.

The planning and coordination of the PCM required an investment of a substantial amount of time, energy and resources in a very short span of time. Initially the organizing process was largely decentralized. The Mobilization Support Team was created to make key political, financial and logistical decisions. A New York/New Jersey Host Committee anchored the local and regional outreach efforts. Other committees and online “hubs”¹¹ were formed to address a variety of needs, including logistical, communications, arts, local organizing, fundraising and outreach, and more.

A national monthly conference call was convened to share information with activists and organizations throughout the country.

To coordinate such a broad-based effort, PCM organizers had to overcome several key differences in politics, ideas and culturally-rooted organizing practices. It challenged people to face and deal with assumptions, privilege, power and stereotypes. It also forced members of the Mobilization Support Team to shift their orientations so that differences in organizing, communication, decision-making and leadership became strengths rather than obstacles. For instance, the culture of some organizations is to act with quickness, agility and at significant scale. Others are more deliberate in building base and relationships in the community based on core organizing principles. Both approaches were put to the test and effectively utilized during the PCM process. Over a 7-month period, national environmental organizations, grassroots economic and environmental groups, labor unions and online activist organizations engaged in an inspiring process of shared leadership, principles and mobilizing—resulting in one of the most significant political actions in recent times. And for the first time in US climate advocacy history, grassroots environmental justice organizations became equal partners at the table with national green groups and labor, working in coordination, cross-racially and cross-sectorally to organize this massive mobilization.¹²

In the course of organizing the PCM, there were several important pieces that illustrate key areas of agreement, struggle and work. They are captured in the following sections.



¹² Sally Kohn, *After Years of Racial Division, the Green Movement Gets Brown* (9/21/14)

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT FOR A NEW MOVEMENT NARRATIVE

The composition and formation of the march was a critical and difficult early negotiation, and arguably one of the biggest gains for frontline, environmental justice (EJ) communities.¹³ The significance of the front of the march was substantial: it is the place where local and national media focus their attention for interviews, reporting, image frames and media bytes. In the US climate movement, the front of most climate marches has typically been a place dominated by white college students and members of Sierra Club Chapters. After the “Forward on Climate” protest, some AFL-CIO leaders said they could not take the US climate movement seriously as long as they were defined by their lily white, Ivy League image.¹⁴ Meanwhile, for the US environmental justice movement, place-based, bottom-up leadership is critical to maintaining respectful relationships across the movement. In the end, Indigenous and other environmental justice communities led the march both literally and metaphorically, placing faces and voices of communities most vulnerable to and at the “frontlines” of the climate crisis front and center. At stake in this decision was how well the PCM would reflect the growing climate movement in the United States in a way that demonstrated the issues, faces and voices of those impacted first and worst by climate change.

Despite an initial agreement by the NY-NJ Host Committee in favor of UPROSE’s recommendation that frontline communities be at the front of the PCM (with youth of color forming the very first line at the front), subsequent alternate frontline proposals kept getting recommended; hence the

struggle. To be clear, that there was struggle didn’t mean that national allies failed to see or appreciate the value of the frontlines. Rather it simply meant that people needed to move through the natural process of debate to ultimately arrive at the best outcomes. In the end, an agreement was reached by which indigenous peoples and other people of color from frontline communities would lead the march under the banner *Frontlines of the Crisis, Forefront of Change*. The youth delegation—specifically young people of color and Indigenous youth under the age of 24—were at the very front and the rest of the frontlines contingent marched in the following order: representatives of local communities impacted by Hurricane Sandy, Indigenous Peoples’ Block, member groups of CJA and other environmental justice communities from across the U.S., other storm-impacted communities, anti-poverty groups, representatives of global south movements, domestic workers, farm workers, immigrant rights groups and the migrant justice contingent.

The other formations were carefully and intentionally negotiated as well. CJA members suggested that its brothers and sisters from labor unions march behind the frontline community formation, carrying the banner *We Can Build the Future* to denote the important leadership role that workers have to assume in building the new, low-carbon economy. Members of the Mobilization Support Team agreed that youth groups, students and families would march with this contingent to illustrate the inter-generational leadership of the movement as well as to highlight the generations who will be building the new systems to replace the old.

After labor, youth and families, the Movement Support Team agreed that the solutions’ practitioners should march along with green groups who advocate for, create and practice economic alternatives in community energy, zero waste, public transportation, local food and ecosystem restoration – together carrying a banner that read *We Have the Solutions*. After the solutions formation, all the campaigning organizations and issue-focused groups organizing to stop polluting industries and their financiers were invited to march under the banner *We Know Who’s Responsible*. This acknowledged that the climate

¹³ Environmental justice communities are generally low income and/or people of color communities directly impacted by one or more environmental hazards; their residents tend to be excluded from processes and discussions on environmental regulations and policies that directly impact them; and they are subject to inequitable implementation of environmental regulations, requirements, practices and activities in their communities.

¹⁴ According to Ananda Lee Tan, this comment was made at a meeting of labor, environmental and other progressive movements that labor activist Joe Uehlein of the Labor Network for Sustainability pulled together at the same time as the Forward on Climate protest in DC. As a result, participants signed a statement that can be found at this link: <http://www.labor4sustainability.org/uncategorized/labor-environmental-leaders-move-beyond-differences-to-a-common-vision/>.

movement must continue fighting the corporations driving the present economic system causing the ecological crises—from dirty energy companies to the oil, gas and mining sector, big agri-businesses, waste corporations, Walmart and the banks...the list was long. After this formation, the science and faith communities followed with a banner that read *The Debate is Over*—messaging that the age of “climate denialism” is finally over, and that science and the moral high ground are cardinal points for US leaders to take action. Finally, all other march participants were invited to join behind the banner that read *To Change Everything, We Need Everyone!*

FUNDRAISING AND RESOURCE SHARING

Groups involved in the planning of the PCM began fundraising early on. Some national environmental organizations like 350.org, Sierra Club and Avaaz made initial pledges to the PCM from their budgets amounting to over \$1.5 million. This first set of resources was placed into an entity called *Res Publica*, a civic organization co-founded by Avaaz and that has acted as a fiscal sponsor for many organizations. While *Res Publica* managed core project expenses and donations for the PCM, PCM organizers initially agreed that each group would raise funds for their own organizing efforts to prevent fighting over resources.

According to GGJ National Coordinator Cindy Wiesner, “even for the big greens, it became hard to get resources, having to go into their general operating funds to put money towards the mobilization.”¹⁵ Yet these organizations had dedicated development staff to make appeals to donors, and it eventually became clear that many funders preferred giving money to

larger national groups rather than contributing to a shared fund or donating to grassroots organizations directly.¹⁶ This reinforced a power dynamic whereby the larger national organizations were in charge of money, leaving many local groups to constantly have to ask for help. Finally, fundraising and resource sharing took place unevenly and of the funding-related challenges that arose, many resulted from ineffective or absent systems and protocols for collecting and sharing resources. While mistakes were made, it is clear that organizing at this scale and pace and within such a short planning window made it difficult to avoid them.

CJA initially set conservative fundraising goals as part of the National Coordination Team.¹⁷ As this body was sharpening a proposal for \$75,000 to an allied funder, its members learned that several national environmental organizations were planning to approach a set of New York City funders with a proposal for nearly \$7 million. On learning about the big green proposal, CJA organizers decided on two major shifts to its fundraising strategy:

- Break out of the *cultures of scarcity* that grassroots and EJ groups often get mired in, and ask for a much bolder amount to reflect CJA’s long term aspirations of building a durable, grassroots movement rooted in communities of practice, and
- Intervene with CJA’s big green partners to a) point out that such large sums of funding should be prioritized for long-term organizing in frontline communities, not simply one day media events, and b) ensure that approaching funders was done together, with all proposal language vetted by CJA.

The relationships CJA had cultivated with the Sierra Club through the Building Equity and Alignment for Impact Initiative process initiated by the Overbrook

¹⁵ Email to I. Kilimanjaro (4/17/15)

¹⁶ In fact, local organizations like UPROSE struggled with fundraising. Even when the larger organizations brought them to meetings and urged them to fund these grassroots groups directly, the funders responded with a “thanks, but no thanks,” and instead granted resources to the larger organizations.

¹⁷ Staying consistent with EJ principles, CJA determined that it would follow the leadership of the NY members and in so doing, would provide

national support. This led to the formation of a National Coordination Team that included local leadership from New Jersey, New York and national alliances (e.g., Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Indigenous Environmental Network, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, etc.). While NYC-EJA would lead on local organizing and coordination, the National Coordination Team would help with national coordination, which included fundraising, negotiating with funders, coordinating CJA and allied grassroots involvement, and sitting at the national table with the national environmental organizations to help ensure the messaging out to other national organizations was consistent with CJA messaging, framing, Jemez approach, etc.



Foundation allowed them to leverage agreement with the rest of the Mobilization Support Team on these interventions. As the planning process moved forward, and relationships within this team grew stronger, a number of resources were made available to CJA members and affiliates. Firstly, Sierra Club and 350.org agreed to make transportation subsidies available to provide buses, vans and trains for EJ and grassroots groups to travel to NYC. This amounted to over \$180,000 and included the expenses of 55 charter buses, which CJA members filled. Additionally, 350.org, Greenpeace and some other groups contributed towards some of the cost of bringing on board local NYC organizers to work with NYC-EJA.

On their own, CJA and its member groups stretched themselves to bring in resources, presenting on webinars that reached 89 funders . In total, they raised over \$300,000, of which over half was passed through to local NYC and NJ partners. The initial grant to CJA from the Chorus Foundation went to the NYC-EJA, UPROSE and Ironbound Community Corporation. Additional resources went to

Indigenous Environmental Network for supporting and coordinating Indigenous Peoples' delegations, Right to the City for logistics and member outreach, GAIA for supporting the overall coordination as well East Coast member mobilization and to the Ruckus Society for its direct action training. However, much of the work leading up that point was done through in-kind contributions. By the time resources began to come in, grassroots groups were struggling financially and wound up paying more for expenses like flights and hotels because discounts were no longer available. Other groups covered the travel and lodging costs of large delegations of members and international allies to New York out of their own budgets, such as Grassroots Global Justice Alliance. Lots of other types of resources were donated and shared, including staff and volunteers, building rents and usage, art supplies, fundraising events, meals, fliers, media trainings and more. Strengthening the practice around resource sharing and increasing transparency in the allocation and decision making power related to it are lessons towards a stronger movement-building practice.

MESSAGING AND MEDIA

Communications was one of the most important areas of collaboration in the PCM. Developing an overall message for the march was challenging since there were a number of issues that divided organizations: Keystone XL, fracking, cap and trade. The Mobilization Support Team made the strategic decision to “caste the appropriate-sized net” by agreeing on a broad set of core messages while creating space for everyone to articulate their own perspectives and political positions. The march would “reset” the movement by providing a space for working relationships to develop in the midst of some deep political differences.

Determining the messengers for the event was just as important as the message. The NY-NJ Host Committee committed early to the principle of a “People’s” Climate March, which meant that the official spokespersons would not be celebrities or traditional political leaders; rather it was agreed that grassroots frontline leaders would be front and center and given the support they needed for their messages to reach a broad audience. One of the key slogans, *It Takes Roots to Weather the Storm*, was created at Center for Story-Based Strategy’s workshop in Boston for a small cohort of CJA members. This slogan means that the “communities best prepared to survive today’s ecological crises are those that have the strongest, deepest and longest connections with the earth.” *Traditional Indigenous knowledge* worldwide is critical for all people to withstand the floods, droughts and storms resulting from climate change. Participants in the training agreed that “we needed to communicate to both the UN and the US public that in order to meet the scale and intensity of the climate crisis, world leaders and nation states need to follow the leadership of place-based communities and cultures of practice. Traditional Indigenous knowledge coupled with local, democratic resource governance is the most reliable path for planetary survival.”¹⁸

CJA’s social media capacity grew steadily in 2014 as member organizations organized Twitter storms and Facebook campaigns for the Our Power Gatherings. Due to collaborations with 350.org and The Other

“communities best prepared to survive today’s ecological crises are those that have the strongest, deepest and longest connections with the earth.”

98%, CJA’s social media reach grew exponentially via the PCM—ultimately peaking at 1.5 million. Our total Facebook reach on September 21 was 1,566,366. And the combined social media reach¹⁹ in relation to the PCM was over 8.8 million through Facebook and 3.3 Twitter messages per second (on the day of the PCM).

ARTS SPACES IN THE COMMUNITY vs. OF THE COMMUNITY

The Arts Space was where the visually stunning and memorable art captured in the media was created for the People’s Climate March. Artists of all kinds—from trained professionals to committed volunteers—painted, drew, constructed and assembled a variety of banners, parachutes, signs carrying meaningful slogans, puppets and more. One of the more popular symbols, the sunflowers, were painted between UPROSE’s office and the Arts Space. The sunflower was first used by local Detroit environmental justice organizers as a symbol of community resilience in the march to shut down the Detroit incinerator during the 2010 U.S. Social Forum. Since then, it has been used for the same purpose and to demonstrate continuity of struggle among CJA members. Its use in the march was led by UPROSE. Shared Elizabeth Yeampierre, “We...chose the sunflowers as an expression of solidarity with Richmond and Detroit. We also wanted to show that we weren’t alone; that we were part of something bigger, stronger, united, inter-generational, and based in communities of color.”²⁰

¹⁸ Interview with Ananda Lee Tan

¹⁹ Reach is the number of unique individuals who received timeline deliveries of hashtagged messages. Similar to Timeline deliveries, there is no way to know how many of the messages were viewed. Because the same users may receive multiple timeline deliveries, measuring reach as well as deliveries allows you to better understand the true spread of your message.

²⁰ In interview with I. Kilimanjaro (10/31/14)

An army of local and regional artists and dedicated volunteers worked round the clock to create stunning images of giant puppets, banners, placards, parachutes and other creative props that defined the character, beauty and creative spirit of the PCM. The Indigenous bloc banners were used to amplify messages on the Rights of Mother Earth and opposition to tar sands and controversial cap and trade policies. Many of CJA's visuals were captured by media outlets. While the Arts Space inspired the most memorable elements of the march, upon reflection, it also represented some of the most difficult contradictions. It was established in a warehouse building that was not easy to get to and was located in a rapidly gentrifying Latin@ neighborhood. Artists and volunteers struggled with limited capacity and lead time, few financial resources, and a hectic and sometimes chaotic environment. Some artists were paid by organizations for their services while most were volunteers. This created tensions in trying to create a collective, collaborative space. The fact that many of the artists and volunteers were white added to the tensions. Although the volunteers and organizers were able to get through the challenges that this presented, future efforts will most certainly need to take into consideration the dynamics that are created when issues of race, class and gender are not systematically addressed.

PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH ORGANIZING PROCESS: SOME KEY SUCCESS

Grassroots leadership from the frontlines: The organizing principles and approach, as already noted, succeeding in putting the leadership of frontline communities at the center. This included authentic grassroots leaders like Mari Rose Turac from Richmond, CA (with the Asian Pacific Environment Network), Kandi Mossett from North Dakota (with Indigenous Environmental Network) and Stanley Strugill from Appalachia (with Kentuckians for the Commonwealth). It also included the NY/NJ leadership, which, in spite of the many challenges, worked hard, held people accountable, helped to shape the messaging, got the word out, organized

people throughout the region to attend the march, and did so much more. The real and perceived leadership and participation in the movement helped to broaden the base going forward, as people were able to clearly see they have a place in it.

Forging new relationships: Coming back from the experience, there were many beautiful stories of the relationships built among the participants, especially the delegates that caravaned on buses, trains, planes, bringing with them their excitement, confidence, and hope for the future. For the organizers, a successful outcome of the PCM organizing process was the relationships forged between people representing different sectors and between representatives of groups that have not always gotten along. Discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report, this is especially noteworthy for the relationships between grassroots environmental justice groups and their networks (including CJA) and national environmental groups like 350.org, the Sierra Club, Greenpeace, and Avaaz in light of historic tensions between environmental justice groups and big greens. This was by no means a perfect process and work is still needed; but significant gains were made in this area.

Forcing political leaders to pay attention: The scale of the march—and the presence of a diversity of communities and sectors that went far beyond the “usual suspects” of climate politics—sent a message to the political leadership preparing to meet at the United Nations *that they need to be accountable to the grassroots*. This was most obvious when Ban Ki-Moon, Al Gore and NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio finally joined the March.

NYC-based grassroots leadership, leveraging PCM to advance NYC-based campaigns: The local NY/NJ leadership collaborations with national groups leveraged the PCM to make progress with NYC-based climate and environmental justice demands. Two strategically timed banner drops by UPROSE and NYC-EJA during the March highlighted the need for waste equity and Zero Waste, a long-standing local environmental justice campaign, as well as the harmful impacts of gentrification in Brooklyn and its intersection with climate change. Since then, New York City's Mayor announced the city's new

sustainability plan called OneNYC and one of the centerpieces, according to Eddie Bautista, "...is a Zero Waste commitment with a stated goal of 90% diversion of waste from landfills and a commitment to overhaul the City's commercial waste system."

On the gentrification fight, Elizabeth Yeampierre of UPROSE shared, "We had been reading articles and hearing that a new property owner on our waterfront was meeting with organizations and elected officials to push for land uses that were inconsistent with our community's vision and needs. The company has deep pockets and we felt we needed assistance to amplify our concerns...The support that we received from Greenpeace and Ruckus gave us visibility at an unheard of scale—a scale that was equivalent to the size of our struggle. The banners were seen by over 400,000 people which included our elected officials. Days after, UPROSE was called to a meeting with two congressional representatives and was able to gain the support of important unions that marched with us and begin the creation of a powerful coalition to fight back against massive displacement."²¹

PCM ORGANIZING PROCESS: KEY POINTS OF CHALLENGE AND CONFLICT

Although the challenges and points of conflict are outnumbered by the successes and points of alignment, many lessons are already informing ongoing efforts.

Capacity, Internal Tensions and Priorities Given that the People's Climate Week was not originally in CJA's own plans and two "Our Power" Gatherings for CJA members and allies were already in the works (Detroit and Richmond), the Alliance set modest goals at first—a small delegation of about 100 people. As it became clear that additional capacity was required, CJA and its two co-anchors, Grassroots Global Justice and Movement Generation, created a division of labor that significantly stretched their collective capacity.

One point of tension was around CJA's priorities.

CJA National Coordinator Michael Leon Guerrero raised the concern, "...how was CJA going to meet its priority to build up and support the Our Power communities when so much capacity and resources were being directed toward the PCM and related mobilizations? CJA was taking a huge risk; if we didn't have the numbers—if the PCM didn't turn out at least 100,000 people—it could have set us back as an alliance and movement. Because of the level of investment, it would've been a hard conversation to have with members."²²

On the other side, national environmental organizations and the PCM itself hired new organizers to meet the urgent need to expand organizing capacity, sometimes with insufficient training and oversight. The result, according to organizer Samantha Corbin, was that grassroots groups in the planning process were being asked to provide input on decisions without sufficient time to solicit input from their bases:

Many people came in with good intentions and tried to do it well; this was why it was possible to work. But good intentions aren't enough. They are necessary but not sufficient. Some of the depth was lost around time – not just that it was a rapid pace, but some of the steps we would take we weren't able to take. Trying to understand each other before jumping into work never happened. All groups brought something legit and real, but I saw lack of understanding and appreciation.

Samantha's assessment speaks to several important elements that must be put into place to minimize mistakes, burn-out, hurt feelings and more in any comparable future collaborative planning process: relationship and trust-building; effective systems of communication and accountability; and principle-guided work process and decisions. All of these get quickly lost and/or overlooked in the acceleration of a planning process if they are not built in early on.²³

²¹ Email from Elizabeth Yeampierre to I. Kilimanjaro (5/1/15)

²² Interview with I. Kilimanjaro (3/20/15)

²³ Interview with I. Kilimanjaro (3/31/15)



CJA and its grassroots member groups and allies were confronted with how to engage members in a meaningful way so that vision and principles of the CJA and PCM were understood and shared rather than members simply showing up and going home. Yet the pace of the overall PCM organizing was not especially conducive to this. Monica Wilson of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) shared that "...it was challenging to bring the whole network along with us. We didn't want to show up as GAIA's staff, but as the network and as CJA. And so bringing members of our network along was challenging, while having to move that fast. But we tried hard and that's how we all build a stronger movement..." Yet people working across CJA in endless meetings at UPROSE's offices experienced some powerful moments when the realization hit that they could get so much done together. According to Ananda Lee Tan, "When we got up to scale, there was trust and collaborative practice. Bottom up organizing can achieve better pace if adequately resourced."

Communications A challenge that several CJA organizers articulated was the absence of an efficient communication system among themselves and with PCM staff and volunteers. Difficulties and

occasionally tensions grew as the pace quickened. For example, while several of the environmental organizations shared office space in the Manhattan office, there was little coordination with Mobilization Support Team leaders and march organizers who were not in that space, particularly around messaging and outreach. This meant that often decisions were made but did not get passed along to the people responsible for carrying them out, which often led to conflicts, issues of accountability, people doing things that were not in alignment with the team, or making mistakes. On the day of the March, many decisions were made on the fly and not communicated, which led to a tremendous amount of confusion for the volunteers and staff.

That the communications in the organizing process were not effective doesn't negate the incredible efforts of key organizers to share information as best as they could under the circumstances. Key to point out here is that when systems, processes and point people are not established and identified early, breakdowns and confusion are more likely as the pace naturally picks up and the event nears.

Race and Privilege Issues related to race and privilege emerged in a few instances during the



organizing process. In the rush to do things, some members of the team often did not take the time to engage local leadership, frontline communities and communities of color in the development of talking points, posters and other communications materials. This led, for example, to English-only advertisements on the subway system and Chinese-language posters with the wrong date of the PCM.

To the credit of many members of the Mobilization Support Team, assumptions and missteps were named, struggled over and addressed as best as possible, resulting in greater accountability in subsequent behaviors and decision-making processes. One 350.org organizer, for example, solicited input that helped produce more robust, meaningful and appropriate talking points.

As referenced above, the dynamic between newly-hired white college-age organizers working in communities of color and organizers based in those communities also created challenges early on. But this changed, however, in the weeks leading up to the march as the larger organizations recognized the local leadership already organizing in communities and learned that partnering with

these organizations and supporting local infrastructure is a more effective approach to organizing in those communities.

Organizing Culture Another challenge that emerged was related to the different orientation that environmental organizations and environmental justice groups have around relationships. The larger organizations tend to be more *transactional* in how they relate to organizations they don't know or haven't worked with—especially environmental justice groups. On the other hand, the environmental justice groups in CJA tend to be more *transformational*, focusing on a deeper level of relationship-building that leads to longer term change. This orientation—which is rooted in different constituencies and definitions of membership—leads to differences in organizing strategies. The national environmental organizations tend to have members that are mostly middle class, white and/or affluent, whereas CJA members and the communities in which they organize are poor and working class Indigenous, people of color and white communities. Neither organizing approach is fundamentally wrong, but each brings about different aims, and coherence of such differing strategies can be a major challenge.

THE PEOPLE'S CLIMATE JUSTICE SUMMIT AND TRIBUNAL

Members of the Climate Justice Alliance and allies helped to organize the People's Tribunal and Climate Justice Summit. These two critical compliments to the PCM created space for activists, scholars and frontline communities from around the world to delve more deeply into the drivers and impacts of climate change, providing examples from their own communities while creating, sharing and strategizing with one another on some important components of building a winning climate movement. CJA partnered with the New School to host the People's Climate Justice Summit and the United Methodist Women to host the People's Tribunal at the United Nations Church Center.

PEOPLE'S CLIMATE JUSTICE SUMMIT

The People's Climate Justice Summit (PCJS) provided space for the sharing of experiences, struggles, and solutions between five local, 13 national and 10 international representatives of communities either directly impacted by climate change or directly fighting the extreme energy economy and extractive industries and market regimes that drive climate change. The PCJS hosted panels featuring the stories, proposals, and demands of communities first and most impacted.

During this two day summit, panelists addressed a host of false promises and quick fixes that perpetuate inequalities, ecological destruction and extreme energy development, including dams, waste-to-energy schemes, carbon markets and climate smart agriculture. They also discussed systems alternatives and strategies for a just transition in which their communities were engaged. "In the opening panel of the [PCJS], speakers were in consensus about rejecting the financialization of nature, but the question arose: might we need to use pieces of this approach to keep corporations accountable or to protect natural resources?"²⁴ On the panel that followed, movement leaders from Brazil to Mexico to New Jersey shared struggles against incinerators and dams while articulating desires to transform the extractive economy via what CJA calls just transition pathways. A third panel spoke to the threats of climate smart agriculture to people and the planet and the importance of youth in leading real solutions today.

²⁴ Matt Feinstein, While UN Climate Summit Makes False Promises, People's Climate Summit Brings Community-Led Solutions (9/23/14)

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL

On the same day as the UN Climate Summit, the People's Tribunal put on trial the corporations, governments and the United Nations for doing little to slow climate change and address issues of adaptation, mitigation and historical responsibility in real ways. On trial were the false promises they continue to promote, which mask their inaction and perpetuate the problems through destructive market mechanisms. The People's Judicial Panel—whose role was to listen to and amplify the voices of those who are witness to and impacted by climate and environmental injustices—included movement activists Lisa Garcia of Earth Justice, Julia Olson of Our Children's Trust, Rex Varona of the Global Coalition on Migration, and Jeremy Brecher of the Labor Network on Sustainability. The Judicial Panel concluded that “based on the evidence we have heard here today, the nations of our world are in violation of their most fundamental legal and constitutional obligations.”

Testimonies were offered by members of frontline communities from 14 years of age and up and moved from struggles in the New York / New Jersey region through the United States to Mali, Honduras, Kenya, Ecuador and Peru, to name a few. The issues about which people testified were varied and included the destruction of food systems, criminalization of resistance, contamination of water and air, the collusion of governments with corporations and drug lords to steal land and rule by violence, the poisoning of land through extractive chemicals and technologies, and the imposition of trade agreements that undermine local economies. The Judges following the final panel shared this: “The good news is that people are inspired and are still willing—after all of this devastation—to come together to take action...We were completely inspired to continue to take action and not let the decisions of those across the street change our minds.”

CONTRIBUTION OF INTERNATIONAL ALLIES

With support from CJA, the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance and Grassroots International co-chaired the International Committee. Together they brought a strong cohort of over 40 social movement representatives from the Global South to the march and tribunal with two purposes: accompany and show solidarity to the communities and organizations represented in CJA and represent the struggles and perspectives of Global South communities. These international allies made important contributions to the panels at the PCJS and testimonies at the Tribunal, demonstrating that we not only share common enemies, but also share similar visions for a just future. Engaging in these kinds of building and sharing opportunities broke the isolation and helped to advance a common agenda for climate justice, systems change and just transition between our members and our global partners.

Some of the key leaders were: Rosa Guillen of World March of Women from Peru, Mithika Mwenda of Pan African Climate Justice Alliance from Kenya, Maxime Combes and Christophe Aguiton of ATTAC France, Juliette Rousseau of Alternatibas, Mary Ann Manahan from Focus on the Global South, Jorge Santiago from DESMI (Social and Economic Development for Indigenous Mexicans) in Mexico, Miriam Miranda from the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras, Srijana Poudel from the Women Awareness Center in Nepal, Elisa Estronioli from the Movement of People Affected by Dams in Brazil, Mamadou Goïta from the Institute for Research and the Promotion of Alternatives in Development in Mali, and more.



DIRECT ACTION

FLOOD WALL STREET

The day after the PCM, direct action organizers—many from Occupy Wall Street and the post-Hurricane Sandy movement assembly along with CJA member organizations like Ruckus Society and Rising Tide North America—organized the Flood Wall Street action at Battery Park. This was a response to CJA's Call to Action in solidarity with all communities on the frontlines of the climate crises. This act of solidarity was significant in that Flood Wall Street's (FWS) mainly white organizers succeeded in respectfully aligning with and engaging frontline communities in the planning of the action. CJA members helped facilitate a number of the early action planning calls, facilitated dialogue between local action organizers and environmental justice community groups, and sent a large delegation of members and international allies to this action.

Over 2,000 people took over Wall Street to denounce the role of multi-national corporations and financial institutions in promoting fossil fuel exploitation and other forms of destructive, extractive energy. FWS organizers met their articulated goals of planning a successful action more daring than the PCM both in its form and its content, as they directly targeted the economic roots of the climate crisis. FWS organizers attempted to build relationships, solicit input and attempt to make sure their frames were useful. But “CJA folks weren’t available to respond or fully engage in the action organizing process with them. This was more a symptom of the over-stretched and limited capacity, not from a lack of desire or from political difference.”²⁵

As in other direct action demonstrations, activists (more often but not exclusively white) that are willing and able to take actions involving a greater level of risk are themselves often not grounded in organizing practices that are relevant to Indigenous, communities of color and working class communities. In the course of planning this action, the Ruckus Society provided guidance on what consultation means and what actual collaboration looks like. Some of the challenges in the planning process required teaching people what it means to do an action on behalf of the grassroots and helping CJA folks understand why doing direct action was also as critical.

Flood Wall Street coordinators organized a panel of international allies and social movements before the direct action to provide political education for those who were to take part. The CJA delegates were well prepared and participated with enthusiasm. Several international delegates shared with Saulo Araujo from Why Hunger that they were happy to see people from the U.S. engaging in the struggle. “They don’t see that too often in newspapers, because of the filtering (blockade) by the corporate media. The composition of different international voices was another highlight. It seems the only voice from North America was Naomi Klein.”²⁶

ACTION AT THE UNITED NATIONS

On September 23, 2014, United Nations head Ban Ki Moon convened a one-day UN Summit on climate change to galvanize support from government leaders for a new international agreement to curb emissions and implement strategies for climate change adaptation. Members of CJA, allies and supporters attempted to bring a statement that afternoon from the people to world leaders in attendance at the Summit, but were refused entry to the United Nations. The statement wrote:

We demand that world leader’s support and move money to our community-led priorities and local infrastructure needs to build sustainable community economies, energy democracy, zero waste, food justice, public transit and affordable housing – pathways that can create millions of long-term jobs and put our communities back to work. We support Indigenous peoples, our brothers and sisters of the North and the Global South, in their climate justice struggles linking land and water rights, land title and the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Kandi Mossett of the Indigenous Environmental Network risked her credentials to deliver the full statement inside the UN Climate Summit. The exclusion of community members on the frontlines of the crisis reaffirmed what many already knew: that today’s decision-making arenas have been taken over by a corporate agenda that prioritizes destructive profit-driven policies over the well-being of families, workers and communities. Although people were turned back, the action was important for the message it sent to the world about a growing movement of people on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

²⁵ Interview with I. Kilimanjaro (3/31/15)

²⁶ Email to I. Kilimanjaro (3/25/15)



KEY LESSONS FROM NYC CLIMATE WEEK

Numerous lessons have emerged since the September 2014 mobilizations and events, some of which are presented below.

Lead with transformative vision and practice: NYC Climate Week inspired many to share, evolve and/or articulate transformative visions, often based on principles and meta-narratives like *just transition*. This concept is rooted in historic conflicts between communities and workers on the frontlines of environmental justice struggles and is about negotiating pathways to local economies that are environmentally sustainable and healthy. Spelling out these transition pathways to new economies provides vision, hope, and clear and actionable steps for people and communities to take. For CJA's Our Power

campaign, this involves implementing zero-waste solutions, community housing initiatives, local food systems and much more. Building such systems will allow communities to be better prepared to weather the storms that climate change is wreaking on populations around the world.

Ensuring organizing at a fast pace doesn't sacrifice deeper-level questions. When things are moving fast in an organizing process or mobilization, depth is often lost as there is little time to spend discussing and working through deeper-level questions. Early in an organizing process, we need to ensure that systems, guided by principles and clear protocols, are put into place as best as possible. This means anticipating volunteer and staffing needs and developing/identifying training materials. It entails building in time for training informed by an intersectional analysis of race, class, gender, patriarchy, and heteronormativity that also articulates local conditions, dynamics and needs. We need processes that clarifies responsibilities, chain-of command, decision-making processes, and internal communication flow. We also need time early on to struggle

through ideas and develop key messages and talking points.

Invest in the capacity of frontline organizations and their alliances to meaningfully and fully contribute to and participate in national agenda formation, events and other movement building activities. Greater transparency is needed in resource-sharing, allocation, and decision-making related to it. If equal resource allocation went to grassroots organizations, it would create new and better conditions for impactful organizational and cross-sectoral collaborations. The other side of this is that frontline communities need *to be honest and realistic about their own money and capacity* to strategically participate in various movement processes, mobilizations and events.

It is clear that integrity in this area is fundamental to any social movement's progress. In the sacred process of building a movement for systems change, clarity on the what is needed to do that—in terms of finances, human capacity and in other ways—is critical, as is the establishment of clear guidelines how to use, distribute and deploy resources.

It's also necessary to navigate the tension between available resources, the urgency of the moment, and the potential impact of the action. Although CJA's resources and capacity were low and stretched thin, there was a real need to organize activities other than the PCM where frontline community members could speak directly to needs, concerns, challenges, solutions and calls to action. For example, Ruckus Society and several CJA members and allies, in spite of overall exhaustion once the People's Climate March was over, succeeded in coordinating the strategic action at the UN in one day.

Take risks to build relationships and trust: The PCM demonstrated how social movements today must take bold yet thoughtful risks to build powerful relationships and achieve desired results. Though the process of building trust was imperfect, trust and faith in one another grew with small successes. "Everyone took political risks entering the process and making decisions. This meant that march organizers had to put their organizational and personal positions on the back burner so that a broad level of political alignment on strategies could be reached."²⁷ Getting to this point, however, requires investment in building trust. Said Samantha Corbin:

People were trying to build relationships with each other in good faith, but at the same time

the speed and urgency of the organizing kept increasing. Everyone (and every group) had needs that weren't being met which at times led to everyone feeling preyed upon by the other. At some point, members of every group expressed feeling used or taken advantage of or not being listened to...And I saw it as a real stumbling block between the [grassroots and national organizations].

Related to building trust and relationships is *naming and committing to address issues of race and privilege* in honest and respectful ways. In some circumstances, this involves anti-racist and anti-oppression work in order to avoid fragmentation or the reproduction of the same inequities inside the movement that prevail in the broader society. Supporting leadership of local, frontline communities isn't simply a race issue. But the central importance of consulting with, building with, and supporting the local leadership of communities of color manifests most clearly when predominantly white organizations and activists are attempting to work in communities of color. As a demonstration of this principle, the CJA national leadership itself didn't consider stepping up into a leadership role in the planning of the PCM without the invitation from and ongoing consultation and coordination with NY-NJ members and allies. And once they stepped into this role, they prioritized funding and supporting their local members and allies.

Take risks to build power: To build power, strategic risk-taking is needed. A challenge that impacted the planning of the Flood Wall Street action was the fear many people have about arrests with mass direct action. Building training and thoughtful discussion of tactics into an organizing process can address these fears, equipping people with the tools and information necessary to make smart choices about when and how to step into powerful actions that involved heightened personal risk.

Recalibrate the Movement: Those hit first and hardest by the environmental and climate crises should have their voices and concerns heard most, and their strategic and tactical leadership should be respected. "By prioritizing representatives of frontline communities...we are starting to shift the national climate discourse around where climate solutions should come from."²⁸

²⁷ Interview with Michael Leon Guerrero (3/27/15)

²⁸ Interview with Michael Leon Guerrero (3/27/15)

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For purposes of preparing this report, I. Kilimanjaro interviewed:

- Samantha Corbin, Actions Director, The Other 98%
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- Cindy Wiesner, National Coordinator, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
- Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director, UPROSE

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OVERALL CJA NATIONAL COORDINATION TEAM

CJA NATIONAL COORDINATION TEAM LEADS

New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NY-EJA), Eddie Bautista
 UPROSE, Elizabeth Yeampierre
 Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC), Cynthia Mellon
 Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), Tom Goldtooth and Dallas Goldtooth
 Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), Ananda Lee Tan
 The Ruckus Society, Sharon Lungo & Samantha Corbin
 Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), Michael Leon Guerrero
 Catskills Mountainkeeper, Wes Gillingham
 Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ), Cindy Wiesner
 Chorus Foundation, Farhad Ebrahimi

OUTREACH WORKING GROUP

Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), Yuki Kidokoro
 Right to the City Alliance (RTTC), Rachel LaForest and Lenina Nadal
 Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Helena Wong
 GAIA, Ananda Lee Tan
 IEN, Tom Goldtooth and Kandi Mossett
 NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program, Jacqui Patterson

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA

CJA, Marjorie Childress
 Center for Story-Based Strategy (CSS), Christine Cordero
 GGJ, Sha Grogan Brown
 NY-EJA, Natasha Dwyer
 UPROSE, Joaquin Brito
 GAIA, Ananda Lee Tan & Antonia Bruno
 Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative (EJCC), Kari Fulton

FUNDRAISING

CJA, Michael Leon Guerrero
 NY-EJA, Eddie Bautista
 IEN, Tom Goldtooth
 GAIA, Ananda Lee Tan
 GGJ, Sha Grogan Brown

PEOPLE'S CLIMATE JUSTICE SUMMIT AND TRIBUNAL

ICC, Cynthia Mellon & Michael Molina
 GGJ, Cindy Wiesner
 CJA, Michael Leon Guerrero & Marjorie Childress
 GAIA, Monica Wilson
 Grassroots International (GI), Sara Mersha
 NYC-EJA, Natasha Dwyer & Eddie Bautista
 Center for Social Inclusion (CSI), Julia Beatty & Anthony Giancatarino
 National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Colin Rajah
 New School, Ana Bautista
 Just Transition Alliance (JTA), Jose Bravo
 Cornell Global Labor Institute, Lara Skinner
 Labor Network for Sustainability, Jeremy Brecher
 Rural Coalition, Angela Adrar
 Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), Janet Redman & Armando Gaetaniello
 Catskills Mountainkeeper, Wes Gillingham
 IEN, Kandi Mossett
 Why Hunger, Saulo Aurajo

INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP

Grassroots International, Sara Mersha
 GGJ, Cindy Wiesner
 ICC, Cynthia Mellon
 IPS, Janet Redman
 Why Hunger, Saulo Aurajo

FLOOD WALL STREET, DIRECT ACTION TRAININGS, ART & PROPS

Ruckus, Sharon Lungo, Samantha Corbin, Nadia Khastgir, Celeste Faison, Cesar Maxit, Laila Williams
 IP3, Heather Milton Lightning & Marty Aranaydo
 David Solnit
 GAIA, Ananda Lee Tan

APPENDIX A: CJA Events Leading Up to the PCM

Our Power Detroit – Detroit, MI, June 27-29, 2014 • The East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC) hosted a 3-day gathering of youth, students and young adults from frontline communities. They strategized about how to scale up youth leadership in the Environmental-Climate Justice movements and bring about a just transition from an exploitative, polluting economy to a just and healthy one. Over 100 youth from Detroit, New York City, Boston, Kentucky and other regions participated in conversations, skills shares and political education on climate issues – providing tools to organize for a just transition toward zero waste, clean community power, public transit, local food systems, and other shifts that reduce pollution and create jobs. This gathering prepared youth to engage in deeper level conversations and planning toward the People's Climate March.

Our Power Gathering/CJA National Convening – Richmond, CA, August 6-9, 2014 • Four hundred people convened in Richmond to strengthen and coordinate strategies to bring about a just transition out of the 'dig-burn-dump' economy. The gathering helped CJA members, their allies, and networks to prepare for the PCM in terms of the framing and being able to step into leadership roles. The gathering in Richmond demonstrated that we were a real network and gave credibility to CJA leaders involved in the planning and coordination of the PCM that they did, indeed, represent a significant group of frontline communities. This gathering helped CJA gain prominence on a national stage and in turn to raise resources for the PCM and the ongoing work.

The National Convening helped many to prepare politically for the PCM. It also provided space for people to actually meet, see each other and exchange vision, solutions and strategies. For many, this made CJA as an alliance more real and tangible.

New York City Climate Justice Youth Summit – August 7-9, 2014 • Over 700 youth from throughout New York and New Jersey convened for a summit to discuss 1) climate change and its impact on their respective communities; 2) how to build climate-resilient communities; and 3) strategies for mobilizing people to the PCM. Organized by UPROSE, and supported by El Puente, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, The Point, YMPJ and Nos Quedamos, the youth summit brought together folks representing the city's communities of color, which were hit the hardest by Hurricane Sandy and are often "under-resourced and ill-equipped to combat the destructive impacts of climate change."²⁹

Ruckus Direct Action Camp in Upstate New York, August 2014 • Around the time that the CJA was figuring out its role in the People's Climate March, the Ruckus Society proposed hosting a direct action camp to give CJA members a boot camp-style training on direct action theory, strategy, planning and skills. Ruckus seeks to build the internal capacity of movements and groups, like CJA to think critically and strategically about the kinds of direct action that can support strategies that lead to wins. The goal for CJA overall was to build capacity of its member organizations to take direct action for themselves and more broadly for the CJA network to know when to leverage direct action not only on a local scale but on a national scale.

The goals of the camp were to 1) create a space for CJA members to build strategic capacity to do direct action; 2) A brainstorm action ideas for the broader CJA network, including how to plug into the PCM 3) evolve these ideas into more specific action plans. The camp achieved the first and the second but not the third goal. Moving forward, it will be important to continue building the capacity of CJA and its member groups to plan for and engage in direct action.

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Editorial Team:

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Report editors: Michael Leon Guerrero, Tammy Bang Luu, Eric Romann, Ananda Lee Tan, Cindy Wiesner
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²⁹ Young people mobilizing for climate justice (<http://newyork.thecityatlas.org/lifestyle/nyc-youth-fighting-climate-justice/>)



Climate Justice Alliance
OUR POWER CAMPAIGN
COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR A JUST TRANSITION



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