



Bridging the Economic and Climate Gaps

December 2010



Green for All Education and Outreach
greenforall.org/resources



Goals

1. Illustrate the reality of the climate gap and economic gap and how they are related.
2. Inspire excitement and provide information about the role of green-collar jobs in bridging these gaps.

Agenda

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| 1. Introduction to the Climate and Economic Gaps | 10 min. |
| 2. Step Forward/Step Back game | 20 min. |
| 3. Reflection: Fishbowl Sculpt | 20 min. |
| a. Show us how you experienced this game | |
| b. Show how these gaps manifest in your communities | |
| 4. The Power of the Green-Collar Economy to Bridge These Gaps | 20 min. |
| a. Video: Faces of the New Green | |
| b. Exploring the basics of the green-collar economy as a way to bridge the gap | |
| 5. Conclusion & Next Steps | 5 min. |
| TOTAL TIME | 1 hour, 15 minutes |

Materials and preparation

- Agenda on butcher paper
- Step Forward/Step Back game prompts
- Faces of the New Green video and viewing equipment
- Slides of graphs and charts
- Blank butcher paper and markers for next steps
- Sign-in Sheet

INTRODUCTION TO THE CLIMATE AND ECONOMIC GAPS: TALKING POINTS (10 minutes)

Introduce yourself and briefly review the agenda.

“Most of us are pretty familiar with the economic gap. Raise your hand if you have a sense of what the economic gap is?”

Take hands and ask for definitions (e.g., the difference in living standards between the rich and the poor, some people get paid more and have more access to wealth than others, white people tend to have more wealth than people of color, etc.).

“Good. Today we see the economic gap pretty clearly in how unemployment affects people of color disproportionately.”

Show the slide of the unemployment graph.

“And this doesn’t illustrate the number of people who have given up looking for work, the number of people who are underemployed, or those who are underpaid and having to work multiple jobs to meet basic needs.

“So, we know the economic is very evident when it comes to unemployment. How else does the economic gap manifest?”

Take a few hands.

“Now, a less commonly known gap is the climate gap. What does this mean—climate gap? Any ideas?”

Take 1 or 2 hands.



“Yes, like unemployment climate change disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color.

“Let’s play a game that illustrates some of the manifestations of both the climate gap and the economic gap in our own lives.”

STEP FORWARD/STEP BACK (20 minutes)

First, ask everyone to form a straight line, shoulder to shoulder (they do not need to be touching), facing the same direction.

“This game illustrates our levels of economic and ecological privilege in this society, relative to one another. Right now, we’re all starting off equal. But let’s see what happens when we start factoring in the economic gap.

“Take a step forward if..

- You grew up with consistent water, gas, electricity, and trash services.
 - You consistently had access to three balanced meals per day (including proteins, carbohydrates, and vegetables).
 - You attended a well-funded public or private high school.
 - Your parents or ancestors owned a business that received government loans or contracts.
 - You are not the first in your family to go to a four-year university. • You and your family have consistent access to quality health care.
 - Your family owns its own home.
-

“Take a step back if...

- You attended an under-funded public high school.
-

- One or more of your family members is chronically unemployed.
 - Public transportation is under-funded and unreliable in your neighborhood.
 - There are no grocery stores in your neighborhood.
 - Any of your close family members has lost a home due to foreclosure.
-

“As we shift into ecological questions, notice how economic and ecological privilege are related.

“Take a step forward if...

- As the climate heats up, you are confident you and your family will have access to air conditioning and/or other ways to cool down.
 - Your family could (if you wanted to) generate your own electricity by installing solar panels or mini-wind turbines on your property.
 - You and your family can afford to regularly purchase organic food.
 - You have access to and can afford natural skin-care products.
 - You are confident that, if there were a life-threatening disaster in your city, your family could relocate to a safer city if necessary.
 - You have ready access to trees and nature zones.
-

“Take a step back if...

- You grew up near or currently live near a refinery or other pollution-producing facility.
 - You or a member of your family has chronic asthma.
 - You grew up in or live in one of the five smoggiest cities in the country: Los Angeles, California; Visalia/Portersville, California; Bakersfield, California; Fresno, California; or Houston, Texas.
 - Your family gets the majority of its food from convenience stores and fast food chains.
-

- If there were a life-threatening disaster where you live, you and your family might be unable to evacuate without government assistance.
- You do not currently have access to land that is safe for growing your own food.
- You and your family lack easy access to clean drinking water and/or cannot afford to buy a filtration system.”

REFLECTION (20 minutes)

After the Step Forward/Step Back exercise, it is important to give participants a moment to reflect on two key questions:

1. How was that exercise for you? What did you get from it?
2. Thinking about some of the prompts in the exercise, how does the climate gap/eco-privilege manifest in our communities? What does it look like in real life? How does it affect people?

You have some options. You could keep it simple and reflect on these questions through small and whole group discussion. Another option would be to use some interactive exercises. If you choose interactive exercises, use the following outline:

1. Have people partner up for five minutes and reflect on the first question: How was that exercise for you? What did you get from it?
2. Ask people to share a few key points from their partner reflections with the larger group. End this share-out by asking if someone from the group can define the climate gap.
3. Next ask people to form a circle and tell people the following:

“We are about to play a game to reflect a little more deeply on how the climate gap manifests in our communities. What does it look like in real life? How does it affect people? What’s exciting about this game is that it will give us a chance to have this conversation both visually and verbally. Here is how the game works: everyone in the circle has the power to be a sculptor, and there can only be one sculptor at a time. Everyone in the circle also has the potential to be clay that is molded into a image. So, let’s say I step out into the middle of the circle as a sculptor, I can pull anyone I want in to form a part of my image.”

[Model a sample image.]

“Are there any questions? Great. Let’s begin. Anyone who is ready can step in and begin sculpting an image. The topic again is: How does the climate gap manifest in our communities? One sculptor at a time. When you are done with your image, give it a title. We will reflect on it and then someone else can come in and either adjust this image and give it a new title or erase this image and start a new one.”

4. Allow some silence before someone steps in to sculpt. After each image, allow the people in the circle to reflect on what they see. Then allow the artist to explain his/her image if they want to. Remind people that this is not charades. When someone offers an image, it gives everyone a chance to reflect and make their own stories out of it.
5. End the game by inviting people to give themselves a round of applause. You might also want to briefly summarize some of the key points that came up in the reflections about the sculptors’ images.

THE POWER OF THE GREEN-COLLAR ECONOMY TO BRIDGE THESE GAPS (20 minutes)

Section break-down

1. Introduction
2. Facts about carbon and climate change
3. Questions about effects we are experiencing today
4. Solutions: “Mitigation and Adaptation” discussion
5. Exploring equity: Good jobs, job training, job access
6. Take action: What can we do politically and as a movement to make this real ?

Introduction

“So we know that the economic crisis is real and it is affecting our families and our communities in deep ways. We also now know that climate change and environmental crises are a reality.”

Facts about Climate and Carbon Change

Share this fact:

“An important fact to remember is that the carbon we emit into the air takes about 70 years to impact the climate. This means that the effects of climate change we are feeling today are in part a result of the pollution from 70 years ago.”

Questions about current climate reality

Question for group: What are some effects we are seeing today?

Answers to pull out: Hurricanes like Katrina, the floods in Pakistan, the tsunami in South Asia, the melting of the glaciers etc.

“We know that carbon emissions have steadily increased in the last 70 years, so climate change is real and it is going to change life on earth as we know it. Now, there are two important things we need to do as human being to deal with climate change and other ecological crises—we need to try and reduce their impact, which is called mitigation, and we need to prepare our communities to be able to survive these crises, which is called adaptation. This is where the green economy comes in. We can create millions of jobs doing the work necessary to deal with these crises. Let’s think about what kind of jobs these would be.”

Adaptation and Mitigation

Discussion captured on flip chart:

“First let’s look at mitigation—the effort to prevent further climate chaos by reducing carbon emissions.”

Question for group: What kind of work needs to happen to reduce carbon emissions?

Answers: Making buildings energy efficient; installing solar panels; building and installing wind turbines; teaching classes on how to reduce energy consumption; designing, planning, and constructing zero-emission public transportation systems; etc.

“Great. Now let’s think about adaptation, which is basically building resilient communities. You’ll notice that efforts to make resilient communities will also usually help reduce emissions.”

Question: What kind of work will we need to do to make sure our communities are able to survive ecological crises? Think basic needs.

Answers: Build community gardens, install rainwater catchment systems, restore our natural watersheds, make bikes more accessible, green construction, teaching classes in disaster preparedness and how to live sustainably, etc.

“Great, so these are some of the jobs that the green economy is generating. But for our communities who have historically been, and continue to this day to be, left out of new economies and economic booms, it is essential that we do more than just create jobs.”

Exploring Equity

Question: For these new jobs to really help us bridge the economic gap, we need to make sure that these jobs are what?

Answers: Accessible to low income communities and communities of color.

“So that means we need training programs in our communities. What else? The jobs need to be well-paid, at least a living wage. And if they are really going to help bridge the economic gap, we need to make sure that these jobs can become career pathways. What do we mean by career pathways? Let’s take, for example, a young person just out of high school who gets into a job training program for energy efficiency. She learns how to conduct energy audits, going into homes and buildings and identifying all the ways the building could save energy. For this sort of job to be a career pathway, she needs to have the opportunity to get additional training and an opportunity to work in green construction and possibly become a green contractor, or the chance to go on to higher education to become a green architect or green engineer. She could also consider getting into urban planning for sustainable communities. The idea is that these entry level jobs for our young people can be stepping stones towards real careers in the growing green economy.

“So, the final question here is this:”

Take Action

Final Question: What needs to happen politically to make this vision of an inclusive green economy a reality? In other words, what can we do as citizens to help realize this change?

Answer:

- We need to advocate for policies at the local, state, and federal levels that not only set aside public funds for green jobs, but that make sure these jobs are accessible to those of us who have been impacted most by the economic crisis.

- We need to educate and organize our communities so that 1) they are aware of green jobs as a solution; 2) they are able to advocate for green-collar jobs; 3) they can get trained for green job opportunities; and 4) the economic opportunities that the green economy creates can be entry points for low-income communities and communities of color to reclaim our legacy as caretakers of the natural environment.
- Broaden the movement — that's us. We can take action in our communities and expand the number of people who understand these issues and who are spreading the knowledge.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS (5 minutes)

1. *Call to action:* This is the MOST important part of your workshop! At this point you will have looked at problems, solutions, and the role you can play. Now is your opportunity to bring it home and provide a way for folks to get involved. An event people can support, a project that needs volunteers, a community event they can attend — these are all ways to keep people engaged and building toward greater participation.
2. *House keeping:* Make sure to collect e-mails and Facebook tags, answer questions about plans you have for your neighborhood or community, and have the next meeting time on the board in big letters.

Next Steps

1. Follow up e-mail/facebook or call: Make sure to thank people for their participation and remind them of the ways to stay involve that you discussed.
2. Send e-mail sign-ups to Green For All at www.greenforall.org/contact-us
3. Track your meeting for your records: how many people came, did you capture photos, etc. This is helpful for developing your next workshop, and building on your success!



Sign up

Green For All is a national organization working to build an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty.

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