

Strengthening Communities

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A look at the numbers...

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HATE GROUPS IN AMERICA

Today there are at least **1,002 hate groups operating in America**, the most since tracking began in the 80's.

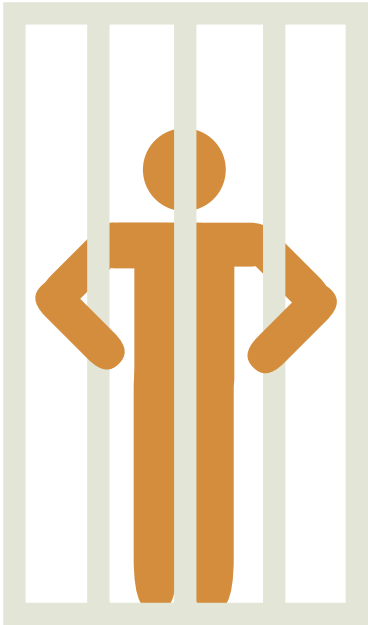
1,002
hate groups

48

Number of "Not in Our Town" campaigns that have been started in cities across America to combat hate groups.

1980

TODAY



x2.3 million

There are currently more than **2.3 million people locked up** in US prisons and jails.

33%

Drop in crime in the 90s after New York began focusing on prevention and rehabilitation, lowering its incarceration rate by 15%

\$3 billion

Amount that could be saved annually if 10% of the non-violent prison population were on parole instead of in prison.

11 million undocumented immigrants live and work in America today, most without access to becoming legal US residents.



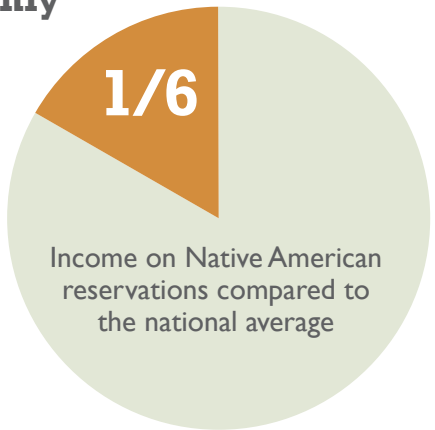
\$200 billion

Cost to deport all the undocumented immigrants in the United States. In addition, it would take about 30 years.

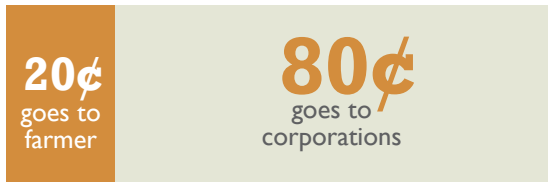
\$66 billion

Tax revenue that would be generated each year by integration of immigrants. **This would more than cover the budget for the State Department and the EPA combined.**

Native American reservations have **average incomes roughly one-sixth** the national average.



When farmers sell their crops to corporations, most receive just **20 cents of every dollar** of the retail price.



15%

Percentage of the country's electricity that could be provided from wind power on reservation lands.

110,000

Number of jobs that would be supported by that amount of wind power generation on reservation lands

\$10

If every household in America would spend this much on local food per week,

\$60 billion

would be invested in their local economies annually.

59%

of Fortune 500 companies and 23 states offer equal rights to same sex couples.

Marriage provides over 1,000 benefits that are denied to same-sex couples.



Go to dreamofanation.org to get the book!

“For a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people’s love and concern for each other.”

➤ Millard Fuller

Community is both life sustaining and unifying; it can be as small as a neighborhood and as big as a nation and everything in between. Community is a way of seeing and something concrete that defines and nurtures the human experience. Millard Fuller was the founder of Habitat for Humanity and his simple but powerful words point to a vision for community that is broad, inclusive and timeless. It calls on us to look within and outside of ourselves to build community in a way that is grounded in compassion and is always **aiming for the common good**.

Communities across the land are growing stronger.

In hearts and minds,

In inner-cities the seeds of beauty and empowerment are blossoming and need to continue spreading.



In rural areas and on reservations, inspiring stories are unfolding.



the flame of unity and inclusiveness is growing.



Transforming Urban Injustice into Beauty and Empowerment

The story I'm about to share is because of a dog. An abandoned puppy that grew to be a much bigger dog than I'd anticipated. When she came into my life, we in the South Bronx were fighting against a huge waste facility planned for the East River waterfront, despite the fact that our small part of New York City already handled more than 40 percent of the entire city's commercial waste and housed a sewage treatment plant, a sewage sludge pelletizing plant, four power plants, the world's largest food distribution center, as well as other industries that bring more than 60,000 diesel trucks to the area each week.

The neighborhood at that time, not surprisingly, also had one of the lowest ratios of parks-to-people in the city. I've lived in this area all my life, and there was no river access because of all of those facilities. Then, while jogging with my dog one morning, she pulled me into what I thought was just another illegal dump. There were weeds and piles of garbage, but she kept dragging me and, lo and behold, at the end of that lot was the river. I knew that this forgotten little street end, abandoned like the dog that brought me there, was worth saving. And just like my new dog, it was an idea that grew bigger than I had imagined. The project garnered much support along the way, and Hunts Point Riverside Park became the first waterfront park in the South Bronx in more than 60 years.

• Majora Carter
• MCG Consulting



Burdens of the South Bronx

Those of us in communities living without environmental justice are just canaries in the coal mine. We are feeling the consequences of our out-of-balance society now, and have for some time. Environmental justice, for those who aren't familiar with the term, states: No community should be saddled with more environmental burdens and less environmental benefits than any other.

Unfortunately, race and class are extremely reliable indicators as to where one might find the good stuff, like parks and trees, and where one might find the bad stuff, like power plants and waste facilities. As a black person in America, I am twice as likely as a white person to live in an area where air pollution poses the greatest risk to my health. I am five times more likely to live within walking distance of a power plant or chemical facility, which I do. These land-use decisions create the hostile conditions that lead to problems like obesity, diabetes and asthma. Why would someone leave his or her home to go for a brisk walk in a toxic neighborhood? Our neighborhood's 27 percent obesity rate is high compared to the rest of the country, and we know that with obesity comes diabetes.¹ One out of four South Bronx children has asthma. Our asthma hospitalization rate is seven times higher than the national average.

Revitalizing the South Bronx

That small riverside park was the first stage of building a greenway movement in the South Bronx. I wrote a \$1.25 million federal transportation grant to design the plan for a waterfront esplanade with dedicated on-street bike paths. Such improvements provide opportunities to be more physically active, as well as encourage local economic development. Think bike shops, juice stands.

Shortly thereafter, I founded Sustainable South Bronx (SSBx), an organization dedicated to greening the local community while providing jobs for residents. We



Green collar workers from Sustainable South Bronx turn a rooftop into a green roof.

**Environmental Equality means:
No community should be saddled with more environmental burdens and fewer environmental benefits than any other.**

secured \$20 million to build the first-phase projects—connecting the South Bronx to its waterfront and to the 400-acre Randall's Island Park. And as we nurture the natural environment, its abundance can give us back even more. SSBx created the Bronx Ecological Stewardship Training (BEST), providing job training in ecological restoration, so folks from our community can get the skills to compete for well-paying jobs. Little by little, we're seeding the area with green collar jobs and with people who have both a financial and personal stake in their environment.

This program differed from the popularized “green jobs” images of inner-city youth with solar panels: climate change mitigation jobs in alternative energy go to folks

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5x more likely to live within walking distance from a power plant or chemical facility

These land-use decisions create the hostile conditions that lead to problems like obesity, diabetes and asthma.



unemployed from other trades with comparable skills. Climate adaptation strategies to combat the urban heat island effect and storm water erosion/flooding costs are new jobs with little organized competition and are both accessible and therapeutic for individuals coming from traumatic experiences like prison and/or combat.

Beyond the Bronx

More than 30 years ago environmental sociologist Robert Bullard identified systematic patterns of injustice in Houston. One hundred percent of the city's garbage dumps were located in black neighborhoods even though only 25 percent of the population was African-American. His book, *Dumping In Dixie*, is widely regarded as the first to articulate the concept of environmental justice.² Bullard went on to found the Environmental Justice Resource Center and has since published 12 books on the subject. In a 2008 interview with Smithsonian, Bullard said, "A study 20 years ago found that race—not income, socio-economic status or property values—is the most potent predictor of where these waste facilities are located. In a February 2007 study, we found this still holds true."³

Communities around the nation continue to experience environmental injustice, and many are engaged in democratic organizing and solution-based campaigns. In one such example, San Diego-based Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) not only successfully blocked the expansion of a fossil-fuel power plant; they also drafted a detailed energy plan that focused on alternative energy sources. A community-wide protest led to the denial of the permit for the proposed project, which would have been located 1,300 feet from an elementary school and 350 feet from the nearest home. The community provided expert testimony and analysis showing that alternative energy options such as solar and conservation were not only feasible and cost-effective, but they could provide three to four times the energy that proposed plant would provide.⁴

Visionaries in other cities also remind us of greater possibilities, for example Bogotá, Colombia, which is poor, Latino and surrounded by runaway gun violence and drug trafficking with a reputation not unlike that of the South Bronx. However, this city was blessed in the late 1990s with a highly influential mayor named Enrique Peñalosa. He looked at the demographics and discovered that few Bogataños own cars, yet a huge portion of the city's resources was dedicated to serving them. As a result, his administration narrowed key municipal thoroughfares from five lanes to three,

As people began to see that issues reflecting their day-to-day lives were prioritized, incredible things happened. People stopped littering. Crime rates dropped. The streets were alive.



(above) Peñalosa transformed this previously decrepit, crime-ridden plaza in Bogotá Colombia into the bustling, thriving city center it is today. (below) Enrique Peñalosa (right, green shirt) reduced vehicular traffic and expanded pedestrian walkways and bike lanes, allowing citizens to travel much more efficiently through Bogotá.



Photo courtesy Institute for Transportation & Development Policy

Photo courtesy Andres Jara-Morey



Photo courtesy Jim West Photography, jimwestphoto.com

outlawed parking on those streets, expanded pedestrian walkways and bike lanes, created public plazas and developed one of the most efficient bus mass-transit systems in the world.

As people began to see that issues reflecting their day-to-day lives were prioritized, incredible things happened. People stopped littering. Crime rates dropped. The streets were alive with people. His administration tackled several typical urban problems at one time, and on a developing country's budget, so we have no excuse in this country. The people-first agenda was not meant to penalize those who could afford cars, but rather to provide opportunities for all Bogataños to participate in the city's resurgence.

A recent report compiled by Alternatives for Community & Environment identified three key principles required for eliminating environmental injustice in our communities (see right).

Residents of Detroit, MI rally near the city's garbage incinerator to voice their concerns for the health of their community.

3 Principles for building environmental equality in our communities

- 1 Create cost-benefit analysis of environmental plans vs public health costs
- 2 Invest in locally relevant green infrastructure and economic development
- 3 Incentivize small green business development with low barriers to entry



Photo courtesy of the Ella Baker Center

Focused on the Triple Bottom Line, Oakland Green Jobs Corps participants work on solar energy panels at Laney College in Oakland, Ca.

Working Together

I do not expect individuals, corporations or government to make the world a better place because it is right or moral. I know that it's the bottom line—or one's perception of it—that motivates people in the end. It's the triple bottom line generated by sustainable development where community projects have the potential to create positive returns for all concerned. What's missing perhaps from the larger debate is a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis between not fixing an unhealthy, environmentally challenged community, versus incorporating structural, sustainable changes.

This is a nationwide policy agenda, and green is the new black, sustainability is sexy, and now it needs to be a part of dinner and cocktail conversations. I want you to grasp the true value of environmental equality. We need to democratize sustainability by bringing everyone to the table and insisting that comprehensive planning can be addressed everywhere. Our energy, intelligence and hard-earned experience should not be wasted. By working together, we can have the audacity and courage to believe that we can change the world. We might have come from very different stations in life, but we all share one incredibly powerful thing—we have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

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From 2001 to 2008 Majora Carter was executive director of the non-profit she founded: Sustainable South Bronx (www.ssbx.org) where she pioneered green collar job training and placement systems in one of the most environmentally and economically challenged parts of the US. This MacArthur "genius" is now president of her own economic consulting firm, and hosts the Peabody Award winning public radio series, The Promised Land (thepromisedland.org).



What's **missing** from the larger debate is a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis between not fixing an unhealthy, environmentally challenged community, versus incorporating structural, sustainable changes.



Creating Food Security, Improving Health, Creating Community

Food security is about more than food; it’s about social justice and equity. Good food is a human right, and to ensure everyone has access to good food requires healthy food systems. Many individuals and organizations are working toward re-establishing this core value as a foundation for society, a society that is sustainable and high functioning.

Urban Food Security

Surprisingly many urban areas in the nation are food deserts—places limited to convenience stores, fast food and liquor stores that are devoid of grocery stores with healthy food choices. Many times people living in food deserts are food insecure—they do not have access to healthy food or possibly even regular meals.

True food security means all citizens have continuous access to healthy, affordable, sustainably grown and culturally appropriate food and products. To establish these systems, we need to close the loop and create integrated systems. Such systems consider land use and ownership, transportation, health, lowering carbon dependency, creating businesses that are locally owned and operated, education, waste stream management and renewable energy production. These pieces link together to form the apparatuses that create the community food system.



• Erika Allen
• Growing Power



Creating Urban Food Oases

We cannot have healthy communities without a healthy food system. Everybody, regardless of economic means, should have access to healthy, affordable food. Industrial farming with cross-country supply chains is not a secure food distribution system and doesn’t supply the healthiest food. It doesn’t create local jobs or support the local economy. Food should be grown where people are. Locally produced food eliminates much of the distribution and transportation costs, providing a bigger return for farmers. In fact, most corporate farmers only receive 20 cents of every food dollar.¹

In 1993, my father, Will Allen, designed a program that offered teens an opportunity to work at his store and renovate the greenhouse to grow food for their communities. This simple partnership to change the landscape of the north side of Milwaukee blossomed into a national and global commitment to sustainable food systems. With three farms, five satellite educational centers, the Farm-to-City Market Basket Program and farmer’s cooperative, Growing Power is now a national touchstone for the community food movement and reaches tens of thousands of community food activists across the country.

True food security means all citizens have continuous access to “good,” healthy, affordable, sustainably grown and culturally appropriate food and products.

Food Security:

The ability to grow, process and consume food locally

To control and operate the food production and distribution systems

The ability to sustain and feed one’s population in times of distress (disaster, terrorism, war)

Have access to food that supports the cultural and spiritual traditions of the people

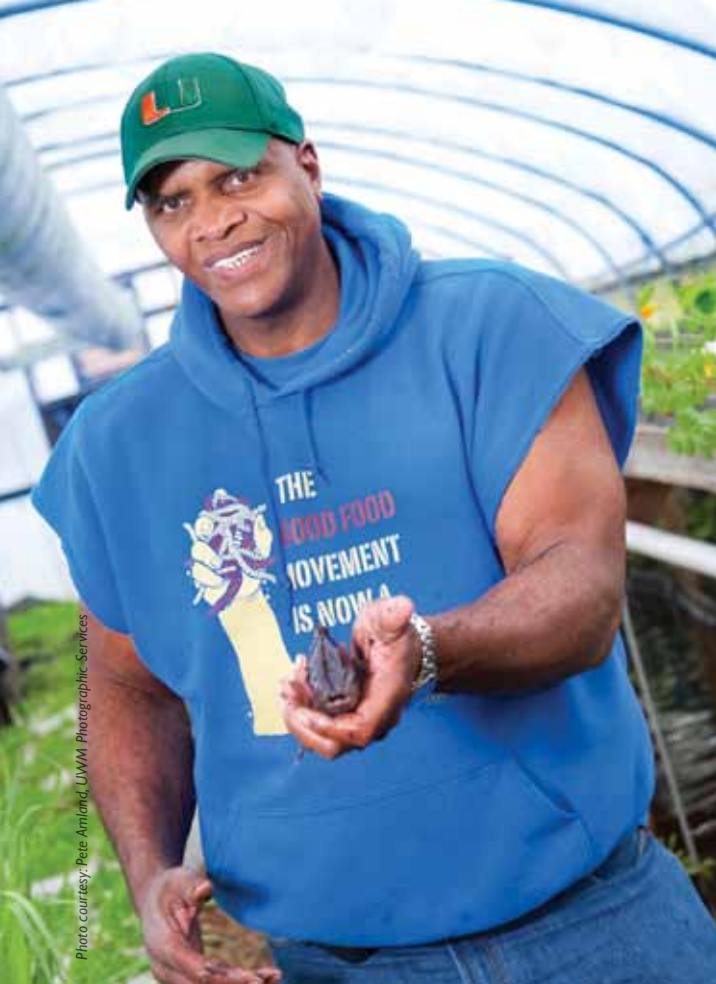


Photo courtesy: Pete Arland/LUWM Photographic Services

Above: Will Allen, founder of Growing Power.
Below: One of the Growing Power greenhouses in Milwaukee, WI.



Photo courtesy: Justin Leonard

In 1993, Will Allen designed a program that offered teens an opportunity to grow food for their communities.

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Jerry Kaufman, a professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison and sometimes called the “father of urban farming,” was one of the first to propose using abandoned industrial land back for urban agriculture.² Now the urban farm movement is gaining momentum and making lasting change in low-income and food-insecure neighborhoods.

Signs of Progress

Chicago Lights Urban Farm is an urban farm and community garden. This garden, initially a community garden model, has made a transition to an urban farm. A community garden provides space for folks to grow what they like in designated allotment spaces, build relationships and add beauty to the concrete landscape. The urban farm onsite is concerned with production, high-value crops and the ability to provide employment and produce to sell. This transition was enabled by the Youth Corp members from public housing adjacent to the farm seeking living-wage employment in the green jobs sector via urban agriculture. The site will eventually house three greenhouses, a farm-stand and office/classroom space for the community.

The goals of the **Iron Street Urban Farm and Organic Waste Processing Facility**, in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood, are two-fold: “growing” healthy soil (via compost) delivered from reputable waste haulers from green restaurants and businesses

with sustainability plans and using closed-loop ecological practices to produce local, healthy and sustainable food year-round. The project uses growing and distribution methods that create a carbon neutral footprint with tangible public health benefits for all with a focus on serving the needs of vulnerable populations. The seven-acre site will include 20 hoop houses to grow fresh produce year-round; aquaponics systems, producing healthy mercury-free tilapia; vermicomposting; livestock (chickens, ducks and rabbits); urban apiary; urban orchard and vine fruit production; green roof production and research; and the training and employment of at-risk youth.

Our School at Blair Grocery in New Orleans' Ninth Ward is a resource-rich safe space for youth empowerment and sustainable community development. Founder and former school teacher Nat Turner said, “We must have safe spaces for youth to take risks to transform themselves.” The project works to increase students' overall literacy by building skills, abilities and confidence, including their sense of efficacy. It teaches them how access resources that build stronger communities and that they are valued participants in community building efforts.

The urban farm movement is gaining momentum and making lasting change in low-income and food-insecure neighborhoods.

Operating out of a former grocery store and two empty lots, both flooded by Katrina, Our School is a unique combination of urban farm and youth education. The student-led urban farm produces \$2,500 worth of vegetables weekly, and students sell it to popular New Orleans restaurants and at the onsite farmers' market.³ An after-school activity center, a home-building and construction program and educational classes on topics such as food justice, New Orleans history, urban communities and public health are also offered at Our School.

“We must bring youth to the table with a developed and articulate vision of their own creation to act as agents of social change,” said Turner. “We must understand that anyone who is not speaking to the youth in our community is not truly speaking to our community.”



Photos courtesy: Our School at Blair Grocery

Our School at Blair Grocery New Orleans' 9th Ward

Operating out of a former grocery store and two empty lots, flooded by Katrina, Our School is a unique combination of **urban farm** and **youth education**. The student-led urban farm produces **\$2,500 worth of vegetables weekly** and students sell it to popular New Orleans restaurants and at the onsite farmer's market.





Photo courtesy: Growing Power

Q&A with Will Allen

Q: What is the Good Food Movement (GFM)?

A movement is something that moves along a continuum. The good food movement is about promoting healthy food to people in all communities. The same type of food that would go to upscale communities, we find ways to get to everyone. That happens along a long continuum that gathers momentum as it moves forward, until it becomes a revolution. That is where we are. The movement started with a few hundred people in the '60s, thousands in the '70s and '80s, continually increasing through the turn of century to where there are now with millions of people involved.

Q: What is the barrier for GFM becoming reality?

I would not call them barriers, and I would call them challenges. First is a lack of healthy soil. We also need to address some of the restrictive policies in place that make getting healthy food to people difficult, particularly in urban and remote rural areas. We have to grow more farmers and producers but educating them takes a long time. Long-term access to land can also be a challenge.

Q: How do we scale up?

For both local and global communities, we need to provide training and resources to grow intensively inside of cities. Because of the high cost of this valuable land and oil, we must maximize space. We have to rethink how we grow—rather than cost per square acre we need to

change our mindset to cost per square foot! We want to generate \$5 per square foot, on an acre of intensively farmed land that will gross a farmer more than \$200,000 per year.

Q: So it's kind of counter-intuitive but scaling up does not mean farming more acres like big agriculture, but maximizing small spaces?

Yes, and scaling up also means creating more jobs, by using small spaces. How do you engage, re-engage communities, who want to be part of it? The key is growing high-nutrient soil, not using chemicals, using natural inputs, closing the loop with our current waste streams. It also means developing relationships with your consumers and CSAs (community supported agriculture) are a good example. Asking the consumer to pay upfront for a share of the farms produce over the season, sharing the risk with the farmer. So when there is a bumper crop, you get more tomatoes than you know what to do with, and when there is a drought, you take the hit with the farmer. This makes the system truly community based.

Q: Hope for the future?

I think one of my hopes for this movement/revolution is that it keeps gaining momentum, that we get thousands of people involved and create a new industry that grows jobs. That is my big thing right now, how do we create more jobs, new strategies? One way is if the regional training centers are able to replicate our work in a culturally appropriate way, we will be able to impact the food system nationally and globally.

Also I would like to see agriculture training back in the schools, re-enchanting our youth and their connection to farming and the earth. I would also like to get more top-down operators involved in supporting community agriculture; this is important too, from all areas and many players need to be involved. The revolution will require hundreds of different job categories to be successful.

For sustainable food systems and urban farming to scale up on a national level, not only do we need more farmers; they also need to earn a living wage. Farmers need the support of the community.

Scaling Up

Expanding the local and sustainable food systems requires farmers, farmers, farmers. Urban agriculture has the potential to generate living wages for farmers who have been trained and know how to grow intensively and market their products.

For sustainable food systems and urban farming to scale up on a national level, not only do we need more farmers; they also need to earn a living wage. Farmers need the support of the community—individuals, business and local government, who see the value in sourcing food locally. Revising city and county zoning policies to legalize commercial urban farms would be the initial step. Local and regional governments could show their support for local farmers by instituting policies that prioritize locally grown products. Consumer education is also important. Consumers will be more likely to seek out locally grown food when they understand the value of supporting the local economy and as well as the likely increase in nutritional value.

Shining examples of success are sprouting up around the country, and it is clear that converting urban areas from food deserts to oases of abundance builds community, creates jobs, improves health and reduces our carbon footprint.

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An urban garden, featuring rows of tomatoes and kale, in Chicago, IL.

Photo courtesy: Linda N.



Photo courtesy: Tishar Doyal



Photo courtesy: Tishar Doyal



Photo courtesy: Charlie Vinz

Erika Allen is projects manager for Growing Power (www.growingpower.org) and is headquartered in Chicago, IL. As the daughter of Will Allen, she has a small-farm agricultural background and experience. She spent her formative years involved in all aspects of farm management, from transplanting seedlings to managing farm stands and farmers' markets. Allen received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and recently received an MA in art therapy from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Growing Power is a national non-profit organization and land trust supporting people from diverse backgrounds, and the environments in which they live, by helping to provide equal access to healthy, high-quality, safe and affordable food for people in all communities.



The Next Generation of Family Farming

• Brian DeVore
• Land Stewardship Project

The news is full of stories about the demise of family farming in the United States. Indeed, the numbers are sobering—the number of farmers 75 and older has grown by 20 percent since 2002, and the number below the age of 25 has dropped 30 percent.¹ The aging farm population is due to several factors, but a major reason is a simple lack of young people replenishing the ranks.

For much of the 20th century, one could launch a successful farming operation with a little luck and a lot of sweat equity. Today, skyrocketing land values and market prices that often don't cover the cost of putting in a crop or raising livestock have combined with federal farm policies that disproportionately support larger farms to make entry into farming a daunting if not unachievable task.

And once a farmer gets established, she or he is faced with a situation where all aspects of the food chain—from processing to packaging to retailing—are dominated by a few powerful players who can basically call the shots on what prices are paid to farmers, as well as what prices are charged to consumers. Four firms now control at least 83 percent, 66 percent and 55 percent, respectively, of the nation's beef, pork and turkey processing markets, according to the University of Missouri's most recent *Concentration of Agricultural Markets* report.² Three firms control 54 percent of flour milling.³ Based on conventional economic wisdom, when four firms control more than 40 percent of a market, it's no longer



This retiring coleseed farmer has no one to pass his farm on to and is having a hard time finding a beginning farmer to buy it.

And as large-scale industrialized operations push out diversified family-sized farms, agriculture has become more alienated from its ecological roots. As a result, all those monocrops of corn and lakes of liquid manure are helping make agriculture one of the largest producers of non-point source pollution (polluted surface water runoff) in the US, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.⁴

The US Geological Survey has found that the popular corn herbicide Atrazine, which has been connected to numerous human and animal health problems (like cancer, infertility and heart and liver

Based on conventional economic wisdom, when four firms control more than 40 percent of a market, it's no longer a competitive one.

a competitive one, and farmers selling crops and livestock into such a market have little control over their own financial destiny.

Unfortunately, key government policies tend to favor those producing higher volumes of a few targeted commodity crops—mainly corn, soybeans, wheat, rice and cotton. The result of these policies has shuttered Main Streets in rural communities and created a greater reliance on food controlled by a handful of mega-firms.

problems) was present in streams in agricultural areas about 75 percent of the time, and in groundwater in agricultural areas about 40 percent of the time.⁵ Water contamination levels of nitrogen, a keystone fertilizer for corn production that causes, among other things “blue baby syndrome” in human infants as well as the Gulf of Mexico’s dead zone, are going up.⁶ Seven to 20 percent of all wells in states like Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin contain levels of nitrate-nitrogen that exceed health standards.⁷



Four firms now control at least 66 percent, 83 percent, and 55 percent, respectively, of the nation's pork, beef and turkey processing markets.

Consumers, environmentalists and communities are calling for a more sustainable agriculture, one that is reliant on good management and an intimate knowledge of the land.

This kind of farming requires more, not fewer farmers.

But there are real opportunities and a great need for a new way to work with the land. It seems that all of the problems associated with industrialized agriculture—the emptying communities, pollution and concerns about food safety—have created a backlash. Consumers, environmentalists and communities are calling for a more sustainable agriculture, one that is reliant on good management and an intimate knowledge of the land. This kind of farming requires more, not fewer farmers.

Within the past decade, there's been an explosion in demand for local food raised using environmentally sustainable meth-

ods. Direct food sales—a direct transfer from the farmer to the consumer via such avenues as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations, farm stands, farmers' markets, the Internet, etc.—skyrocketed from \$812 million to \$1.2 billion in just 5 years—a 49 percent increase, according to the latest Census of Agriculture. The Organic Trade Association has more good news: sales of organic foods in the US more than tripled from \$8.6 billion in 2002 to \$26.7 billion in 2010.⁸ By the end of 2010, there were 6,132 farmers' markets in the US, which is around 5,000 more than there were two decades ago, according to the USDA.⁹

Another positive trend has been the explosion in the development of farming systems that are low-cost, profitable and environmentally sustainable, and that produce food products that consumers are willing to pay more to buy such as grass-fed beef; grass-fed dairy; and organic grains, fruits and vegetables. But farming methods that rely on alternative production and marketing models take a lot of management skills. Studies show that a major barrier to adopting sustainable farming methods is lack of information and firsthand

In the past decade there's been an explosion in demand for local food, raised using environmentally sustainable methods.



knowledge related to such systems. Farmers adopting alternative production methods are more likely to be successful if they are part of some sort of formal or informal network of like-minded farmers.

Farm Beginnings

That's why, when Roger and Michelle Benrud decided to launch a grass-based dairy farming enterprise, they enrolled in the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course on sustainable farm management. Courses like this provide firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The Benruds learned business planning and goal setting, as well as marketing methods that help farmers capture the most value for their production. Perhaps most importantly, through the class they were introduced to farmers who were already running profitable operations of their own. The opportunity to visit established farms and see firsthand farm management systems successfully put into action is priceless. And through this interaction, an informal farmer network is created.

Studies show that a major barrier to adopting sustainable farming methods is lack of information and firsthand knowledge related to such systems.



A lesson at Farm Beginnings in sustainable farming techniques

An Iowa State study found that **if just 25 percent** of the fruits and vegetables consumed in the state **were grown** by local farmers, the statewide economic impact would be **nearly \$140 million in output**; over \$54 million in labor income alone would be **paid to roughly 2,000 jobholders**.

After learning crucial management skills, the Benruds gradually built up a successful dairy operation. Their milk is sold through the organic market and has been sold through a specialty butter and cheese cooperative, which has racked up numerous national awards for its excellent butter. This means the Benruds receive a premium price from health-conscious consumers who also appreciate the environmental benefits of pasture-based dairying.

Sixty-six percent of graduates of sustainable farming courses in Minnesota who are farming say their annual net farm income has increased on average \$12,500 since taking the course.¹⁰ Over 20 states have initiatives that help beginning farmers get started, and many are using a community-based approach. Since the majority of the new farmers coming out of these programs are pursuing enterprises centered around local, sustainably raised foods, the economic development potential is tremendous. Counties with organic farms have stronger farm economies and contribute more to local economies, according to a University of Georgia economic analysis. An Iowa State study found that if just 25 percent of the fruits and vegetables consumed in the state were grown by local farmers, the statewide economic impact would be nearly \$140 million in output; over \$54 million in labor income alone would be paid to roughly 2,000 jobholders.¹¹

Community Building

This movement is not just about creating the next generation of livestock producers, CSA farmers and specialty crop growers. It's also about revitalizing rural communities and creating active members of society. With the network in place and a business focused on community, it's not a far leap for these farmers to take on bigger roles in their communities by serving on boards, volunteering and getting involved with local decision-making institutions like townships.

This is developing a solid constituency of citizens who can educate lawmakers about the bright future for family farming. Graduates of these programs hosted lawmakers during the debate over the 2008 Farm Bill and talked about their own farms, and the expanding market for their regionally and sustainably produced meat, dairy and vegetable products. They shared their vision for the renewal of a family farm system of agriculture that supports vibrant rural communities and a healthy landscape. And they zeroed in on the public policy that was needed to help more people like them get started. They were living proof that there are many opportunities in agriculture that go beyond bolstering the bottom lines of the Cargills and ADMs of the world.

As a result of such efforts, when it was signed into law, the 2008 Farm Bill provided financial and administrative

support for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). BFRDP is a precedent-setting attempt by the federal government to support community-based programs that conduct beginning farmer education, training and mentoring.

Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers

Enlightened government agriculture policy will help clear the way for revitalizing family farms, but even more exciting is that anyone who eats has a chance to play a role in reinventing our food and farming system. The benefits of buying locally grown food from your nearest farmers' market or CSA operation go far beyond simply benefiting the farmer. The health and environmental benefits that come with local, fresh, sustainable food are worthy of support in their own right, but then also consider the economic and community perks that can result. If residents of just one Iowa county,



The outdoor market in Madison, WI is the largest outdoor farmers' market in the US, and is a signature weekly event for Wisconsin's capitol.

With an ever-expanding community of family farms, we have a chance to reinvent the agriculture industry, revitalize rural communities and improve the land through an expanded transition to more sustainable farming practices.

Black Hawk, spent \$10 of their weekly grocery bill on locally grown food, that would amount to \$2 million every month invested in local people, local farms and independent local businesses, according to the University of Northern Iowa Local Food Project. Try replacing or augmenting your produce from the big chain grocery store with a CSA membership next summer. Make an effort to replace your meat with locally grown grass-fed varieties at least once a week.

Buying local, sustainable food shows government decision-makers and the business community that there is a demand for these kinds of products. But it also provides a critical morale boost to the hardworking farmers themselves. Whenever we make a food-buying choice, we are sending a tremendously powerful message back to rural America about what sort of farming is valued.

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Brian DeVore is a staff member of the Minnesota-based Land Stewardship Project (www.landstewardshipproject.org), which, among things, coordinates the Farm Beginnings program. Since 1997, Farm Beginnings has trained hundreds of farmers in sustainable management techniques. Farm Beginnings-licensed courses are now being taught in six states.



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Supporting a Green Future in Native American Communities

Ojibwe prophecies speak of a time during the seventh fire when our people will have a choice between two paths. The first path is well-worn and scorched. The second path is new and green. It is our choice as communities and as individuals how we will proceed.

The economy of the future is the green path, and we are keenly interested in having our communities at the center of this transition. With reservation unemployment rates at between 15 to 80 percent and per capita annual incomes roughly one-sixth the national average, the well-worn and scorched path is not the solution. A path with food security, clean energy solutions and a green jobs initiative is a part of our prophecies and is, for our Mother Earth, essential.¹

• Winona LaDuke
• Honor the Earth



Two generations ago, most tribal communities produced their food locally.

Today, the average meal moves **1,546 miles** from farm to table.

The Challenges We Are Facing

Two generations ago, most of the tribal communities in the north produced our food locally. Today, we buy food shipped from far away, whether by Wal-Mart, Food Services of America or SYSCO. The average meal moves between 1,200 and 2,500 miles from farm to table.² And because we also rely so heavily on petroleum to grow our food, some scientists suggest that we are using between 10 to 15 calories of fossil fuels to create one calorie of food.³ This means that our food security is now tied to industrial food systems and oil. We are feeling the consequences of that relationship. Food prices are skyrocketing as the cost of oil rises. Food is costing more and more, not just in dollars but also environmentally and in terms of our physical and cultural health.

Nationally, tribes spend tens of millions of dollars on fuel assistance each year to support our low-income tribal members. That is a lot of *zhooniya*. As electricity and fuel prices continue to rise, the dollars we spend on energy will increasingly outpace all subsidies. We need to create long-term, sustainable solutions to poverty by creating a renewable, energy-efficient future. In today's climate-challenged world, food sovereignty and energy sovereignty are the keys to creating green economies on tribal lands. Not only will these strategies be viable for tribal self-determination, but they will also lead to independence, jobs and sources of export revenues.

Approximately 50% of a tribal economy's money is spent outside the reservation on food and energy, the largest drain on tribal wealth.

Food Security Approximately 50 percent of a tribal economy's money is spent outside the reservation on food and energy, the largest drains on tribal wealth. Native peoples often live in food deserts, meaning we have very few places we can easily get to that sell healthy foods. However, many of our traditional foods are drought- and frost-resistant, making them less susceptible to food production problems associated with climate change. Traditional food restoration through organic farming is a means of restoring our food security but it can also help mitigate climate change by limiting and even absorbing carbon emissions.

Many tribes are implementing traditional food programs such as local food production, seed saving, educational workshops and ecological restoration work for wild rice, buffalo and other culturally essential foods. The Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona received a Native Communities Grant from Honor the Earth, and the funds are being used for programs that encourage traditional foods in school lunch programs. The tribe also conducts traditional food educational presentations at community events and hosts two farms that grow traditional foods,



Photo courtesy of Honor the Earth

Students pick apples for their school's Traditional Foods program.

one of which is being transitioned into a learning center. In addition to food security, returning to a traditional diet has the potential to undo much of the illness and harm processed foods have caused in our communities because traditional foods are healthier.

Energy Efficiency Our current homes and buildings waste a great deal of energy. In fact, 30 percent of the energy we pay for in our homes and buildings is wasted because of inefficient construction and appliances.⁴ Energy efficiency and conservation are the simplest ways to save money and the first step toward creating a clean energy economy.

Weatherization and energy-efficiency retrofits are also the first steps in energy sovereignty. The White Earth Land Re-

covery Project, working with the White Earth Band of Ojibwe and local utilities, is working on weatherization renovations and alternative heating sources for the 700 homes that qualify for fuel assistance. The program is set to expand with a proposed local training program in both energy audits and weatherization and additional solar heating panel installations. Program staff also worked in collaboration with Honor the Earth, Little Earth of United Tribes, the Rural Renewable Energy Alliance and Fresh Energy to install two solar heating panels on Little Earth's Elders Housing Unit in Minneapolis. Replicating this type of work in all reservations will save our people millions of dollars in utility costs and create thousands of meaningful jobs.

Renewable Energy Like energy efficiency, renewable energy has excellent potential to create living-wage, dignified jobs. Tribal lands are incredibly rich in energy resources, with an estimated 10 percent of the country's energy resources,⁵ which holds promise to create valuable job opportunities. It is estimated that renewable energy and energy efficiency were responsible for \$970 billion in industry revenues and 8.5 million jobs.⁶ Wind and solar energy generate 40 percent more jobs per dollar invested than coal mining.⁷

In order for the US economy to stabilize carbon emissions, we will need to produce around 185,000 megawatts of new power over the next decade. The ten-year total projection for wind energy, according to the Renewable Energy Policy Project, entails the creation of 125,000 megawatts of power. This means up to 400,000 domestic manufacturing jobs in wind power alone.⁸ The new jobs of the green economy can and should include investment and progress in Native communities, both urban and reservation.

Tribal lands are incredibly rich in energy resources, holding an estimated 10 percent of the country's energy resources, which lends well to valuable job opportunities.

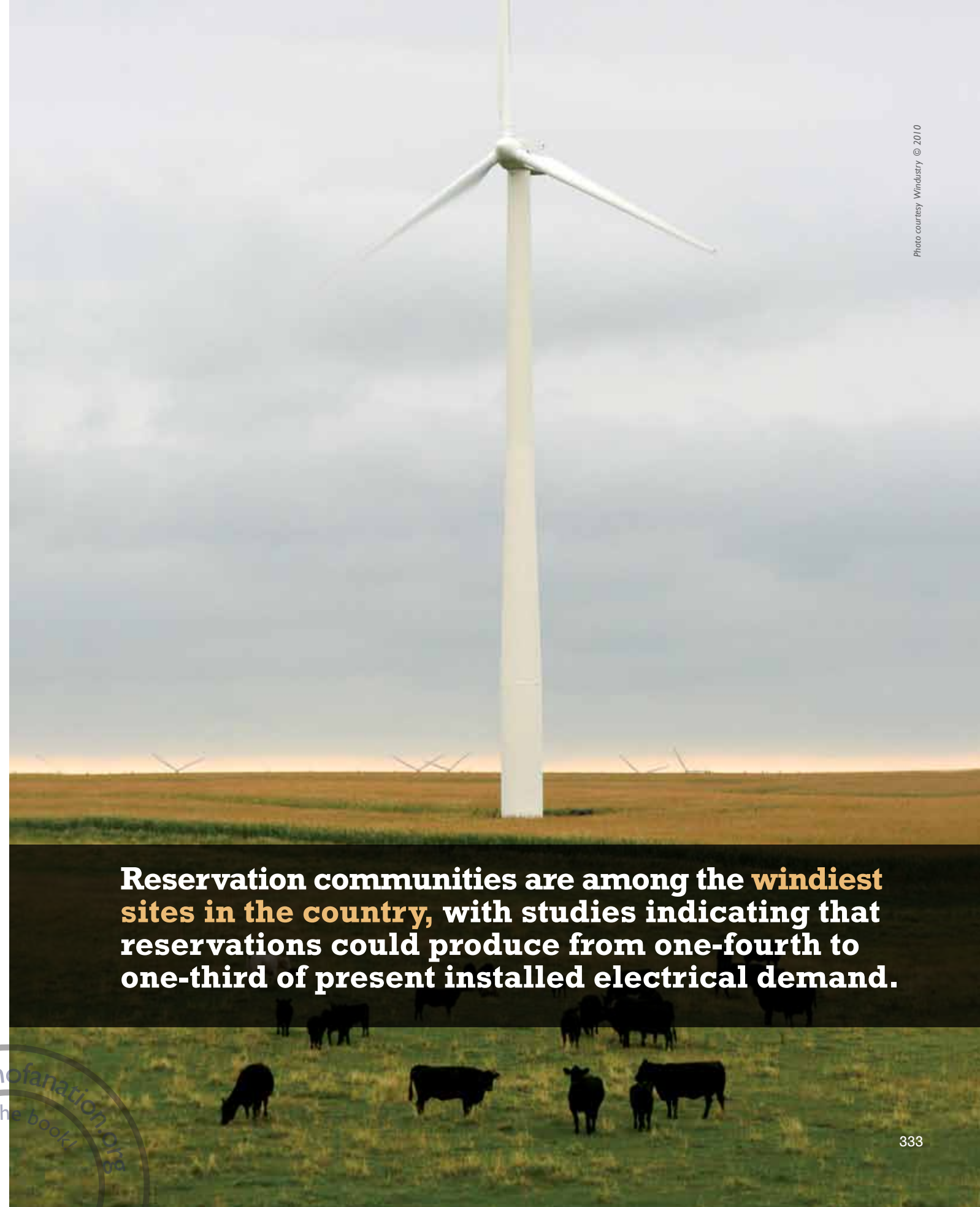


Photo courtesy Windustry © 2010

Reservation communities are among the windiest sites in the country, with studies indicating that reservations could produce from one-fourth to one-third of present installed electrical demand.



“Navajo Green Jobs continues their grassroots campaign to strengthen the economy of the Navajo Nation with sustainable business & industry.”

Young People Affirming a Prosperous, Green Future for the Navajo Nation

During the summer of 2008, about 50 young people dressed in green gathered outside the Navajo Nation Council. As the Council deliberated over funding a program to provide loans to small-scale sustainable businesses, the young demonstrators marched into the session cheering and waving green flags to show their support. Behind the group's vocal support, the Council passed the program by a vote of 62 to 1.

Many of those activists went on to form Navajo Green Jobs, which continues their grassroots campaign to strengthen the economy of the Navajo Nation with sustainable business and industry. The group still marches in their trademark green shirts to raise environmental awareness throughout the Southwest, and they have also started programs to map the progress of green initiatives within the Nation and provide community members with the tools and support needed to start their own sustainable businesses.

And according to activist Nikki Alex, Navajo Green Jobs has a mission that extends off the tribal lands, “The indigenous people have an answer, yet we're the least heard people here. We're just trying to get the word out that we indigenous people live with very small carbon footprints, we live sustainably, we do have answers.”¹¹

from the editor

Tribal Wind Energy Nationally, tribal wind-power potential is tremendous. Reservation communities are among the windiest sites in the country, with studies indicating that reservations could produce nearly 15 percent of the nation's electricity.⁹ Wind energy represents an excellent opportunity for reservation-based employment and also represents a fuel source with economic predictability and security into the future. Many reservations in the Dakotas and Montana have class-six or class-seven wind, which is the best you can have.

In Minnesota, White Earth, Red Lake and several Dakota reservations have class-four wind, which represents good potential for commercial-scale projects and the export of energy. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota Community has installed a 1.5-megawatt wind turbine, solar hot water panels and a green roof. The community also partially owns a biofuels plant. The White Earth reservation hosts a 20-kilowatt wind turbine and is looking to install 250-kilowatt and 750-kilowatt wind turbines over the next three years.

The Campo Reservation in Southern California partnered with the local utility to build California's second-largest wind-power project in the mountains east of San Diego. At peak capacity, the 160-megawatt wind farm will produce enough power for 104,000 homes. The tribe has an equity stake and hopes to eventually own the project.¹⁰

There is great potential for some of the ongoing demand for electricity generation to be met by tribal installations and tribal power. Actualizing this potential will require resources and investment, training and a national strategy that incorporates Native peoples.

Tribal Solar Energy Solar also has vast potential for self-sufficiency, revenue and jobs for First Nations. Tribal lands could produce an estimated 17 trillion kilowatt hours of solar electricity annually, over four times total US annual electrical generation.¹¹

The US Department of Energy's Tribal Energy Program, which provides financial, technical and educational

assistance, has funded several solar projects, both feasibility studies and installations, on tribal lands.¹² The Jemez Pueblo tribe, in New Mexico, has taken it a step further and is building the first utility-scale solar plant. The project is slated to include 14,850 solar panels on 30 acres. It is estimated at \$22 million and will be financed through government loans, grants and tax credits.¹³ With a transmission line already available at the site, and an average of 310 sunny days a year, the 4-megawatt solar project is expected to generate \$25 million in revenue over the next 25 years for the tribe through the sale of the electricity.¹⁴ As well, there is interest in putting a solar power



Green jobs advocates celebrate the success of their campaign to bring green jobs to the Navajo Nation after the Navajo Nation Council voted to create a green jobs policy and establish a commission to pursue grants and opportunities for green color job development.

Tribal lands are incredibly rich in energy resources, holding an estimated 10 percent of the country's energy resources, which lends well to valuable job opportunities.

and self-sufficient business ventures and traditional agriculture projects.¹⁵

In recognizing the links between food, health, fuel

project of at least 200 megawatts on the former Black Mesa coal strip mine, which has the potential to create a good energy source out of an ecologically bad history.

Clean Energy, Local Food, Green Jobs: Bright Future

Tribes across the country are proving that it's possible to take control of our future by looking to clean energy, food security and the promises of the growing green economy. For example, on the Dinétah-Navajo Nation in Arizona, the first green jobs bill among First Nations was passed to create the Navajo Green Economy Commission. Committed to zero or minimal CO2 emissions and other pollution, the Commission will focus on sustainable green manufacturing, local

poverty and energy, we can address the global challenge of climate change and peak oil and the economic and health challenges afflicting our communities. By investing in energy efficiency, renewable energy and local food systems, Native communities can help secure a place in the developing green economy and ensure a sustainable future. Native nations, the federal government and private enterprise are helping to make this a reality, but the pace of change and financial support need to be greatly scaled up.

In the end, we as Indigenous peoples need to control our own destinies by exercising food and energy sovereignty. Our future generations are counting on us.

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Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabe) is an internationally renowned activist working on issues of sustainable development, renewable energy and food systems (www.honorearth.org). She lives and works on the White Earth reservation in northern Minnesota, and is a two-time vice presidential candidate with Ralph Nader for the Green Party.



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Envisioning an Inclusive World

The Importance of the Gay Civil Rights Movement

“C onstitutional amendments should be used to expand freedom, not restrict it. Gay and lesbian people have families, and their families should have legal protection, whether by marriage or civil union. A constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages is a form of gay bashing and it would do nothing at all to protect traditional marriages.”
➤ Coretta Scott King¹

In a world defined by difference, our strength depends on our common humanity. As a country, we’ve made great progress in improving equality for women and minorities, but there’s still room for improvement in recognizing our common humanity. Our nation was built on the ideals of fairness and equality for all, but all do not experience those values. Gay Americans still face discrimination on many levels, in the workplace and in places of worship, to name a few. Same-sex couples do not experience the same safeguards and legal rights as opposite-sex couples, such as Social Security, health insurance and unquestioned hospital visitation.



... Donna Payne
Human Rights Campaign



In a world defined by difference, our strength depends on our common humanity. As a country, we’ve made great progress in improving equality for women and minorities but there’s still room for improvement in recognizing our common humanity.

Black Civil Rights Movement and Gay Civil Rights Movement

I cannot separate the African-American part of me and the lesbian part of me. They make up my whole being. However, there are concerns around equalizing the hardship that the black civil rights movement faced with that of the gay civil rights movement. There are differences between the struggles my ancestors faced during slavery and the civil rights movement, and the modern LGBT civil rights movement. However, there are shared basic inequalities that cannot be overlooked, such as housing and workplace discrimination. But civil rights are really about the way that we treat people. Discrimination shows through our behavior toward each other.

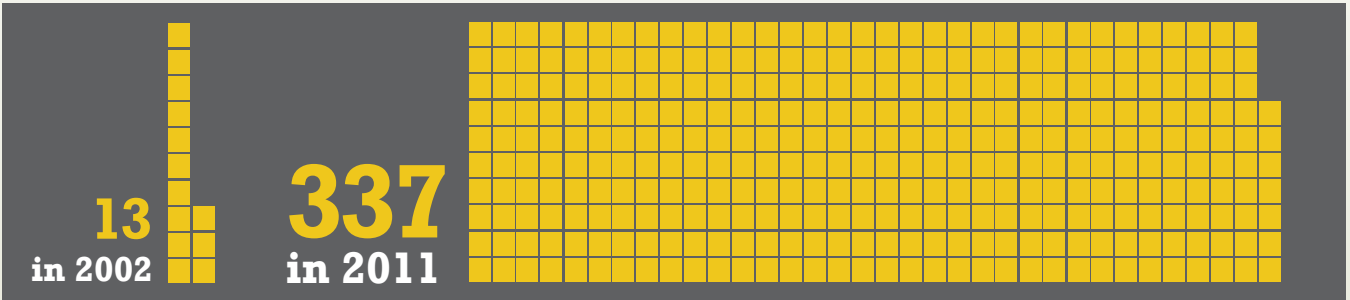
The NAACP recognizes the need for civil rights for the gay community as well. At a historic event in New York City in September 2010, Benjamin Jealous, the President of the NAACP, visited the New York Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Center and spoke to a large audience about working together. It was the first such public appearance by a sitting NAACP president openly stating that gay rights are civil rights.²

Bringing Fairness Into Focus

Fairness in the workplace has been recognized as a fundamental right protected under federal law. In the US, we are legally protected against employment discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, national origin or disability. However, working Americans are not legally protected against sexual orientation or gender identity and gender expression discrimination. Currently, there is no federal law that consistently protects lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals.

In recent years, businesses have implemented policies aimed at creating safe and productive workplaces for gay and lesbian employees. The majority of Fortune 500 companies have prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation since 1995 and have offered partner benefits since 2006. The number of companies that receive top ratings from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s Corporate Equity Index rose from only 13 in 2002³ to 337 in 2011.⁴ However, more work needs to be done to translate inclusive policies into an inclusive climate as more than half of LGBT employees hide their LGBT identity at work.⁵

SIGNS OF PROGRESS: NUMBER of COMPANIES to receive top ratings from HRC’s Corporate Equality Index:



HOWEVER... More work needs to be done to translate inclusive policies into an inclusive climate, as **more than half** of LGBT employees hide their LGBT identity at work.

All families deserve the ability to protect themselves with basic legal rights and safeguards.

There are over

1,049 benefits

that come with marriage that make day-to-day family life manageable.

Those rights include:

Hospital visitation, Social Security benefits, immigration, health insurance, estate taxes, family leave, nursing homes, home protection & pensions

None of these benefits are available to same-sex couples because they can't get married.

Civil unions and domestic partnerships only grant

1/4 of marriage protections

At its core, the push for marriage equality is simply about making the day-to-day lives of same-sex couples and their families secure.

Marriage and Relationship Recognition

At its core, the push for marriage equality is simply about making the day-to-day lives of same-sex couples and their families secure. All families deserve the ability to protect themselves with basic legal rights and safeguards. There are 1,049 benefits that come with marriage. Those rights include hospital visitation, Social Security benefits, immigration, health insurance, estate taxes, family leave, nursing homes, home protection and pensions. None of these benefits are available to same-sex couples because they can't get married! Many argue that civil unions and domestic partnership laws can offer this protection, but they only grant one-quarter of marriage protections.

The Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act (DPBO) would provide domestic partnership benefits to all federal civilian employees on the same basis as spousal benefits. These benefits, available for both same- and opposite-sex domestic partners of federal employees, would include participation in applicable retirement programs, compensation for work injuries and life and health insurance benefits. DPBO would bring employment practices in the federal government in line with those of America's largest and most successful corporations. In addition, 59 percent of Fortune 500 companies, 23 states, the District of Columbia and over 150 local governments make benefits available to public employees and their same-sex partners. This is great progress, but we need to be working toward equal rights and benefits for both opposite- and same-sex couples.

Currently, only marriage can provide families with true equality, due to the federal legal rights associated with marriage. Vermont, New Jersey and New Hampshire offer civil unions, which are, like domestic partnership recognition, a form of relationship acknowledgment that grants same-sex couples access to state-level marriage rights but not federal-level rights. In the US, same-sex marriage is legal in six states: New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, New Hampshire and Vermont, as well as in Washington, DC. Equality-seeking groups across the country have created marriage campaign initiatives in other states.

59%

of Fortune 500 Companies provide domestic partner benefits to their employees.

In addition,

23 states

+ the District of Columbia + over

150

local governments make benefits available to public employees and their same-sex partners.

This is great progress but we need to be working toward equal rights and benefits for both opposite and same-sex couples.

In the US, same-sex marriage is legal in five states:

Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York and Washington, DC.



Participants in an Iowa City rally celebrate after the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in Iowa. The poster in the center reads, "Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain," Iowa's state motto.

Several countries have joined the ranks of showing support to same-sex couples and their families. The list is growing and reflects the equality that is possible.

Seeing Equality Throughout the World

Since the gay civil rights movement started, there has been progress around the world to secure protections for individuals, their relationships and families. Several countries have joined the ranks of showing support to same-sex couples and their families. The list is growing, and they reflect the equality that is possible.

- **South Africa** was the first country in the world (in 1996) to include a section in their constitution on LGBT rights, which declares, “The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including sexual orientation.” Adoption rights and marriage recognition followed in 2005.
- **The Netherlands** was the first country to legalize marriage in 2001 and became the beaming light in the world that gave us all a glimpse of possibility for the future.

- **Canada** followed with marriage recognition, adoption and the banning of all discrimination including gender identity in 2003.

We are now surrounded by a path that shows us how things should be for everyone. For the past four years, more countries have recognized same-sex marriage, adoption and openness in the military and banned all discrimination against gay and lesbian individuals and families, including Norway, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, Iceland and Argentina.

Gaining Fairness in America

Nothing smells better than progress! We’re seeing it around the world and in the US. Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, a policy that was put in place to restrict US military officials from efforts to reveal the sexuality of a service member was repealed in 2010. This policy also kept the military from adding to their ranks if a person was openly gay, lesbian or bisexual. Removal of this federally mandated law was preceded by military research showing that its repeal would not harm military effectiveness.

Another step in the right direction is the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

Conceived as a response to the bias-motivated murders of Shepard and Byrd, the act gives the Department of Justice the power to investigate and prosecute bias-motivated violence by providing them with jurisdiction over crimes of violence where a perpetrator has selected a victim because of the person’s actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

Progress is also being made in terms of relationship recognition. New federal regulations regarding patients’ hospital visitation rights have gone into effect nationally. These new regulations require all hospitals participating in Medicaid and Medicare programs, which is almost every hospital in the country, to permit patients to designate visitors of their choosing and prohibit discrimination in visitation based on a number of factors, including sexual orientation and gender identity. That’s equality!

America was founded on the ideals of liberty and justice for all. We have come a long way in strengthening civil rights for US citizens; however, progress toward fundamental fairness and equity for gay and lesbian individuals and families is still possible. At the Human Rights Campaign, our dream is of an America where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are ensured equality and embraced as full members of the American family at home, at work and in every community.

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Support Fairness in America

- 1 State your support for full marriage equality.
- 2 Patronize businesses that support equality and encourage others to implement non-discrimination policies.
- 3 Become informed of initiatives in your area, locate local LGBT advocacy groups and support their work.
- 4 Vote for candidates that support LGBT civil rights.

President Obama signs the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell in 2010.



As one of the Human Rights Campaign’s (www.hrc.org) key representatives, Donna Payne works closely with our civil rights organizations and leaders across the country to increase inclusiveness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities of color. Her work includes leading HRC’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities program. In 2009, she was chosen by TheRoot.com as one of 100 established Black Americans who are making exceptional contributions in their professions and communities. Payne is also a founding board member of the National Black Justice Coalition. She graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in political science.



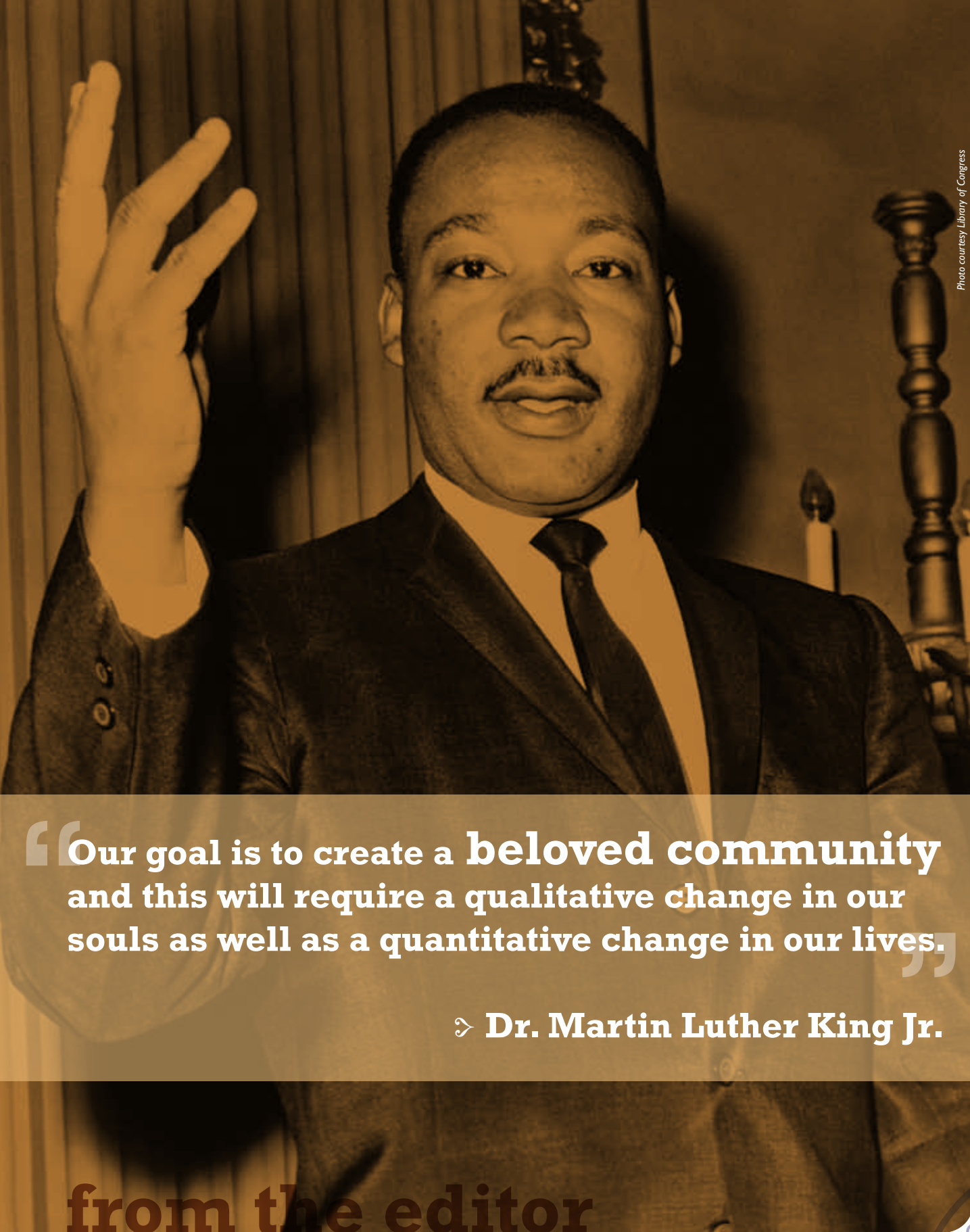


Photo courtesy Library of Congress

“Our goal is to create a **beloved community** and this will require a **qualitative change** in our souls as well as a **quantitative change** in our lives.”

➤ **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

from the editor

Immigrants in America: Common Values, Common Dreams

America’s success has always been driven by a unique combination of core values, clear-eyed pragmatism and unity of purpose. It’s a fusion that has carried us through war and recession, through disaster and recovery and onward toward the quest of a more perfect union.

When it comes to the increasingly heated debate over immigration, however, we seem to have forgotten our national formula for success. Where we should be lifting up our core values of fairness and accountability, our policy discourse is spiteful and arbitrary. Where we should be seeking realistic solutions based on evidence, we are opting for shrill gestures and political theater. And where we should be working together as a nation, we are mired in division.

⋮ Alan Jenkins
⋮ The Opportunity Agenda



Photo courtesy: Ludovic Bertrou (flickr)

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The system for legal immigration is shockingly outdated and inadequate for the needs of American industry in agriculture and many other sectors.

This is not the first time that America has lost its footing on an important national issue. But neither is it too late to turn things around. When it comes to immigration, it's time for practical solutions that uphold our nation's values and move us forward together.

First, the Facts

Americans are understandably frustrated by a badly broken immigration system. Yet there is inadequate discussion of precisely how it is broken. There is simply no way for the 11 million undocumented immigrants

in our country to become legal residents or begin a path toward citizenship. The system for legal immigration is shockingly outdated and inadequate for the needs of American industry in agriculture and many other sectors, and the backlogs of immigrants with close family ties in the United States have made that process unworkable.

Though they have no way of legalizing their status, those immigrants are a part of our nation's economic engine and of the social fabric of many communities around the country. They are caregivers, mechanics,

Though they have no way of legalizing their status, those immigrants are a part of our nation's economic engine and of the social fabric of many, many communities around the country.

They are caregivers, mechanics, laborers, professionals & college students.

They are a part of us.



laborers, professionals and college students. They are a part of us.

Immigrants can also be a vital part of our nation's future, including our much-needed economic recovery. Even before we were a nation, those who chose to journey to the New World were people who wanted to rewrite their destinies, who wanted their stations in life to be determined by their own efforts rather than by the circumstances into which they were born. With them came an entrepreneurial spirit that time and again has led to innovation and progress.

In the 21st century, that innovation has often translated to job creation and a boon to the economy. In 2010, for example, approximately 340 out of every 100,000 Americans created a new business each month; the rate for foreign-born Americans that year was 620 out of 100,000—more than double the average.¹

"Immigrants not only help fuel the Nation's economic growth," wrote Edward P. Lazear, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors to President George W. Bush in 2007, "but also have an overall positive effect on the income of native-born workers."² A study authored by the Council went on to state that immigrants have lower crime rates than natives and improve the solvency of entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare. The dairy industry estimates that half of US farms rely on immigrant labor to put produce and dairy products in our grocery stores.³

Returning to Our National Values

Yet these new Americans' full contribution has not yet been tapped, due to our broken system. To avoid the threat of deportation, they are forced to live underground. Unscrupulous employers can and frequently do take advantage of this situation, opting to pay sweatshop wages—or not pay at all—because they know these workers have no recourse under the law.

While attempts to right this situation have fallen victim to partisan bickering and ideological arguments, we have too often witnessed the ills brought by misguided efforts to enforce the laws under our current broken system. In May 2008, federal officials conducted the largest immigration raid in US history at a meat-packing plant in Postville, Iowa. Nearly 400 workers—more than a third of the plant's employees and almost ten percent of the town's population—were taken into custody. The aftermath was akin to that of a natural disaster. Businesses were shuttered, including the meat-packing plant. Churches were empty. Half of the school system's 600 students were absent. And families were torn apart.

Policies that allow such actions are unnecessarily harsh and do not live up to our national values. Neither do laws like Arizona's S.B. 1070 and similar copycats, which single people out based on ethnic stereotyping and put cities and police departments at risk of significant and costly lawsuits. These efforts violate our cherished civil liberties and illustrate the America we *don't* want to become.

Protesters in Minneapolis, MN march on International Worker's Day, against immigration raids, deportation policies and the Arizona S.B. 1070 law.



Photos courtesy of Flickr



Three generations of Mexican-American citizens stand together at a rally for immigration policy reform in the nation's capitol.

The Bigger Picture

While the frustration felt by many in Arizona and other states is understandable, a patchwork of draconian solutions will not solve our national problem. Those who focus on deportation and border fences are missing the bigger picture. Nearly 50 percent of undocumented individuals currently living in the United States came into the country legally, through a guarded port of entry, then overstayed their visas.⁴ Yet between 1993 and 2005, US spending on border security tripled—and some legislators are calling for more.⁵

Likewise, mass deportation is not a realistic option. In 2010, a record 392,000 people were deported from the United States.⁶ Even if that rate were maintained year after year, deporting 11 million undocumented immigrants would take nearly 30 years and cost over \$200 billion.⁷ More importantly, it would tear our nation and communities apart. These are people who work in American farms and factories, people who buy clothes and food for their families. In many cases, they are also people who have taxes deducted from each paycheck,

though they have no way to access that money later or get the full benefits of being taxpaying citizens. Removing them from the economy would reduce the US GDP by an estimated \$2.6 trillion over just the next ten years.⁸ And the human impact on families and neighborhoods would be staggering.

Our immigration system is broken, and Americans are hungry for solutions—workable, comprehensive solutions that address the entire problem. Above all, Americans value fairness. When asked, the majority of those polled said they would favor a solution in which undocumented individuals are put on a path to citizenship if they agree to learn English, pay a fine and pay back any taxes they owe the US government.⁹ That's a solution that works.

And in addition to reflecting our values, integration of the existing 11 million undocumented immigrants would bring in an additional \$66 billion of revenue from income and payroll taxes as well as various administrative fees.¹⁰ If there were ever a time for actions that

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Even if this rate were maintained year after year,

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bolster the US economy, that time is now. Continuing to sacrifice America's values and economic opportunities, solely for the sake of partisan bickering and ideological posturing, benefits no one but the politicians.

Though fixing our broken immigration system at the federal level would be the most efficient approach, there are a number of proactive steps that state legislatures can take to integrate immigrants living in their communities. Affordable courses for English-language learners typically have long waiting lists and are in need of funding. Wage and hour laws should be enforced for all workers, not just those with documentation. And implementing policies that limit police inquiry into immigration status, especially when working with a victim or witness to a crime, improves public safety for all.

Despite the negative rhetoric that has controlled the debate around immigration and held us back from national progress, there are civic and political leaders who understand the benefit of recognizing the reality of immigration, as well as the many contributions immigrants make and the value of integrating them into the fabric of society. Those who want to see positive change in our country must make their voices heard. Only when Washington hears a chorus of Americans demanding real, effective, values-based solutions will the bickering end and the action begin. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

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Reforming Prisons Saving Billions Creating Opportunity

... Nastassia Walsh
... and Tracy Velázquez
... Justice Policy Institute

Sadly, “the land of the free” has become the land of the imprisoned for millions of Americans. The United States has by far the highest incarceration rate in the world.¹ While we have just 5 percent of the world’s population, the United States holds 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. There are currently more than 2.3 million people locked up in US prisons and jails, and the numbers continue to increase. The number of people in US prisons has increased 275 percent over the last 25 years.² It will take dramatic change in the way the US reacts to crime and social problems in order to turn around our current state. We as a nation need to come to terms with our national impulse to try to solve our social problems with more and more iron bars.

There are several reasons for the dramatic increase in the number of people imprisoned over the last 25 years, but one area that cannot be convincingly attributed to growing prison populations is crime. Prison populations grow when crime is up, and they grow when crime is down. Bruce Western at Harvard University recently found that only 10 percent of the crime decline in the 1990s was due to increased use of incarceration.³ Some states lowered their incarceration rates and still experienced a drop in crime.⁴ New York, for example, lowered its incarceration rate by 15 percent while experiencing a 33 percent drop in crime. And Maryland’s crime rate fell 5 percent at a time when they lowered their incarceration rate by 24 percent. Such uneven results do not support continued over-reliance on incarceration.

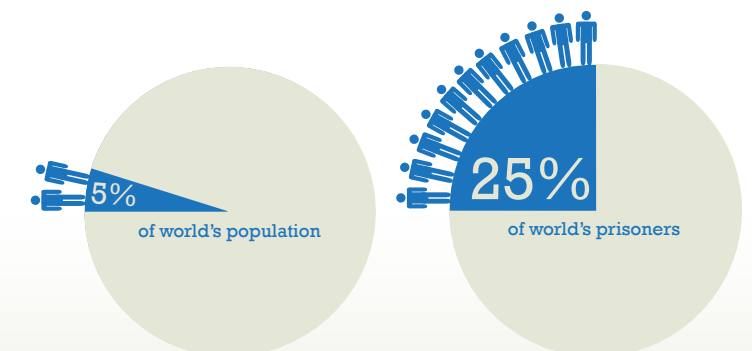
New York lowered its incarceration rate by 15% while experiencing a 33% drop in crime, and Maryland’s crime rate fell 5% at a time when they lowered their incarceration rate by 24%.

The poor and communities of color are the most severely impacted by US incarceration policies. African-American adults are 4 times as likely as whites and nearly 2.5 times as likely as Hispanics to be under correctional control.⁵ One out of every nine young black men is currently behind bars.⁶ Disparate policing practices, access to counsel, treatment before the courts and availability of drug treatment are some of the factors that contribute to this disproportionality.⁷ Incarceration breaks up families and disrupts communities, creating a cycle that is reinforced by an unequal allocation of resources that create meaningful employment and educational opportunities.

In addition to the lack of proportional public safety benefits from increased incarceration, this burgeoning correctional system costs taxpayers over \$74 billion per year. Some states, like California, are spending more on their corrections systems than they spend on higher education.⁸ California now spends over \$10 billion on its corrections system and provides only \$1.6 billion to its public university system.⁹ While there was a time when rehabilitation and services were part of the correctional system, many states have all but done away with these programs due to shifts in philosophy and budget cuts. Without these programs, fewer people are able to be successful after serving time in prison: in fact, two

in three people released from state prison will be rearrested for a new offense within three years.¹⁰

With 95 percent of the people in prison returning to the community someday,¹¹ it is to the benefit of individuals, families and public safety to ensure that they make a successful transition.



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Providing Treatment and Services in the Community Can Improve Public Safety

With the “war on drugs,” society has moved from a largely public health approach for treatment of substance abuse to one of law enforcement. Individuals with substance abuse problems have become a significant percentage of the prison population. Police have more resources to proactively seek out people involved with illegal substances. These factors have led to a dramatic increase in the prison population over the last 30 years. Now, more than a quarter of prisoners are incarcerated for drug offenses alone.

Numerous studies have shown that providing substance abuse and mental health treatment, employment and education in the community are more effective at improving public safety and life outcomes for individuals than incarceration. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy estimates that for every dollar spent on drug treatment in the community the state receives more than \$18 in benefits in terms of reduced crime—more than three times the benefits of providing treatment inside prison.¹² Yet states continue to put the lion’s share of this type of funding into systems of corrections that have not been shown to be the most effective way to improve public safety.

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Reforming Parole Can Improve Safety and Save Money

There is an enormous benefit to allowing people to live in the community, contribute to that community and participate in family life,¹³ but fewer people now are being released to parole than are being admitted to prison. Increased utilization of parole for individuals who are no longer deemed a risk to public safety is a readily available way to reduce prison populations quickly and safely. However, as the current system operates, most parole systems are in the business of supervision, not providing services and resources necessary to help people succeed as they are leaving prison. For this reason, 27 percent of people released on parole will be returned to prison on a technical violation—that is, something that isn’t a new crime but violates their conditions of parole, such as missing appointments or not paying fees.¹⁴

Ideally, parole should be a way to provide resources and support for people who are returning from prison and trying to be productive members of their community. Reducing the number of people returned to prison on technical violations could save states millions of dollars annually. At an annual average cost of around \$23,000 per person,¹⁵ prison is a costly endeavor compared to a

maximum of about \$4,000 for people on parole.¹⁶ Reforming the agenda of parole systems to one of support and services could save states millions by keeping people in the community, while improving public safety and individual life outcomes.

Doing it Better in Maryland

One example of such reform is Maryland’s Proactive Community Supervision (PCS) program, a pilot program with quantifiable results that is being brought up to scale statewide. With the PCS program, parole agents are in a more cooperative, service-oriented role, rather than merely a role of supervision. A case plan is developed for each person on parole, which identifies potential triggers for participation in illegal behavior. A risk assessment instrument is used to determine appropriate levels of supervision and support and helps identify ways in which to best support people who might be at higher risk of rearrest. Visits with people on parole are based on the performance of the person on parole, rather than an arbitrary or preset level of supervision or number of visits. People on parole who participated in this program were less

likely to be arrested for a new offense (32 percent vs 41 percent) and less likely to violate their parole (20 percent vs 29 percent). The services that PCS provides decrease the chances that a person will return to prison, but also reconnect people during the often difficult transition back into the community.

Reducing the Need for More Prisons in Kansas

In 2007, Kansas approved criminal justice legislation with the potential to significantly reduce the projected need for additional prison beds. This legislation included the creation of a performance-based grant program for community corrections to reduce parole revocations by 20 percent and restore earned good-time credits for good behavior for individuals incarcerated for non-violent offenses, so that more people will be released on parole.¹⁷ This change in the parole system is projected to save \$80 million over the next five years in reduced capital and operating expenses, about \$7 million of which will be reinvested in community corrections and substance abuse and vocational training programs.

Individuals preparing to be released from prison attend a graduation ceremony after completing a technical education apprenticeship program.



Photo courtesy California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

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States with the highest percentage of high school graduates have the lowest crime rates.

Minnesota and Utah have the highest percentages of high school graduates and have violent crime rates **nearly half** the US average.

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Making an Early Investment Can Save Money in the Long Term

Making smart investments in communities and social institutions is the most effective way of improving public safety and supporting communities. Research shows that states that spend more on education have lower crime rates than states that spend less.¹⁸ States with higher levels of education attainment, where the largest percentage of their population has at least a high school diploma, have the lowest violent crime rates. Minnesota and Utah have the highest percentages of high school graduates in the country and have violent crime rates nearly half the US average. In addition, states like Connecticut and Illinois, which in-

money saved on prisons, states could put more money into education and employment skills, while also funding community-based services for both youth and adults that have been proven to be effective.

While there is no single answer for solving states’ public safety challenges, it is clear that attempting to spend our way to public safety via more “cops, courts and corrections” is not the type of comprehensive strategy that is needed to protect public safety. This strategy will only continue to bloat US prisons and perpetuate the racial disparities now associated with the criminal justice system. We should instead seek effective alternative methods to dealing with social problems that promote public safety, strengthen com-

The Alliance for Excellent Education reported that a 5 percent increase in male high school graduation rates would produce an annual savings of almost \$5 billion in crime-related expenses.

creased their higher education spending by over 30 percent, saw dramatic reductions in their crime rates: a 15 percent drop in their violent crime rate over five years.¹⁹ The Alliance for Excellent Education reported that a 5 percent increase in male high school graduation rates would produce an annual savings of almost \$5 billion in crime-related expenses.²⁰ With the

munities through prevention and educational services and improve the way we support people returning to the community. This more comprehensive strategy is good for people, good for communities and good for the overall well being and safety of our country.

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