

From the Co-publisher

The "green economy" is now exploding into a billion-dollar sector - with more growth predicted. Before we find ourselves left behind and left out, those of us working to uplift urban America see now as a good time to ask: who is going to benefit from this massive economic growth? And how can we ensure that the job, wealth and health benefits of the green economy do go to those in our society who need them the most? The green pie is huge - and rapidly growing. In the area of clean technology alone, investors poured \$520 million into R&D for things like alternative fuels, solar power and hybrid vehicles in 2004. Driven by fears of global warming and rising oil costs, these investments made clean technology the sixth-largest investment category in the United States.

By 2009, that figure could climb to \$3.4 billion. Internet billionaires Bill Gates, John Doerr and Steve Case are jumping on the bandwagon. And the "greentech" numbers don't even include the exploding business in green construction, energy-conserving retrofits and other eco-friendly businesses.

But we believe that the green economy can do more than create business opportunities for the rich. We believe that it can also create job opportunities for the poor. While curbing global warming and oil dependence, we know that we can also create good jobs, safer streets and healthier communities for urban America. We see it as the chief moral obligation in the 21st century: to build a green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty. We dream of seeing kids who are now fodder for the prisons instead creating zero-pollution products, healing the land and harvesting the sun. We dream of a day when struggling cities like Watts, Detroit and Newark blossom as Silicon Valleys of green capital and enterprise.

We imagine Green Technology Training Centers in all public high schools, with youth being trained to install solar panels on their grandparents' rooftops. We dream of clear skies and clean air over our major port cities (Los Angeles, Oakland, Seattle, New Orleans). Where idling ships once fouled the air, we see solar-powered energy stations that let docking sea vessels power up cleanly. We imagine big trucks purchasing cleaner bio-diesel blends, to take the fair trade goods off the ships without polluting the neighborhood.

We dream of broad support for groups such as the Oakland-based People's Grocery, a market-on-wheels providing organic produce to low-income residents. We envision rooftop gardening and urban farming in every barrio and housing project, ensuring food access and cutting the amount of fuel burned to import food into cities. We see all that healthy, abundant food driving down rates of urban obesity, high blood pressure and heart disease. We envision eco-industrial parks on land once blighted by prisons.

We see community leaders understanding that cities can create good jobs, safer streets and healthier communities for ourselves - while showing the country how to curb global warming and oil dependence.

We dream of a multi-ethnic, grassroots movement transforming urban America by creating jobs, reducing violence and honoring the Earth.

Some will call this unrealistic and advise urban America to keep its dreams small. But that cynicism is the problem in our country, not the solution.

We want to ensure that those communities who were locked out of the last century's pollution-based economy will be locked into the new, clean and green economy.

This issue of *Race, Poverty & the Environment* is another step along the journey to that outcome.

Van Jones
Executive Director
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

& the **Race, Poverty Environment**

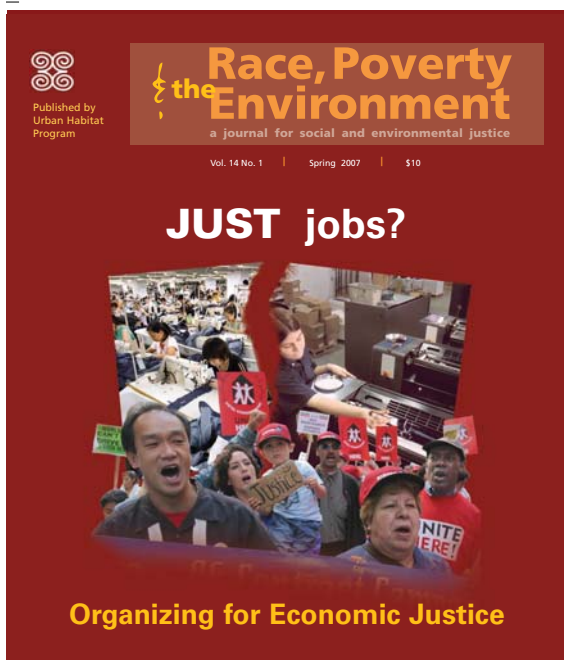
a journal for social and environmental justice



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