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Movements for Climate Justice

– Brian Tokar

Just a few years into the current millennium, popular movements to address the emerging global climate crisis appeared to be at an impasse. Although scientific evidence was rapidly converging with respect to the nature and consequences of human-derived climate changes, public attention to the issue lagged far behind, especially in the United States. Efforts to engage the public were most often limited to explaining the science of global warming and emphatically making the case that the phenomenon was real; this limitation was most apparent in Al Gore's popular documentary film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, but appeared endemic to the movement as a whole.

Even in the aftermath of the 2007 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which declared that the evidence for human-caused climate change was now "unequivocal," global warming was most often viewed as a somewhat esoteric scientific concern, with consequences that would be felt at some indefinite future time and most dramatically affect the inhabitants of remote and uniquely endangered ecosystems. The most iconic symbol of this earlier wave of climate activism was the polar bear, struggling to stand its ground amidst shrinking ice flows in the Arctic north.

When tens of thousands of people converged on the streets of Copenhagen during the landmark UN climate conference in December of 2009, a different perspective was clearly emerging.[1] Some activists still dressed as polar bears, while others aimed to focus the world's attention on the need to reduce the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide to a maximum of 350 parts per million.[2] But a far more urgent outlook on the climate crisis was also beginning to capture the world's attention. This view, known as "climate justice," is rooted in vulnerable communities around the world that have experienced severe and destabilizing climate-related disruptions to their lives and livelihoods. This chapter will examine the perspective of climate justice, its origins and scope, as well as some of its challenges in moving forward.

Origins of Climate Justice

The first acknowledged reference to the concept of climate justice appeared in a 1999 report titled *Greenhouse Gangsters vs. Climate Justice* by the San Francisco-based Corporate Watch group.[3] The report was mainly an examination of the petroleum industry and its disproportionate political influence, but it also made an initial attempt to define a multifaceted approach to climate justice, including:

- Addressing the root causes of global warming and holding corporations accountable;
- Opposing the destructive impacts of oil development, and supporting impacted communities, including those most affected by the increasing incidence of weather-related disasters;
- Looking to environmental justice communities (see below) and organized labor for strategies to support a just transition away from fossil fuels;
- Challenging corporate-led globalization and the disproportionate influence of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and World Trade Organization.

The report's conclusions were highlighted at a 1999 rally at Chevron Oil's headquarters in San Francisco, as well as at international conferences held in the Netherlands in 2000 and on the Indonesian island of Bali in 2002.

The Corpwatch authors were active participants in the US movement for environmental justice, which began in the 1980s and had become a focus for inner city, indigenous, and poor rural communities confronting their disproportionate exposure to a variety of environmental hazards. The movement was galvanized by several successful local campaigns, as well as a landmark, church-sponsored report, *Toxic Wastes and Race*, which revealed that the racial composition of communities is the largest factor in the siting of hazardous waste facilities in the US. The report documented that 3 out of 5 African-Americans nationwide live in close proximity to abandoned toxic sites.[4]

News of the *Toxic Wastes and Race* report helped unite a variety of currents that had been challenging this reality on the local level for many years, and helped empower African American, Native American and Latino activists to demand a greater voice within the Euro-American-dominated environmental movement.[5] In 1991, a National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit issued a comprehensive public statement against environmental racism and for environmental justice.[6] By the mid-1990s, leaders such as Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) were articulating the need to bring the deepening climate crisis into this framework, understanding that people of color would be as disproportionately impacted by climate disruptions as by chemical toxins. The movement's second Leadership Summit in 2002 issued a document titled "10 Principles for Just Climate Change Policies in the US."[7]

Also throughout the 1990s, international NGOs such as the World Rainforest Movement, Friends of the Earth International and the Third World Network drew public attention to local struggles of indigenous and other land-based peoples in the global South against the rising levels of resource extraction that accompanied neoliberal economic policies. They joined with Corpwatch, IEN and others at a meeting in Bali in 2002 to develop the Bali Principles of Climate Justice, a comprehensive, 27-point program aimed to "begin to build an international movement of all peoples for Climate Justice."[8] Campaigns to highlight indigenous land struggles helped shape the international movement against corporate-driven globalization in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and became a significant focus for organizations engaged in international climate justice organizing today, including IEN, the Global Forest Coalition, and the Global Justice Ecology Project.[9]

Several years earlier, at the 1997 UN conference that produced the Kyoto Protocol, then Vice-President Al Gore had offered that the US would endorse an agreement only if mandated greenhouse gas reductions were implemented through a system of market-based, tradable emission permits. The protocol eventually came into effect without US ratification, and policy measures in the E.U. and other countries increasingly come to rely on such "cap-and-trade" measures to nominally reduce greenhouse pollution. Market skeptics, concerned about the injustices inherent in this approach, convened a meeting in Durban, South Africa in the fall of 2004 that included representatives of social movements and indigenous peoples' organizations based in Brazil, India, Samoa, the US, and UK, as well as South Africa. That gathering drafted the Durban Declaration on Carbon Trading, which has gained over 300 endorsements worldwide.[10]

When the U.N.'s annual climate conference was held in Bali in 2007, the Durban Group for Climate Justice and numerous allies from around the world gathered in significant numbers. Representatives of communities disproportionately affected by global inaction on climate presented a strong and unified showing both inside and outside the official proceedings, and a more formal worldwide network emerged under the slogan, "Climate Justice Now!" At a series of side events, press conferences and protests throughout the Bali conference, representatives of affected communities, Indigenous Peoples, women, peasant farmers, and their allies articulated their demands for:

- reduced consumption in the global North;
- huge financial transfers from North to South based on historical responsibility and ecological debt, paid for by redirecting military budgets, innovative taxes and debt cancellation;
- leaving fossil fuels in the ground and investing in energy-efficiency and community-led renewable energy;
- rights based resource conservation that enforces Indigenous land rights and promotes peoples' sovereignty over energy, forests, land and water; and
- sustainable family farming and food sovereignty.[11]

A more detailed statement of principles for Climate Justice Now (CJN), developed the following year, begins in part:

> From the perspective of climate justice, it is imperative that responsibility for reducing emissions and financing systemic transformation is taken by those who have benefited most from the past 250 years of economic development. Furthermore, any solutions to climate change must protect the most vulnerable, compensate those who are displaced, guarantee individual and collective rights, and respect peoples' right to participate in decisions that impact on their lives.[12]

By 2010, the CJN network included some 750 international organizations, including numerous grassroots groups throughout the global South, and had become a clearinghouse for information and the continuing involvement of many groups seeking to further these goals.[13] At the annual UN climate conferences, the network offers an inclusive meetingplace for critical perspectives on the unfolding international climate negotiations.

Over the past several years, climate justice has come to embody several distinct but largely complementary currents from various parts of the world. In the global South, demands for climate justice unite an impressive diversity of indigenous and other land-based people's movements. They include rainforest dwellers opposing new mega-dams and palm oil plantations, African communities resisting land appropriations for industrial agriculture and agrofuel production, Pacific Islanders facing the loss of their homes due to rising seas, and peasant farmers fighting for food sovereignty and basic land rights. A statement to the 2009 Copenhagen climate conference from the worldwide confederation of peasant movements, La Vía Campesina, stated in part:

> Climate change is already seriously impacting us. It brings floods, droughts and the outbreak of pests that are all causing harvest failures. I must point out that these harvest failures are something that the farmers did not create. Instead, it is the polluters who caused the emissions who destroy the natural cycles… [W]e will not pay for their mistakes.[14]

In the US, environmental justice activists continue to be the leading voices for climate justice – mainly representatives from African American, Latino and Native American communities that have been resisting daily exposure to chemical toxins and other environmental hazards for more than 25 years. A two day conference in New York City in early 2009, organized by West Harlem Environmental Action (WEACT), brought together inner city activists, community and youth organizers, indigenous representatives and farmworker advocates with students, environmental lawyers, scientists, public health advocates and government officials to discuss the relevance of the climate justice framework for communities of color and their allies across the US.[15] Many speakers described the emerging climate justice movement as a continuation of the US civil rights legacy, and of their communities' continuing

"quest for fairness, equity and justice."[16] Others explained how, in recent years, the environmental justice movement has broadened its scope to areas of food justice, housing justice, and transportation justice, as well as opposition to the commodification of the atmosphere through global carbon markets. The national Grassroots Global Justice Alliance continues to bring delegations of US environmental justice activists to the annual UN climate conferences, while the Labor Network for Sustainability and allied groups work to raise support for climate justice among the ranks of organized labor in the US.[17]

In much of Europe, climate justice emerged as a further evolution of the global justice and anticapitalist movements that arose in opposition to the World Trade Organization and annual G8 economic summits during the late 1990s and early 2000s. A March 2010 discussion paper from the European Climate Justice Action network (CJA) explained that "Climate Justice means linking all struggles together that reject neoliberal markets and working towards a world that puts autonomous decision making power in the hands of communities." The paper concluded: "Fundamentally, we believe that we cannot prevent further global warming without addressing the way our societies are organized—the fight for climate justice and the fight for social justice are one and the same."[18] While Climate Justice Action proved to be relatively short-lived, this approach is also expressed through ongoing networks such as Rising Tide – which was formed in the Netherlands and boasts chapters in the UK, US, Mexico, Ecuador and Australia – as well as the UK Climate Camp movement, which organized high profile actions between 2006 and 2010 at major power plant sites, Heathrow Airport, London's financial district, and the Edinburgh headquarters of the Royal Bank of Scotland.[19]

While various organizational expressions have proved difficult to sustain, the outlook of climate justice continues to have significant appeal in many parts of the world, and the informal Climate Justice Now network serves as a consistent point of contact among these disparate currents, especially around the ongoing UN climate negotiations. Between UN conferences, people and groups collaborate through a variety of online forums to share news, debate perspectives and strategies, and further the scope of climate justice organizing. Demands for climate justice have recently been voiced by representatives of waste pickers in Durban, South Africa, migrant farmworkers in the hills of Vermont, and Rising Tide activists challenging the practice of "mountaintop removal" coal mining in the US state of West Virginia, among others.[20] As the consequences of climate destabilization continue to be felt by people around the world, the disproportionate effects on those least responsible for excess greenhouse gas emissions continue to be a powerful motivator for engaged civil society actions.

The Case for Climate Justice

The disproportionate impacts of a changing climate are most clearly illustrated by the marked increase in weather-related disasters over the past half-century. The stories of people affected by unprecedented droughts, floods, wildfires and other such incidents have most shaped public perceptions of the case for climate justice. From Hurricane Katrina in the US to the flooding of the Indus River valley in Pakistan, uncontrollable wildfires in Russia, and years of protracted drought in the Horn of Africa, the stories of vulnerable and often helpless people facing increasingly dangerous and unanticipated weather events have stirred the conscience of people around the world.

While scientists may disagree to what extent particular events are attributable to climatic changes, three things are clear: first, that the rate of weather-related disasters is increasing rapidly, upsetting even the authoritative projections of the global insurance industry; second, that these incidents are wholly consistent with the predictions of climate models for the behavior of a warmer, more turbulent atmosphere; and third, that when the climate contribution to particular weather events can be measured, the signal of global warming consistently stands out as an essential strong contributing factor.[21]

The 2007 UN Human Development Report revealed that one out of every 19 people in the so-called developing world was affected by a climate- related disaster between 2000 and 2004, compared to one out of every 1500 people in the OECD countries.[22] A 2009 Oxfam study found that of nearly 250 million people who are now affected by natural disasters every year, 98 percent of them are falling victim to climate-related events such as floods and droughts. They predict that this could increase to over 375 million people per year as soon as 2015.[23] Columbia University's International Earth Science Information Network predicts that by 2050 the world will see as many as 700 million climate refugees.[24] The IPCC's ongoing assessment of current climate research has confirmed these realities, while summarizing numerous studies of the potential impacts of observed trends. Their 2007 report predicted a worldwide decrease in crop productivity if global temperatures rise more than 3 degrees Celsius, and that crop yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by half as early as 2020. Current climate trends would expose between 75 million and 250 million people to "increased water stress" in Africa alone.[25]

Some of the grimmest consequences for human rights are contained in the IPCC's assessment of the health consequences of climate changes, which predicts "increases in malnutrition and consequent disorders [...]; increased deaths, disease and injury due to heatwaves, floods, storms, fires and droughts; the increased burden of diarrheal disease; the increased frequency of cardio- respiratory diseases due to higher concentrations of ground- level ozone [...]; and, the altered spatial distribution of some infectious disease vectors," including malaria. It is clear that those populations with "high exposure, high sensitivity and/or low adaptive capacity" will bear the greatest burdens; those who contribute the least to the problem of global warming will continue to face the most severe consequences.[26]

A study by Rafael Reuveny of Indiana University, examined 38 cases over seven decades where populations were forced to migrate due to a combination of environmental and other factors. Half of these cases led to violent conflict between the migrating populations and those in the host areas. Reuveny points out that those who depend the most on the environment to sustain their livelihood, especially in regions where arable land and fresh water are scarce, are most likely to be forced to migrate when faced with rapid and unplanned-for climate changes.[27] Journalist Christian Parenti's book, *Tropic of Chaos*, offers a particularly graphic, on-the-ground tour of climate-exacerbated conflicts throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, illustrating what he describes as "the catastrophic convergence of poverty, violence and climate change."[28]

"There could be no clearer demonstration than climate," explained the 2007 Human Development Report, "that economic wealth creation is not the same as human progress."[29] Those who benefited least from the unsustainable pace of economic growth and capitalist expansion between 1950 and the early 2000s are facing a future of suffering and dislocation that may be unprecedented in world history. To prevent this will require a thoroughgoing reversal of patterns of exploitation and maldevelopment that many in the global North have come to take for granted. This understanding lies at the very core of the case for climate justice.

Challenging Fossil Fuels and the False Solutions

While movements for climate justice do not claim a unified political strategy, their praxis to date clearly fall into three main arenas: strategic interventions at the annual negotiations carried out under the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); challenges to the expanding extraction of fossil fuels; and a variety of efforts to expose corporate-driven "false solutions" to the climate crisis. Even as fossil fuel companies and other transnational corporate interests underwrite efforts to deny the reality of global climate disruptions, they have simultaneously aimed to influence the debate over climate solutions.

Several sectors of the global energy industry have proposed technological and policy measures purported to address the climate situation while assuring their continued hegemonic role in the global economy. Campaigns to challenge the false solutions to climate change focus mainly on these corporate initiatives. The false solutions framework has engaged those who identify with the messages of climate justice in opposition to a new generation of energy megaprojects, as well as the global proliferation of carbon markets and a variety of proposed geoengineering schemes.[30]

The petroleum industry's most aggressive measures, however, are more closely linked to their support for climate change denial. With oil prices rising and conventional reserves rapidly dwindling, the industry is pursuing new technologies to extract oil and gas from increasingly inaccessible and hazardous locations, including deep beneath the oceans, once-impervious geological formations, and tar sands deposits from Alberta, Canada to the Congo Basin.[31] These projects have sparked widespread opposition from the people most affected by these projects, including Inuit communities near the shores of the Arctic Ocean, Cree people in central Alberta, and people living in the vicinity of major shale formations that have shown to be lucrative sources of oil or gas when subjected to the high-pressure injections of water and chemicals known as hydrofracturing, or "fracking."[32] Campaigns in solidarity with those most affected by these most extreme forms of energy development have engaged people throughout the world in recent years.

The technology of fracking for natural gas links opposition to conventional fossil fuels with the emerging false solutions to the climate crisis. Influential environmental NGOs in the US and beyond continue to view natural gas, with roughly 30 percent less carbon dioxide emitted than from burning oil, as a "bridge fuel" to help facilitate the future expansion of renewable energy. But the hazards of modern gas extraction methods have sparked opposition in many regions, including some of the most politically conservative parts of the United States. Amid numerous reports of contaminated water, dying livestock and hazards to human health, landowners are organizing to resist the pressure to sign drilling contracts, while towns and entire counties are enacting bans, Vermont passed a statewide ban on fracking in 2012, and New York's governor proposed to prohibit the practice in most of the state.[33]

False solutions to the climate crisis include a variety of technologies that are claimed to expand energy supplies without increasing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as market-oriented policy measures such as carbon markets and offsets that aim to substitute for regulations against pollution.[34] Technological false solutions include the expansion of nuclear power, which was widely advocated before Fukushima and will likely be considered again in the near future. Indigenous inhabitants of areas known to be rich in uranium, including the US Southwest and central Canada, are organizing against the expansion of mining in their territories. The false promise of "carbon capture and storage" from new coal-fired power plants is another important focus, as a new generation of purportedly "capture-ready" coal plants has been proposed in many countries, despite a scientific consensus that reliable underground carbon capture is many decades away, at best.[35] Local activists tied to the Sierra Club have reportedly halted the construction of 132 new coal plants in the US in recent years.[36] While utilities claim that new coal plants will replace older, less efficient ones and thus reduce the climate impact of US electricity production, activists argue that new construction will sustain the economy's dependence on coal far into the future.

In many countries, opposition to industrial-scale plantations for biofuel – more appropriately "agrofuel" – production is a central focus of resistance. Expansion of soya, maize and sugarcane fields for fuel production encroaches on traditional land uses and contributes to ongoing food shortages, while scientists increasingly question whether there is any climate advantage to burning agrofuels instead of gasoline.[37] The challenge to land rights is most acute in South America – where native forests and grasslands, as well as traditional polycultures, are being plowed under to facilitate a massive expansion of soy production – as well as in Africa and Southeast Asia, where rainforests and pasture lands are overrun by expanding palm

oil plantations.[38] The Global Forest Coalition and World Rainforest Movement, among others, have brought international attention to people's movements challenging these rapidly expanding agrofuel monocultures. The same regions of the world also face a new generation of massive hydroelectric dams, including projects in uniquely endangered areas such as the Amazon basin. For example, indigenous and fishing peoples have repeatedly attempted to block the construction of a new dam on Brazil's legendary Xingu River; when developers built an initial barrier to begin obstructing the river, opponents blocked roads and hand-dug a trench to free the river once again.[39]

On the policy front, campaigners for climate justice have led the environmental opposition to the expansion of carbon markets, along with several newer schemes that further commodify nature. Climate justice activists tend to view tradable emissions permits as a boon to corporations seeking to postpone investments in energy-saving technologies, while simultaneously creating a new property right to pollute the atmosphere.[40] The consistent over-allocation of permits has allowed politically powerful corporations to exceed legislated "caps" on emissions with ease. One significant impetus for the creation of Climate Justice Now was the advocacy in favor of carbon markets by several larger environmental NGOs, represented at the UN climate conferences as the Climate Action Network (CAN). CAN describes itself as a broadly inclusive alliance working toward "the coordinated development of NGO strategy on international, regional, and national climate issues," and boasts a network of 700 international organizations, both large and small.[41]

The British columnist George Monbiot has aptly described global carbon trading as "an exuberant market in fake emissions cuts."[42] Carbon offsets, which allow corporations to invest in nominally carbon-reducing projects around the world in exchange for higher emissions at home, are frequently described as a gaping "hole" in any mandated emissions cap. A German study of UN-approved carbon offset projects reported that at least 40 percent, and as many as 86 percent of all offset-funded projects (hydroelectric and wind power developments, industrial energy efficiency, etc.) would likely have been carried out anyway.[43] This runs counter to the Kyoto Protocol's guideline requiring that projects granted emissions offsets must be "additional," *i.e.* not already underway.

In California, environmental justice groups went to court in 2011 to challenge a new state cap-and-trade law. They argued that its provisions for international offsets would encourage corporations to continue increasing in-state CO_2 emissions, together with other forms of pollution that more directly affect public health.[44] A decision in the plaintiffs' favor was overturned on appeal, and advocates went on to appeal to the governor, and then to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on grounds that the scheme violates the civil rights of communities of color that are disproportionately exposed to unsafe levels of air pollutants.[45]

Despite widespread opposition, and mirroring the predictions of many market skeptics, UN negotiators continue to expand the scope of pollution markets beyond the trading of permits to emit carbon dioxide. The Indigenous Environmental Network has been in the forefront of organizing global opposition to an enhanced offset scheme aimed to address deforestation, which is responsible for up to 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions.[46] This plan, known as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) has encouraged new proposals for tradable biodiversity credits, clean water credits, and other novel market-oriented measures.

To the Summits and Beyond

While the principles of climate justice have the potential to unite a wide variety of people's movements around the world, many groups engaged in local struggles against new energy developments still identify

rather loosely with the climate justice movement. This is especially true in the US and Europe, where climate justice campaigns began to coalesce in the lead-up to the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit, only to subside in the summit's aftermath.

Indeed, some active participants have concluded that Copenhagen was the inadvertent peak of global efforts to create a unified climate justice movement. Some 50,000 people attended the alternative "Klimaforum" people's summit in Copenhagen, and over 100,000 marched in the streets during the conference, many conveying demands for climate justice and for "System Change, Not Climate Change," yet this proved far from sufficient to prevent a diplomatic meltdown inside the conference center. The Copenhagen effort, according to CJA activists Nicola Bullard and Tadzio Müller,

> failed to establish an anti-capitalist CJ-discourse that was visible and understandable beyond the subcultures of activists and policy-wonks, and thus failed to provide a visible alternative to despair; failed to establish a new 'pole of attraction' that would substantially reconfigure the political field around climate change; and failed to do anything to significantly advance the fight for climate justice. In some sense, the *global* CJM [Climate Justice Movement; emphasis in original] remained something more of a potential than a reality.[47]

In the US as well, the most visible manifestations of climate justice occurred in the lead-up to Copenhagen. North American activists created a Mobilization for Climate Justice network and organized a series of actions across the continent on November 30, 2009, the ten-year anniversary of the landmark demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organization.[48] In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Mobilization for Climate Justice-West (MCJ-West) organized seven high-profile demonstrations and actions during the five months prior to Copenhagen, often acting in solidarity with community activists in Richmond, California in opposition to a major Chevron oil refinery located in that North Bay city.

MCJ-West proved unable to sustain its high public visibility into 2010 and beyond, despite a principled and politically significant effort to restructure the group to better reflect the priorities of organized local communities. The broader Mobilization ceased to operate following a similar internal discussion. Although participants agreed that "frontline" environmental justice communities should ideally be in the forefront of the climate justice movement, organizations struggling with the daily impacts of political and economic marginalization did not appear to have the capacity – nor perhaps the inclination – to sustain a unified national climate justice coalition. The lessons of these experiences, however, have inspired some insightful new approaches to political alliance-building across barriers of race and class, initiated in part by a San Francisco Bay Area group called the Movement Generation Justice and Ecology Project.[49]

Efforts to reunite various climate justice tendencies at the 2010 US Social Forum in Detroit proved largely symbolic and limited in scope. However, Movement Generation and several allied groups, including the Indigenous Environmental Network, Grassroots Global Justice and others, continued to meet and develop strategies. A September 2010 position paper proposed uniting around four themes: root cause remedies; human rights and anti-racism; reparations for historic injustices; and directly democratic control by people over the decisions that affect their lives.[50] In 2012, nearly 30 groups organized as the Climate Justice Alignment proposed a nationwide campaign for a "just transition" away from fossil fuel dependence, including the creation of 10 million new jobs in renewable energy, public transportation, local food, waste reduction, and related areas.[51]

Internationally, a significant effort to coalesce climate justice-oriented movements was realized in Cochabamba, Bolivia during April 2010. At the end of the Copenhagen climate conference, Bolivian president Evo Morales' invited participants to Bolivia four months hence to participate in a People's

Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth. Some 30,000 representatives of civil society, indigenous peoples, and social movement actors from around the world, along with a delegation of public officials from Bolivia and allied countries, assembled in Cochabamba to develop a "People's Agreement," assembled from the products of 17 onsite working groups.

In marked contrast to the rather empty "accord" that came out of the UNFCCC negotiations in Copenhagen, the People's Agreement was rooted in indigenous views of harmony, complementarity and anti-colonialism, and proposed a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth. The document condemned carbon markets and the commodification of forests for carbon offsets; asserted the rights of climate migrants; and proposed an International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal to judge and punish activities that promote further climate change.[52] However, the agreement fell short of endorsing the full climate justice agenda, most notably the call to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Popular movements critical of Bolivia's economic dependence on resource extraction formed a separate working group, which was compelled to operate outside of the official proceedings.[53]

Further public expressions of climate justice continued to manifest at the annual conferences of the UNFCCC in Cancún, Mexico at the end of 2010 and Durban, South Africa in 2011.[54] In both instances, international NGOs affiliated with Climate Justice Now brought representatives of popular movements from throughout the global South to the UN summits to testify at official side events and demonstrate outside of the proceedings. Vía Campesina and its affiliated peasant farmer movements were in the forefront of public events in Cancún, challenging the limitations of the official proceedings. In Durban, conflicts between civil society groups participating in the UN conference and those who remained outside came to a head on the very last day during an Occupy-style demonstration just outside the conference hall. While representatives of organizations such as Greenpeace and 350.org urged cooperation with UN security in clearing the building of protesters, several activists refused to leave and some were forcibly removed.[55] Whereas many groups affiliated with Climate Justice Now have had an increasingly difficult time airing their issues within the UN process – pointing to a concerted effort by officials to marginalize civil society voices – others remain hopeful about the potential for a coordinated inside/outside strategy around these annual events.

Into the Future

Where is the movement for climate justice today? Many groups continue to intervene under the banner of climate justice at the UN level, despite what some groups perceive to be diminishing returns on these efforts. But perhaps more important, local activists around the world continue to bring climate justice messages into their campaigns. Some activists have voiced concerns that the message of climate justice has been appropriated by large international NGOs, governments, and development agencies, while others celebrate the emergence of official climate justice initiatives, such as a £3 million fund announced by the Scottish government in 2012 to support water projects in eastern and central Africa.[56] As awareness grows of increasingly erratic and extreme weather patterns throughout the world, the social justice dimensions of the climate crisis have proved increasingly difficult to overlook.

One promising development is the increasingly unified opposition to the increasing pace of oil extraction from western Canada's Alberta tar sands, which has widely been described as the most climate-damaging project in the world.[57] In 2011, organizers with the traditionally cautious 350.org network overcame an initial reluctance and actively supported a civil disobedience campaign in Washington, D.C. Over 1200 people were arrested outside the White House in opposition to a new US pipeline for tar sands oil, and representatives of the Indigenous Environmental Network were prominent participants in those actions.[58] A year later, "350" was actively supporting a pipeline blockade in Texas, an organizing effort in northern

New England against the reconfiguration of a 60-year old pipeline to transport tar sands oil, and a civil disobedience campaign at Montana's state capitol over the issue of coal exports. The tar sands pipeline – proposed to run from the Canadian border to oil refineries on the Gulf of Mexico – even became an issue in the 2012 US presidential campaign. These efforts have significantly raised the stakes for climate activism in general, and for furthering the understanding that marginalized peoples – starting with the First Nations communities in central Alberta – remain at the frontlines of destructive new energy developments in North America and beyond. Despite concerns about the potential dilution of climate justice principles, the movement's core messages continue to motivate concerted actions for climate protection and for the rights of affected communities around the world.

Movements for climate justice continue to be multifaceted, and draw upon a perhaps unprecedented diversity of perspectives and strategies. In many ways, their diversity is their greatest strength, given the multiplicity of peoples affected by extreme weather and increasing climate chaos, as well as the need to develop appropriate strategies for a wide variety of political contexts. But the climate crisis is also inherently global in scope, and the lack of progress toward global reductions in greenhouse pollution speaks to the need for ever greater coordination, determination, and commonality of vision.

Climate justice activists' involvement at the UN level has helped forge unique and encouraging alliances among people and organizations throughout the world, but the 2011 Durban Platform's deferral of new mitigation measures until 2020 at the earliest helped further a lingering crisis of confidence in the entire process. The delay could spell a "death sentence for Africa, small island states, and the poor and vulnerable worldwide," in the words of Friends of the Earth International chair Nnimmo Bassey, and increasing "climate racism, ecocide, and genocide," according to IEN's Tom Goldtooth.[59] Perhaps the movement's best hope lies in the combination of rising climate militancy in the North and the increasing international visibility of struggles in the South. Short of a comprehensive strategy to overturn the stalemate in global negotiations – in turn a product of the political hegemony of fossil fuel interests – South African analyst and activist Patrick Bond suggests that:

> we should remind ourselves of the most important features of a future climate justice politics: in thinking locally, nationally and globally, and also acting in each sphere with the appropriate analysis, strategies, tactics and alliances.[60]

Humanity's future may rest on that somewhat tentative but undoubtedly essential prospect.

NOTES

[1] For a comprehensive review of climate justice perspectives in the lead-up to Copenhagen, see Ulrich Brand, *et al*., eds., *Contours of Climate Justice: Ideas for shaping new climate and energy politics* (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation 2009).

[2] James Hansen, *et al*., "Target Atmospheric CO_2: Where Should Humanity Aim?," *Open Atmospheric Science Journal 2,* pp. 217-23 (2008).

[3] Kenny Bruno, *et al*., *Greenhouse Gangsters vs. Climate Justice* (San Francisco: Transnational Resource & Action Center, 1999).

[4] *Toxic wastes and race in the United States: A national report on the racial and socioeconomic characteristics of communities with hazardous waste sites* (New York: United Church of Christ, 1987). The conclusions were updated in Robert D. Bullard, *et al*., *Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty 1987—2007: Grassroots Struggles to Dismantle Environmental Racism in the United States* (Cleveland: United Church of Christ, 2007).

[5] Brian Tokar, "Environmental Justice," in *Earth for Sale: Reclaiming Ecology in the Age of Corporate Greenwash* (Boston: South End Press, 1997), chapter 6.

[6] Available from http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html.

[7] Downloaded from http://www.ejnet.org/ej/climatejustice.pdf, accessed June 14, 2012.

[8] Downloaded from http://www.ejnet.org/ej/bali.pdf, accessed June 14, 2012.

[9] The climate-centered activities of GJEP are highlighted on their blog, at http://climate-connections.org and IEN's at http://ienearth.org/climatejustice.html.

[10] http://www.durbanclimatejustice.org/durban-declaration/english.html.

[11] Climate Justice Now press statement, Bali, Indonesia, December 14, 2007, via Durban Group email list.

[12] Climate Justice Now Principles of Unity, May 12, 2008 draft, via Climate Justice Now email list.

[13] A full listing as of November 2010 is at http://www.climate-justice-now.org/category/climate-justice-movement/cjn-members.

[14] Statement of Henry Saragih, general coordinator of La Vía Campesina, to the Klimaforum alternative summit, 7 December 2009, via CommonDreams.org.

[15] WEACT's origins are discussed in Ashley Dawson, "Climate Justice: The Emerging Movement against Green Capitalism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109:2 (Spring 2010), pp. 325-326. Also see *Advancing Climate Justice: Transforming the Economy, Public Health and Our Environment: Conference Agenda and Resource Guide* (New York: WEACT, 2009).

[16] Comments of Robert Bullard at "Advancing Climate Justice: Transforming the Economy, Public Health and Our Environment" conference (New York, January 30, 2009).

[17] GGJ's activities at the "Rio +20" environmental summit in Brazil in 2012 are outlined at http://ggjalliance.org/node/982, and the Labor Network for Sustainability's perspectives are described at http://www.labor4sustainability.org.

[18] "What does Climate Justice mean in Europe? A Discussion Paper," via Climate Justice Action email list, March 26, 2010.

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