

# WHO'S GOT THE POWER?

SHIFTING FROM CORPORATE TO COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ENERGY EFFICIENCY



LESSONS FROM A CAMPAIGN IN PROGRESS

**GREEN  
JUSTICE  
COALITION**

SEPTEMBER 2010

**Community Labor United (CLU)** was formed as a unique collaboration that connects the strengths of community-based organizations with that of labor unions in order to protect and promote the interests of working class communities in the greater Boston area. Through strategic research, leadership development and organizing, CLU unites community groups and unions in joint organizing campaigns where a common vision and plan of action are developed. With our partner organizations, our campaigns identify and move specific policy recommendations that can counteract the growing gap between rich and poor by reshaping the local economy into a more humane and equitable one. CLU is also the convener of the Green Justice Coalition.

CLU's partner organizations include: Alternatives for Community and Environment, Boston Teachers Union, Boston Workers Alliance, Chelsea Collaborative, Chinese Progressive Association, City Life/Vida Urbana, Greater Boston Labor Council, Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance, New England Regional Council of Carpenters, New England United for Justice, Painters & Allied Trades DC35, Project RIGHT, SEIU Local 615, 1199 SEIU, UFCW Local 1445 & UNITE HERE.

The **Green Justice Coalition (GJC)** is a statewide partnership of more than fifty community organizations, labor unions, environmental groups and faith based alliances from across the Commonwealth united in support of a sustainable, equitable, and clean energy economy. The GJC works to put working class communities, which have been particularly overburdened by our unsustainable economy, at the forefront of the growing green, sustainable economy. As a chapter of the Apollo Alliance, the GJC is a part of a national movement that supports investment in energy efficiency building retrofits as the best, most immediate and cost-effective opportunity to reduce carbon emissions, create good 'high road' jobs and make our communities healthier and more sustainable.

The Green Justice Coalition came together because:

**Greening is not only our responsibility, *it is our right.***

Resources for greening must be accessible to all if we are to stabilize our climate.

**A sustainable economy must be as equitable as it is green.**

We must repair economic inequalities by promoting family-sustaining green jobs, career pathways, and local and community-owned businesses.

**Economically marginalized communities must be at the forefront of the green wave.**

Lower income communities and communities of color that have been overburdened by the dirty fossil fuel economy and systematically disenfranchised from decision-making structures must take a lead role in building a sustainable green economy.

The Coalition has been leading a campaign to:

- Dramatically expand energy efficiency programs to reduce Massachusetts's carbon footprint, focusing on utility-based energy efficiency programs;
- Maximize energy efficiency opportunities for the state's working class communities, especially those that are struggling the most with rising energy bills;
- Create living wage and 'high-road' jobs for new and incumbent workers;
- Establish career ladder training programs to connect new workers from lower-income communities and communities of color to good, safe green jobs.

# Executive Summary

Since 2008, the Green Justice Coalition (GJC) has been building power in Massachusetts by uniting base-building community organizations, unions, and environmental groups in a campaign to push for equity in the state and utility companies' energy efficiency programs. The GJC model includes demands for:

1. **High Road Jobs**, with living wages, benefits, safe working conditions, and career pathways;
2. **Community Access to Jobs;**
3. **Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction;** and
4. **Community Access to Energy Efficiency Resources**, particularly from working class communities.

The campaign won a major victory in late 2009, when the state Energy Efficiency Advisory Council approved a \$1.4 billion plan which incorporated many elements of the GJC's recommendations, including demands to make the decision-making process around utilities' energy efficiency programs more democratic and accountable to the community. A crucial component of the plan is a commitment by the utilities, with support from state regulators, to create pilot projects ("Community Mobilization Initiatives" or CMI) modeling the GJC's approach to this work.

Since the Green Justice Campaign's victory, people and organizations around the country have reached out to find out more about the coalition's success. This report is partially a response to those questions. Most importantly, this report offers an analysis of the factors that have contributed to its success, as well as those that have created challenges along the way. Since the fall victory the coalition has run into numerous industry obstacles blocking progress on many of our issues. It is the coalition's hope that by sharing these lessons with openness and humility, groups in other parts of the country may be able to benefit from what the Green Justice Coalition has learned, use what has worked, and avoid or prepare for challenges that may come up along the way.

## USING WHAT WORKS

1. **The Green Justice Coalition Principles document unites members around a powerful framework**, providing motivation and inspiring guidance for campaign direction around the concepts of "just sustainability" and community control.
2. **Deliberate popular political education** with and between members builds capacity for stronger leadership.
3. **Research is an important tool** to support campaign demands and build momentum.
4. **Community Mobilization Initiatives** are an effective way to reach working class communities and communities of color, while building community investment and control.
5. **A broad statewide coalition led by grassroots community organizations, along with labor unions and environmental groups, builds power** and allows the campaign and achieve much more than any sector could achieve on its own.

## LEARNING FROM CHALLENGES

1. **Existing financing structures create barriers to access weatherization, especially for renters and working class homeowners.** This constituency makes up the majority of the state's population, and pays into the energy efficiency system, **yet most** cannot afford the upfront costs required to be able to access the system.

*Energy efficiency programs can address these barriers by changing the incentives system to reduce upfront costs for those making 60-120% of median income, and developing split incentives between tenants and landlords so that tenants and landlords each benefit from weatherizing.*

- 2. The structure of many utility companies' energy efficiency program can be fundamentally problematic.** Pricing structures reinforce low wages, narrow definitions of cost-effectiveness disregard other measures of social costs and benefits, low-income weatherization programs may not be structured to achieve maximum impact, and utility companies are incredibly slow to change.

*Communities can address these challenges by separating energy efficiency programs from the control of utility companies, demanding that pricing take place after energy audits, incorporating measures of social equity into the legislation and regulation governing energy efficiency programs, and consider ways to improve access to low-income weatherization and the quality of jobs these programs create.*
- 3. Energy Efficiency has historically been a "low-road" industry,** paying low-wages, often without benefits or other worker safety protections.

*Communities can address this challenge through responsible contracting language, as well as creative collaborations between grassroots community organizations, unions, local contractors and/or worker-owned cooperatives.*
- 4. People with arrest or prison records and other barriers to employment face these same challenges in energy efficiency jobs reducing many people's opportunities to have this work create a "pathway out of poverty" for them.**

*Communities can address this challenge by incorporating anti-discrimination language into energy efficiency legislation, regulation, and/or responsible contractor language.*
- 5. With energy efficiency work, multiple targets and technical details can be overwhelming,** and can make it difficult to maintain strong member engagement & decision-making.

*Communities can address this challenge by exposing injustices in a way that relate to members' lives, making sure the campaign does not get paralyzed by all of the details, and revisiting campaign principles for clarity and focus.*
- 6. Inside strategies are only effective in combination with a strong outside strategy.**

*Communities can address this challenge by making sure that allies on the "inside" are accountable to your organizing strategy, and by maintaining public pressure from the grassroots to counteract the effects of institutional stagnation.*
- 7. A free-market outlook can pose barriers to collective solutions and community well-being.**

*It's important for a campaign to be clear on its own definition of building collective, community wealth that benefits those that have experienced the worst impacts of economic and environmental injustices.*
- 8. We are organizing in a political climate that is generally hostile to the interests of our base groups, including working class communities, communities of color, and immigrants.**

*Communities can address this challenge by sharing coalition responsibilities among organizations, by having a pro-active approach to resolving potential conflicts, by raising funds to build capacity in grassroots organizations, and by developing and publicly projecting shared analysis on the root causes of the issues our communities face.*

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Weatherization Workers/Trainees of Carpenters class, Shauday Johnson and Stacey Borden-Holliday (August 2010)

## Part 1: INTRODUCTION

### ABOUT THIS REPORT

The story of the Green Justice Campaign is an inspiring example of what's possible when communities, unions, and environmental groups come together to fight for a vision of economic and environmental justice. In late 2009, Massachusetts utilities agreed to a groundbreaking plan committing to dramatically expand their energy efficiency work over the next three years. This \$1.4 billion plan incorporated some of the Green Justice Coalition's (GJC's) recommendations. The GJC has been aggressively organizing to make sure that working class communities have access to the weatherization resources and to quality jobs doing this work, through responsible contractors paying living wages and benefits. Over the past year, the coalition has made strong strides in pushing for equity as a central component of energy efficiency work. At the same time, it has encountered tremendous challenges as it began to unravel some of the arcane inner workings of the industry.

Since the Green Justice Campaign's victory, people and organizations around the country have reached out to find out more about the coalition's success. This report is partially a response to those questions. It includes compilation of reflections and analysis from the key leadership of the campaign, including staff and Steering Committee members. It includes the context under which the campaign was born, a description of how and why different groups got involved, and a brief history of campaign strategies, tactics, and victories. More importantly, this report offers an analysis of the factors that have contributed to its success, as well as those that have created challenges along the way. **It is the coalition's hope that by sharing these lessons with openness and humility, groups in other parts of the country may be able to benefit from what the Green Justice Coalition has learned, use what has worked, and avoid or prepare for challenges that may come up along the way.** Also, the GJC hopes that this report can be part of a growing dialogue, as more and more communities take a stand for a just and sustainable way of living. CLU/GJC encourages other organizing efforts to similarly write up their own experiences and add to this important dialogue.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Warm thanks to the **Solidago Foundation** for providing the resources and encouragement to document our lessons and produce this document. **We deeply appreciate all of the Green Justice Coalition staff and leaders who contributed their time and thoughtful analysis to this report.** In addition to the staff listed on the previous page, the following people agreed to be interviewed for this project: Johnny Arevalo,

Organizer, MassCOSH Workers Center; Alan Aulson, Owner, Aulson Company; Shannon Bade, Lead Organizer, Alliance to Develop Power; Kalila Barnett, Executive Director, Alternatives for Community & Environment; Bob Bower, Political Director, Massachusetts AFL-CIO; Mike Chavez, Program Manager, YouthBuild Boston; Larry Chretien, Executive Director, Massachusetts Energy Consumers Alliance; Hakim Cunningham, Community Organizer, Boston Workers Alliance; Mark Erlich, Executive Secretary Treasurer, New England Regional Council of Carpenters; Missy Gilbarg, Executive Director, Coalition Against Poverty/Coalition for Social Justice; Juan Leyton, Executive Director, Neighbor-to-Neighbor; Mark Liu, Green Justice Organizer, Chinese Progressive Association; Penn Loh, former Executive Director ACE, current member Energy Efficiency Advisory Council; Isabel Lopez, Coordinator, MassCOSH Workers Center; Cindy Luppi, Executive Director, Clean Water Action; Myrna Montano, Organizer, MassCOSH Workers Center; Mimi Ramos, Executive Director, New England United for Justice; Jim Snow, former staff, Community Labor United; Aaron Tanaka, Executive Director, Boston Workers Alliance; Mary Vogel, Executive Director, The Construction Institute. **Your wisdom shines through on every page!** Any errors are the author's own.

Many other people made this report possible: Sahar Lawrence diligently transcribed every word of nearly twenty chock-filled interviews; Katie Harrison, CLU Intern, scheduled interviews and attended them when possible; and T.J. Hellmann designed the layout. Thanks also to the Barr Foundation for our initial green justice planning grant and for their continued funding and the New World Foundation who together with the Barr Foundation funded both CLU to do this work and funded many of our Green Justice Coalition partners. Thank you to our other very important funders during this campaign: the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the Discount Foundation, the Hyams Foundation, the Herman and Frieda L. Miller Foundation, the Needmor Fund, the New Prospect Foundation, the Solidago Foundation, the Surdna Foundation and the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock.

Thanks also to SCOPE/AGENDA in Los Angeles and the Center for Working Families in New York for sharing their work with us and providing strong examples of how organized coalitions can take leadership in the the emerging green economy. We also appreciate the support we have received from the national Apollo Alliance who throughout our campaign has played an instrumental role in connecting us with strong organizing efforts in other parts of the country and who co-authored an important research report for our campaign. Green for All has also helped promote our work and connect us with other green policy work across the country. **Our most heartfelt thanks go to all of the grassroots members and leaders who have been moving the Green Justice Campaign from the beginning, and who continue to fight for your communities with courage, vision, and fortitude.** You are the inspiration that breathes life into movements for social justice, and we dedicate this report to you.

For more information on CLU's work and the Green Justice Coalition including the Coalitions reports, go to our website: [www.massclu.org](http://www.massclu.org) or contact us directly at:

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Sara Mersha worked for Direct Action for Rights and Equality, a grassroots group in Providence, RI, first as Community Organizer and later as Executive Director. She has been active with local and national coalitions and networks such as Jobs with Justice, Right to the City, and the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance. She is currently a graduate student at Brown's Center for Environmental Studies, and stays involved with movement-building efforts around climate justice.



Chinese Progressive Association does community education/outreach on Green Justice at the Chinatown August Moon Festival

## Part 2: GREEN JUSTICE CAMPAIGN CONTEXT

### HISTORY

In 2007, the concept of “green jobs” was beginning to take hold as a way to jump-start local economies while addressing the climate crisis. Community Labor United (CLU) knew that if the point was to make sure that green jobs benefited local communities, these same communities would need to be leading the fight. CLU decided to approach Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE)—a founding member of CLU and a key environmental justice organization with more than a decade of experience in the Boston area—to see if they would be interested in thinking through campaign possibilities centered around the green economy. ACE had already been following the work across the country on “Green Jobs, Not Jails” and developing a campaign for summer jobs as a way to prevent youth violence. Combining this experience with their background in fighting for environmental justice, ACE was in a good position to take the initial leadership.

CLU and ACE began a research and planning process together which included reaching out to other community organizing groups around Boston and inviting them to get involved. CLU and ACE were intentional in not rushing this explorative process, in order

to ensure that base-building community organizations had the time to define the issues and identify the connection to their collective interests. This deliberate process made it possible for organizations to both feel genuine ownership and also take leadership in the campaign.

*“The historical moment we’re in is not just an opportunity. We’re not going back to a time where we can disregard climate change...there’s no doubt in my mind that we have to prepare. [We are] converging into a broader social change movement in which environmental sustainability and social/economic justice are joined... we have to achieve ‘sustainability’ because they’re not actually different things.”*

– Penn Loh, former Executive Director, Alternatives for Community and Environment

The workgroup took on three primary tasks:

- 1. Workgroup members visited and conducted research on other campaigns around the country to learn from what others had been doing around green jobs.** With such a new field, there was no one clear model on how to make sure green jobs benefit the community, but working group members particularly appreciated what they learned from their visit to SCOPE/AGENDA’s green jobs work in Los Angeles. This campaign included unions as well as base-building community organizations and combined organizing a policy campaign with ensuring that community members would actually get *hired* into those jobs.

## WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE GREEN JUSTICE COALITION?

*“At the city and state level we were not taken into account – certainly not what potential [climate] impacts would happen for communities of color and low-income communities, but also not at all thinking about the need to address past injustices through whatever new kinds of initiatives and resources were going to be created. That voice was just not in existence and it was really important that we were there.”*

– Kalila Barnett, Executive Director, Alternatives for Community and Environment

*“Who’s paying the price is our communities and so if we’re not there who else will be? We came to this country in the first place looking for better lives because our countries have been devastated and we don’t have any sources of jobs. When we get here, we are exploited. We need to be part of the fight - little by little our communities are organizing to have better lives.”*

– Isabel Lopez, MassCOSH Workers Center

*“There’s hundreds of millions of dollars and it might shoot over the population it needs to affect.”*

– Hakim Cunningham, Boston Workers Alliance

*“There’s a lot of people struggling out there right now, especially young people who don’t have opportunities. We’re trying to create those opportunities, and I saw that by working with the Green Justice Coalition, we could open the door for some young people.”*

– Bob Bower, Massachusetts AFL-CIO

*“I saw this as a good opportunity to expand our market share further into the residential market, and to turn dead end jobs into career paths for higher wage union jobs.”*

– Mark Erlich, New England Regional Council of Carpenters

*“It pays to work with the community.”*

– Alan Aulson, Aulson Company

*“This was a very strategic way to implement existing bills and to press for new advances to meet the needs of all communities across the state. The other thing that really motivated me personally was a lot of our work around the coal-fired power plant issues had a dynamic of community and environmental leaders versus labor. So this was part of a deliberate effort to reach out to labor to build bridges and work together towards common goals.”*

– Cindy Luppi, Clean Water Action

*“What keeps me motivated is knowing that there’s a real working coalition - we’re different people, have different voices in different geographic areas, and bring different strengths. That’s powerful...I really like the fact that City Hall is [asking], ‘What are these Green Justice folks talking about now?’ They need to know that we are watching...we are going to hold them accountable.”*

– Mimi Ramos, New England United for Justice

*“We are from poor countries but we have a consciousness about our environment. We preserved the rivers, the trees, but we have to fight with the big American companies that are changing our countries. I’m involved in this work so we can have the best future for our kids.”*

– Johnny Arevalo, MassCOSH Workers Center

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED?  
GREEN JUSTICE COALITION

**2. The workgroup developed and agreed on a Statement of Principles and Vision upon which to operate, shape direction, and make decisions on campaign demands** (see *“What Does Green Justice Mean?”*, page 6).

**3. Using these principles, the workgroup identified local and statewide campaign opportunities.** The idea of focusing the initial campaign on energy efficiency made a lot of sense – after all, this is an area widely recognized as the “low-hanging fruit” for its capacity to reduce carbon emissions. Furthermore, energy efficiency creates relatively more local jobs per dollar spent than many other clean energy solutions, and creates economic benefits through lower energy consumption.<sup>i</sup>

The campaign initially focused on the City of Boston, however it soon became clear the state was on the verge of passing new legislation around energy efficiency and the city was going to wait and see what came out of the state’s efforts. In the summer of 2008, the state passed the Green Communities Act, the Global Warming Solutions Act and the Green Jobs Act. These three bills set the stage for a dramatic expansion of energy efficiency programs through the utilities and targeted millions of dollars to be directed to these efforts:

- The *Green Communities Act* required least cost procurement by utilities (requiring them to invest in all efficiency measures that are less expensive than new supply).
- The *Green Jobs Act* established a Clean Energy Technology Center and allocated millions of dollars to support green job training programs.
- The *Global Warming Solutions Act* required the state to develop programs and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050.

CLU and the GJC were not involved in designing or winning passage of this legislation. It was largely moved by environmental organizations and people within the Governor’s administration. However the legislation passed as the workgroup was beginning to explore organizing in this field. In order to be able to affect the way these programs would be structured, the groups involved knew they would have to have statewide influence. Quickly, they decided to re-structure the coalition and campaign around this statewide focus, expanding the groups involved in order to build power across Massachusetts.

## GREEN JUSTICE COALITION STRUCTURE

One of the things that makes the Green Justice Coalition unique is its composition and decision-making structure. The Broader Coalition is open to any organization that agrees with the Principles and Vision, and that wants to engage in the campaign. The Steering Committee, as the official decision-making body of the campaign, has more specific criteria. In addition to agreeing on the Principles and Vision:

## ON WORKING THROUGH TENSIONS

*“There was a healing moment between unions and community groups within one of our Steering Committee meetings, when the unions said ‘we made mistakes in the past’ and owned up to some of the racism or discrimination that they’d done. You could just feel some walls were let down when they did that. It was like there was a little more of a breath in the room and then it changed the dynamic, where community groups weren’t as defensive or mistrusting. I feel that’s part of the movement building - bringing all of these different groups together.”*

– Mark Liu, Chinese Progressive Association

*“I know the labor groups in the past haven’t done as good a job as they could do with a lot of that stuff. I’ve been in the labor movement a long time, and it’s finally realizing what the community is worth. You can’t do it alone. You need to work as partners and bring the people in.”*

– Bob Bower, Massachusetts AFL-CIO

*“[It’s important to have] a willingness to accept what it means to have real community leadership. One example that has played out on the ground here is that in order for us to pay people at a decent wage it will probably result in fewer residences ultimately getting these services [at least initially]. We have to be willing to look past an initial knee-jerk objection to that, and look at why that benefits the whole - how that gets to better work being done with people who are trained and in it for the long haul.”*

– Cindy Luppi, Clean Water Action

*“It’s looking proactively, putting problems on the table and dealing with them directly with one-on-ones or in coalition meetings.”*

– Lisa Clauson, CLU

ON WORKING  
THROUGH  
TENSIONS

1. Steering Committee member organizations are *grassroots base-building* organizations. This includes community organizations, unions, and environmental groups.
2. Organizations committed to taking on a leadership role within the coalition and their sectors (union, community, environmental).
3. Organizations committed to actively engaging staff, members, and leaders in the campaign.
4. The membership of the Steering Committee is predominantly groups organizing in working class communities and communities of color.

The Green Justice Coalition's model of grassroots leadership has been extremely important in setting the campaign's goals and direction.

## INTERNAL GOALS

Demands and external victories are often at the forefront of considerations about any campaign, for good reason. At the same time, many of the goals of the Green Justice Coalition's lead partner groups began with strengthening organizations and their relationships with one another, in order to build a movement that could take on any number of progressive issues.

1. **Addressing the wedge between community groups and unions.** While there is a great deal of common interest between working class communities of color and unions, the history of racism and competitive economic structures in this country have driven wedges between communities and unions, so that we have a harder time collectively challenging the systems that oppress us both. Community Labor United looks for opportunities to expose these injustices, intentionally address historical divisions, and find points of unity for common struggle. Darlene Lombos explains, "If we split ourselves between workers and community, we only fuel the bosses, the landlords, the rich, the capitalist system. We knew this was going to be a really hard campaign – because of the deep history and tensions between the construction trades and the community. That's why we knew we had to take it on, this was really the crux of our work."
2. **Creating the space for a community-led campaign in which unions would also feel invested.** Before taking on the Green Justice Campaign, CLU's previous campaigns had community engagement and community demands but were labor initiated. In order to create a balanced dynamic and support genuine reciprocity, the coalition realized it would be important to take on a campaign that community organizations conceptualized and led – and in which unions (and in this case also traditional environmental organizations) would actively participate and support. Operationally, this has meant that:
  - CLU initially turned to ACE and other community groups to think about whether this type of campaign would be one worth taking on;
  - Base-building community organizations working in working class communities and communities of color created the initial vision and framing document for the campaign;
  - Community organizing groups make up a majority of the campaign's steering committee, in addition to significant commitment from unions and base-building environmental organizations.

*"The climate crisis we're in is not going to change if we keep it at individual market-based solutions. By having an organized base with people who understand how to turn a perceived individual issue into collective action and a collective response, that's the only way we're actually going to change this climate crisis.... It's not simply getting on the doors and handing out fliers, it's actually changing the way people think, and our community groups do that every day."*

– Darlene Lombos, Co-Director, Community Labor United

CLU Co-Directors Lisa and Darlene observe several ways in which this community leadership is essential to the coalition and to this type of campaign. As discussed later in this report, having both an "insider" and an "outsider" strategy has been important to this campaign. Community organizations are skilled at using direct action tactics to build power and mobilize pressure to win campaign demands, and tend to turn to "outsider" tactics more frequently than unions and environmental organizations do.

Community organizations also pushed a thoughtful analysis of the issue, including the equity frame and need for a collective response instead of a market-based one. Their leadership creates a way to reach deep and broad in working class neighborhoods and communities of color, and provides an opportunity for unions and environmental organizations to learn about issues that are important to the community.

3. **Increasing membership and capacity of the coalition and its member organizations.** In addition to creating space for community leadership, the Green Justice Campaign sought to increase organizational engagement in Community Labor United, while also providing resources for member organizations to increase their capacity and strength. Specifically, the Green Justice Campaign engaged organizations CLU had not worked with before, while increasing engagement from groups who had already been involved with CLU. Importantly, the coalition has also leveraged significant resources to base-building community organizations taking campaign leadership, so that they could increase their organizational capacity through staff time and deeper member engagement.
4. **Raising consciousness and reframing issues.** The leadership of the Green Justice Coalition shares an organizing approach that includes examining the root causes of an issue, including who is most impacted, and creating a new vision and frame to raise public awareness about the real solutions to this issue. In fact, the term “Green Justice” was a way to make it clear that this campaign would come from a perspective that was inclusive of environmental, economic, and social justice.

## WHAT DOES “GREEN JUSTICE” MEAN?

When the initial workgroup of community organizations came together to conceptualize the Green Justice Campaign, they knew it would be important to start by analyzing the root causes of the environmental and economic conditions that working class communities of color face. The “Principles of Green Justice” clarify this analysis. At the center is a clear understanding of greening not only as a responsibility, but also as a right – one that, if connected to a clear process of genuine community control, has the potential to address longstanding environmental and economic injustices by transforming the economy while creating real sustainability. While ACE took leadership in drafting the initial document, each organization contributed its experience and expertise to expand collective understanding of the issue, and strengthen the final version of the framing document. For example, the MassCOSH Workers Center had members who had been working in the weatherization field at low-wages, without benefits, or adequate safety equipment. They not only underscored the need for dignified compensation, but also raised the issue of workers’ health and safety – an issue that the coalition might not have considered without their active involvement.

*“Visions don’t spontaneously materialize...[we have to] take on the challenge of saying here’s what we think green jobs ought to look like.”*

– Penn Loh, ACE

Soledad Boyd of CLU sums up the need for a new model of community control. “We want community control zones, that go beyond the current model of politically appointed task forces and tenant associations hampered by management control. We want to answer the questions - What is social wealth and does it matter? Who profits from our social wealth? How do we make our physical spaces work for us? How do we shape those spaces? We don’t want to be relegated to commenting on what has been proposed by outsiders. We want to draft the proposals, push demands and have the final say. We want to matter.”

These Principles have played a large role in making the Green Justice Campaign unique.

- The **coalition strategy is fundamentally about prioritizing an organizing strategy to build power**, rather than service delivery or policy work alone;
- **The campaign demonstrates a real commitment to community control of “green” resources and the broader economy**, by being based in working class neighborhoods and communities of color that have been traditionally excluded from economic or environmental opportunities.
- **Campaign demands reflect these shared beliefs.**

# PRINCIPLES OF GREEN JUSTICE\*

The Green Justice Coalition is founded on the following principles:

- We all have a right to a decent quality of life and healthy environment, but not at the expense of others or future generations.
- We all have a right to an equal voice on how public resources are used to go green. We all have a right to know the outcomes of public investment in the green economy.
- We must protect those who are currently most vulnerable.
- Those who have contributed more to the problem need to contribute more to address past injustices, while those who have paid the price are owed a greater share of new green resources and opportunities.
- Green Justice requires that there be meaningful access to green jobs and other green economic opportunities for members of communities of color and other working class communities. Meaningful access includes appropriate education, training and supports, as well as priority hiring for local projects.
- Green jobs must be safe jobs, with good jobs and benefits, jobs that can support families. Where possible, green jobs should be union jobs. Workers who will be negatively impacted by green development have a right to a just transition.
- Green Justice supports not only green jobs but also opportunities for individual and community ownership and production among communities of color and other working class communities.

\* Excerpt from “Green Justice Coalition Vision and Principles” document – available online at <http://massclu.org/system/files/TheGreenSolution-full.pdf>, pp. 66-67

## EXTERNAL GOALS

Coming out of this framing process, the Green Justice Campaign started out with four primary demands for energy efficiency work in the city and state. Together, these four components make up the Green Justice Campaign’s model for equity in the energy efficiency industry.

- 1. High Road Jobs<sup>ii</sup>:** Rather than advocating for job training alone, or accepting low-wage dead-end jobs as better than nothing, the coalition demands good jobs, including family-sustaining wages, benefits, safe working conditions, and opportunities for career advancement;
- 2. Community Access to Jobs:** The coalition demands that working class communities and communities of color who have been traditionally excluded from economic opportunities, and who have experienced the most severe impacts of environmental injustices, have first access to the jobs created with weatherization dollars.
- 3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction:** Part of the reason the coalition chose energy efficiency is its potential to create significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions – something the coalition understands as important from the perspective of environmental and intergenerational justice. As such, the coalition pushed for more aggressive statewide energy efficiency goals as part of the utilities’ new 3-year energy efficiency plan.
- 4. Community Access to Energy Efficiency Resources:** Who has access to resources to weatherize their homes is an important equity issue, for not only will those communities be able to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, but they will also be able to save money on utility bills – money that working class communities could use to meet many other important needs.

These four demands are incorporated in GJC’s community-driven model for large-scale energy efficiency work, known as Community Mobilization Initiatives (CMIs). This new model includes 1) a lead community base-building partner who is already established and trusted in the neighborhood or city that the pilot will be taking place to coordinate the initial outreach and education on energy efficiency, organize other groups on the ground to support the work and bundle residential homes, multi-unit buildings and small businesses interested in implementing energy efficiency measures, and 2) a lead union or community-based cooperative to bring in a responsible contractor committed to local hiring and establishing career pathways for new workers.

Another important element of the CMI model is “green leases”—protections to ensure that lower income tenants are not displaced and working class communities are not gentrified as a result of participation in energy efficiency programs. GJC is advocating for landlords to sign commitments to not raise rents in weatherized apartments for at least two years after having had ratepayer subsidized work done.

PRINCIPLES OF GREEN JUSTICE

Even larger than any of these important and ambitious campaign demands is the Green Justice Coalition's broader external goal: to build statewide power for progressive change. Lisa Clauson elaborates, "This is a policy campaign that is also about power building in the state ... creating relationships across key community organizing powerhouses in the state. We all get that there's a lot of value to be had by linking together. Yet, we are still struggling with what that means longer term, and how we can add up these pieces to make them be of greater value. But we learn through doing campaigns and experiencing the work together. This campaign has played a valuable role in helping create a place for doing just that."



ACE leader and GJC member Sadika Edwards in GJC t-shirt doing outreach on green justice in Dudley Square (August 2010)

## COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION INITIATIVES (CMIs)

Designed and developed by the Green Justice Coalition, CMIs are a new approach to achieving large-scale energy efficiency work by relying on innovative partnerships between community organizations that have long-standing relationships in working class communities and responsible contractors committed to providing livable wages, benefits, and career pathways for local residents.

**CMIs are at the heart of the Green Justice solution.** Trusted community-based organizations go door-to-door in their neighborhoods, signing up and educating large numbers of residents about home energy efficiency work. Each CMI will "bundle" these retrofits into a single contract, done by a responsible contractor that agrees to local hiring, training, wage and benefit packages and safety measures.

Work cannot be "bundled" or responsible contractors hired unless someone signs up large numbers of people for this work in one neighborhood, creating efficiencies of scale. Mobilizing entire neighborhoods for good jobs and quality retrofits can create the wave effect that has so far eluded social marketing experts working in the energy efficiency field. It can also lead to long-term changes in energy behavior that are needed to meet the greenhouse gas reduction goals that are important not only for meeting state goals, but also for addressing the broader climate crisis.

"We create a situation where we can get economies of scale, do the work more efficiently, build an organization in the community, get people good jobs, and show that a progressive model can work," says Jim Snow, former CLU Pilot Coordinator.

COMMUNITY  
MOBILIZATION  
INITIATIVES



Juan Leyton, Executive Director of Neighbor to Neighbor testifies in front of the state Energy Efficiency Advisory Council

## Part 3: CAMPAIGN STRATEGY & RESULTS

Before launching the public campaign, the Green Justice Coalition had to determine who were the primary decision-makers that it would seek to influence. There were several sources of funding for energy efficiency work at the time, including Weatherization Assistance Program funds and the 2009 federal stimulus package. However, CLU research showed that utility programs had the largest and most consistent sources of funding for energy efficiency work — especially after the passage of the Green Communities Act in 2008. (*see Part 2 under “History.”*)

For this reason, the Green Justice Coalition decided to focus primarily on the utility companies, while also looking to gain support from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources and the Legislature.

*“Decision-makers in the state are used to an ‘inside the ivory tower’ sort of decision making process. These decisions are usually dominated by energy businesses, large industrial customers in the state, not by the general public. Energy regulators in this state are used to these grand bargains being met ... almost always between the utilities and the large commercial customers who use the energy – residential consumers are not in the picture. To have decision makers in Massachusetts knowing that community leaders care about these issues and are willing to engage politically to press for them is a paradigm shift, that in and of itself is the bigger picture victory.”*

– Cindy Luppi, Clean Water Action

In order to influence these powerful entities, the coalition decided to use a combination of both “inside” and “outside” organizing strategies. In addition to the four demands for making sure that energy efficiency programs benefit communities, the campaign also began pushing for changes **to make the decision-making process around utilities’ energy efficiency programs more democratic and accountable to the community.** As a first step, the coalition won placement of a coalition member (Penn Loh, former ACE Executive Director and later Faculty member at Tufts University’s Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning Department) onto the state’s Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC). Once he

was appointed, the coalition pushed for evening hearings and translation so that community members could attend, understand, and meaningfully participate in the process.

Coalition leaders knew from the beginning that even with an official voice on the inside of the decision-making process, it would take concerted grassroots organizing from the outside to win any real campaign demands. This is in many ways what many of the base-building organizations in the coalition know how to do best. From getting thousands of postcards signed across the state, to mobilizing hundreds of members to fill EEAC meeting rooms and testify during hearings, to organizing a series of public actions and accountability sessions this year, the campaign demonstrates that people-power gets results.

In late 2009, the Green Justice Coalition celebrated a remarkable victory. As mentioned earlier, under the Green Communities Act, the utilities were required to develop new 3-year energy efficiency plans for meeting dramatically increased savings goals. These plans had to be approved by the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC) by the end of October, 2009. The Green Justice Coalition played a crucial role influencing these plans. In early July, the coalition released an Issue Brief outlining ways to address the barriers to scaling up this work, and issuing recommendations for the new utility plans. After persuading the state to hold a public hearing on the issue, the coalition packed the hearing with grassroots members and leaders, many of whom testified about these barriers and recommendations. The GJC also spent considerable time over the summer and fall bringing community and union leaders to meetings with Department of Energy Resources (DOER) staff and EEAC members, regarding our concerns and solutions. On July 28th, the EEAC passed a resolution urging the utilities to incorporate new outreach and delivery models into their plans. The coalition continued meeting with DOER staff, EEAC members and utility program administrators advocating for its recommendations. On October 7th, community and labor leaders filled a second EEAC hearing to reiterate the key elements our model.

On October 27th, before a cheering crowd of GJC members, and after five months of intensive organizing, the **EEAC approved a \$1.4 billion energy efficiency plan which incorporated many elements of our recommendations. The state estimates this three-year plan will result in \$4.1 billion in energy savings.** This historic plan will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts, and with the GJC's continued organizing, should enable lower income communities to access the efficiency work. In addition to language in the plan addressing each of the coalition's issue areas, **the EEAC also agreed to the GJC's recommendation to create an Equity Subcommittee**, to monitor and evaluate the plan's implementation with regards to equity issues (including access to efficiencies, access to work, type of work created).

**A crucial component of the plan is a commitment by the utilities, with support from state regulators, to create pilot projects ("Community Mobilization Initiatives" or CMIs) modeling GJC's approach to this work.** This campaign win was truly groundbreaking – no other state had agreed to this combination of demands before. Specifically, this victory includes several important provisions.

- These pilots will be developed in several working class neighborhoods across Massachusetts and will incorporate the GJC's demands for high-road jobs (including living wages, benefits, and career pathways), community mobilization, local hiring, and bundling multiple units at a time into energy efficiency programs.
- The pilots will involve short-term energy efficiency work in up to 130 units per pilot, for a total of 520 units (50 1-4 residential family units per pilot, plus 4 buildings of up to twenty units);

## INSPIRING CAMPAIGN MOMENTS

*"Last year really proved that the organizing worked - we were able to attend hearings, fill rooms, post cards, meetings. I think we died down a little bit since then because these pilot programs came around, and I'm really excited at the fact that the coalition is now saying we need to start moving again. Because when we died down a little bit they thought we just went away and it's like 'No, no, no we're still here—let's show you who we are again, maybe remind you why we care about it.' We've come a long way, and I'm excited to do more of that."*

- Mimi Ramos, Executive Director, New England United for Justice

*"It was very inspiring to have the workers going to the hearings. I remember one hearing with the city of Boston - we were listening to the city of Boston people in suits talking about how we are going to use the green jobs and the stimulus money, and the workers were like, 'Really, are you kidding? How about me?' They were so excited, they didn't want to leave."*

- Isabel Lopez, MassCOSH Workers Center

*"At the final Energy Efficiency Advisory Council meeting when they were going to announce that all of the stakeholders and all of the councilors agreed on the changes that the coalition had been advocating for—as they were coming into the meeting the coalition had decided to hold up thank you signs and cheer them on. It was really compelling to see these sort of hard-bitten lawyers and utility executives kind of puffing out—it was fun for us, and I think it was fun for them as well to realize that they actually managed to move forward in a way that was positive."*

- Cindy Luppi, Clean Water Action

INSPIRING  
CAMPAIGN  
MOMENTS

- An estimated 6-8 new workers will be hired per pilot for weatherization work, plus additional local hires for the community mobilization outreach.

Once the pilots are completed, the coalition plans to push for an expansion of the model (high-road jobs, community mobilization outreach, bundling, tenant protections) into the overall energy efficiency programs. For this reason, **the future impact is likely to be on a much greater scale.**

*“What I like about the campaign is that we are actively trying to push forward changes that are going to directly affect people’s lives. The pilot is a really good opportunity to figure out how do you have all of the different standards around workers—workers’ health and safety, physical health but also economic health - and at the same time build up a community. It’s not impossible but it is really hard to do - we are trying and problem solving and troubleshooting - doing something in real time and that is incredibly important. So we have a lot at stake with the pilots.”*

– Kalila Barnett, ACE

As we write this report, the first pilot is preparing to launch in Chinatown, through a collaboration between the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA), the Painters’ Union, and the Aulson Company. It’s a special collaboration that would not have been possible without the deliberate relationship-building of the Green Justice Coalition, and each party has developed a great deal of respect for one another. Alan Aulson recognizes this project as a benefit to his company, allowing it to enter the weatherization industry in a new community where it would not have otherwise had the relationships, language skills, or cultural background to reach this constituency. By working with CPA, he has been able to start employing and training a group of bilingual crew leaders who are training monolingual Cantonese speakers to do energy efficiency work in the neighborhood, and who Aulson plans to keep on his workforce even beyond this pilot, as new members of the Painters’ Union. Historically, monolingual Cantonese workers have been unable to

join unions because of language barriers. This model is an exciting way to open up doors that had previously been closed off to much of the Chinese community. In total, the Chinese Progressive Association was able to coordinate weatherization and pre-apprenticeship safety training with 14 workers. Mark Liu, CPA Green Justice Organizer, sees the value of this work as adding a jobs and environmental component to the organization’s broader strategy of stabilizing Chinatown (which also includes housing and anti-gentrification work).

Three additional pilots are in the planning stages, based on similar collaborations between community organizations, unions, co-ops, and other responsible contractors. Darlene Lombos explains that working to implement the pilot has put the coalition between a rock and a hard place. “Initially, what it meant for us was proving our demands could actually work in order to change the system.” However, the Green Justice campaign soon discovered fundamental problems with the way that utilities’ energy efficiency programs are structured; systemic problems that would not support innovations like the CMIs. (See “Lessons Learned,” page 14.) In addition, the coalition’s time and attention spent on negotiating and rolling out the pilot projects has taken away from a more focused outsider strategy. Darlene goes on to explain, “Instead of proving that our model works, we’re using the pilots to prove that the current system just does not work for our communities and the system is stuck in an outdated model that was only designed to reach a very small portion of the population.”

In addition to these statewide efforts, the Green Justice Coalition has also made significant progress on the city level. The coalition’s Boston-based organizations created a partnership with the City of Boston and their contractors (Mass Energy & Next Step Living), under which the city has awarded a \$1.8 million contract using ARRA (federal stimulus) funds for local residential weatherization work. Next Step Living has signed a Community Workforce Agreement with the GJC, outlining plans to be a responsible employer (hiring locally, paying higher than industry average wages and benefits), and to subcontract at least 25% of the work to other GJC responsible employers. The coalition expects at least 2400 units to be weatherized through this program using responsible contractors with local hiring.



Community Resident Shewanda McGhee provided impromptu testimony during a street skit New England United for Justice did about barriers in the state’s weatherization programs (Codman Square, Dorchester)

## Part 4: LESSONS LEARNED

### USING WHAT WORKS

Several factors have contributed to the Green Justice Coalition’s significant successes to date.

- 1. The Green Justice Coalition Principles document unites members around a strong framework, providing motivation and inspiring guidance for campaign direction.** Penn Loh explains, “For me it really verified the power of vision – not just fighting against injustice, but fighting for a dream that can sustain long term work. We’re not used to doing it, but it’s such a driving force for the kind of organizing we want to do.”
- 2. Deliberate popular political education with and between members builds capacity for stronger leadership.**

At the same time that the coalition is creating its frame, it’s important to have discussions within and between the memberships of each organization. This way, people are a part of shaping the campaign framework, and see that the problem is not about blaming ourselves as individuals, but rather seeing systemic causes and solutions. While this is still a relatively new field, there is a growing body of resources and tools that can help organizations do this work in ways that include an environmental justice analysis of racism, along with a radical economic critique.<sup>iv</sup> Organizations can do a lot of this work internally. For example:

- ACE and the MassCOSH Workers Center conducted a set of workshops with leaders before getting into campaign mode, contributing members’ input into the campaign framework.
- Neighbor to Neighbor, the Chinese Progressive Association, and New England United for Justice established “Green Justice Committees” to keep members engaged and part of decision-making.
- Alliance to Develop Power has modified the training modules to use with members in house meetings. They have found that house meetings allow them to reach large numbers of people, while building investment in the campaign – at the end of each house meeting, members commit to taking some leadership step, whether it is hosting their own house meeting, collecting postcards, or attending a strategy meeting or action.

In addition to this internal work, the coalition organizes broader events for collective learning and strategizing between member leaders. Mimi Ramos explains the importance of these cross-fertilizing

# CALCULATING COLLECTIVE SAVINGS

Shannon Bade, Alliance to Develop Power

“My analysis is that the Mass Save program, the way it’s currently administered, only reinforces the racial and economic disparities that already exist. What I mean is that when you look at history, low-income people have the worst housing out there, so they’re paying more into this fund because it’s based on kilowatts used. So the more energy-inefficient your home is, the more that you’re paying into this fund and the less likely you are to receive the services [because of inability to afford copayments].

“I was exploring and investigating one of ADP’s housing cooperatives - Greenfield Gardens pays \$9,400 a month in electric alone. So they are paying \$600 per month into this fund – \$7,200 a year, and this doesn’t include gas. The researchers involved said that when you weatherize your home or unit you can save up to thirty percent on your bill. So when you look at \$9,400 a month the savings on that comes out to about \$33,000 a year that Greenfield Gardens is just throwing out the window (as long as they can’t access the weatherization program). That money could certainly be used to improve other things in the multi-family housing cooperative!”

## CALCULATING COLLECTIVE SAVINGS

opportunities, “When you bring the leaders in the room through education, leadership development, and the vision of local neighborhoods to lead campaign work together, that’s really strong.”

- 3. Research is an important tool to support campaign demands and build momentum.** CLU is fortunate to have a full-time researcher who collects and shares technical information with coalition members, and writes policy reports that backup campaign demands. At the same time, even without full-time research capacity, there is a lot that grassroots organizing groups can do to create “organizing handles” based on information that can build public support. For example, when Alliance to Develop Power calculated how much money members were paying into energy efficiency programs already, and what they could save individually and collectively through weatherizing their homes, they were able to expose injustices inherent in the system, while also increasing members’ motivation to fight for their rights.
- 4. Community Mobilization Initiatives are an effective way to reach working class communities and communities of color, while building community investment and control.**

Utility companies’ marketing strategies for energy efficiency programs often involve inclusion of a paper advertisement in the envelope with customers’ bills.

*“Most people are not concerned about this little green piece of paper with their bill - they’re worried about the how much they owe. So the utility companies could have said ‘We did the outreach and it didn’t work,’ but we know there’s no way that strategy would be effective marketing... You need to have effective community-based organizations that have relationships built with homeowners and residents in the neighborhood to be the faces and the voices. We can send out people with Boston Workers Alliance tags, and people say ‘Oh, that’s the place on the corner that helped my son or grandson with his [criminal record].’ There’s already rapport built because of activities we do for local residents. What better way to get in, educate, and train people on the opportunities that are present with weatherization?”*

– Hakim Cunningham, Boston Workers Alliance

CMI also benefit contractors doing energy efficiency work in neighborhoods. Alan Aulson of Aulson Company explains that the skills involved are different from those involved in managing large crews and finances. “It takes a little bit of hand holding, it takes a good personal relationship...when you’re in-home, you’re face-to-face, you’re right there on people’s flowers, in their yard.” The stronger the relationships with and ownership by the community, the greater the chances for success.

**5. A broad coalition led by community members allows the campaign to achieve much more than any sector could achieve on its own.**

Shannon Bade of ADP explains the importance of this point in clear and simple terms: “It’s no easy task going up against the utility companies and the state, so it’s very important that we use our shared power.”

How did the Green Justice Coalition hold together such a wide array of forces, from community groups, to labor unions, to environmental organizations? Many of these specific lessons are included earlier in the report, under “Internal Goals.” In addition, several coalition members point to CLU’s Leadership Institute (a series of joint discussions and workshops over the period of several months) as a key strategy in building relationships, developing collective analysis, and creating the basis for long-term partnerships in the coalition.

*“It takes an organization to take on an individual issue, but it takes a movement to take on a system. That’s part of why coalitions are so important in this work – it is about helping our groups find themselves as part of a movement [because] we do have to take on the system.”*

– Darlene Lombos, CLU

*“The CLU [Leadership] Institute allowed me to understand who was in the room with me...and it really helped set the tone for the past few years that we’ve been involved, understanding we’re all on the same side. We might look a little different and there might be some challenges but let’s understand what those challenges are in order to overcome them.”*

– Mimi Ramos, New England United for Justice

## LEARNING FROM CHALLENGES

While the strengths of the Green Justice Coalition have allowed it to accomplish major victories, it may be even more instructive to learn from the obstacles that the campaign has met along the way. We hope that this open analysis will allow groups to either avoid - or at least anticipate and prepare for - some of the challenges they might face in doing this kind of work.

**1. Existing financing structures create barriers to access to weatherization for a significant sector of the population, including many people in working class communities and communities of color.**

There’s a glaring inequity in Massachusetts: renters and low-to-moderate-income ratepayers are paying into a home weatherization pool that many of them can’t access. The state’s energy efficiency system is paid for largely through monthly charges on everyone’s utility bills (system benefit charges). However, most people in our target income category (60-120% of median income) do not have disposable income, are struggling to pay their current bills, and are not able to come up with the upfront costs required of them to access the programs. The system is also not set up to work for renters. 35% of Massachusetts’s population are renters. 17% are homeowners in the 60-120% of median income category. So essentially, 52% of the ratepayers contributing to the fund for energy efficiency cannot access the programs as they are currently designed. As a result, these ratepayers are subsidizing energy efficiency work for higher-income ratepayers.

Here is how it works: Low-income families (people who earn below 60% of median income) get 100% subsidies to weatherize their homes. Everyone above 60% of median income gets a rebate of 75% of the cost of basic weatherization work up to \$2000, and must pay the remaining 25%. Contributing that 25% is not a problem for wealthier people. However, having to come up with 25% of the costs is a significant barrier to at least two sets of people in our communities:

- *Working class homeowners:* Families that make 60% to 120% of the state’s median income, do not qualify for the low income program, but usually do not have sufficient means to invest in the upfront costs (25%) to participate in the utility programs. This means they will continue to pay into the program each month through the system benefit charges, but they can’t access the program and as a result are subsidizing energy efficiency for everyone else. Additionally, the rebate system operates like a regressive tax, because

# STRUCTURAL ISSUES & LESSONS LEARNED

Programs in different states will likely have their own unique challenges, but we share these with the hope that some of our lessons may be useful in your state.

- a. **Utility companies are at the heart of administering the energy efficiency program**<sup>v</sup> – this in effect is a type of self-oversight, leading them to be incredibly slow to change and implement any program changes.

*“This whole question of having utilities be at the heart of administering this system is completely insane. It’s not just a bad idea; it’s like the wolf guarding the chicken house. Even if your energy system is private does not mean that the efficiency system has to be.”*

– Mary Jo Connelly, Community Labor United

**LESSON** *In other parts of the country that have not yet passed legislation to determine the structure of energy efficiency programs, try to separate energy efficiency work from being run by the utilities themselves, particularly investor-run utilities.*<sup>vi</sup> *CLU Senior Organizer Jeremy Shenk advises “don’t leave it in the hands of the utilities.”*

- b. **The existing pricing structure for energy efficiency work reinforces low wages.** The utilities set standard reimbursement rates for each weatherization measure performed even though the conditions in different homes vary. This pricing structure is contrary to how the construction industry operates where normally contractors determine the full scope of work for each job and then bid on it.

**LESSON** *Had the coalition known about this structure when it started, it would have included a **demand that when bundling, pricing would get set after the energy audit.** This in turn would allow contractors to price knowing the conditions in each unit, and to create savings based on economies of scale, thus offsetting the cost of paying livable (or more livable) wages to their workers.*

- c. **The Coalition did not realize how important the exact wording of the plans would be, because of the specific roles that different regulatory bodies play in energy efficiency work.** The EEAC plays a role in regulating the utilities in Massachusetts. However

the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) also approves changes to the utility programs. The GJC was able to win strong language as part of an EEAC resolution regarding the utilities’ plans, but because this language was not part of the official plans, it did not have much teeth. When the coalition later tried to use a legal process to force recognition of this resolution, the DPU ruled that companies were not bound by the resolution.<sup>vii</sup>

**LESSON** *An in-depth power analysis of the various agencies and regulatory players involved (industry, regulators, and other state agencies), combined with an historical investigation of how changes in the industry have come about, could be incredibly useful when developing your campaign strategy. **The challenge is to do an accurate power analysis without getting lost in the many details and endless digging this industry could provide.***

- d. **The Green Communities Act – which created the structure for expanded energy efficiency programs in Massachusetts – is only concerned with “cost-effectiveness,” in energy savings per dollar spent.** It does not take into account the quality of working conditions, or any other social equity measures. This means it could privilege low-wage contractors over those that truly benefit the community. The lack of attention paid to job issues is in part due to the fact that the utility regulatory process has typically only taken consumer (low rates) and environmental issues into account. In Massachusetts (as in other states), the workforce development and labor issues have traditionally been kept in separate silos from the energy and environmental issues.

**LESSON** *Grassroots community organizations and unions must be part of creating the language of energy efficiency legislation, in order to **make sure that social equity measures are included in the original version.** This could take place through responsible contractor legislation, or through a point system in which bids are awarded extra points for meeting measures of social equity, such as paying good wages, hiring locally, committing not to discriminate based on a worker’s arrest or prison record, and serving a working class community or a community that has in the past been adversely environmental impacted.*<sup>viii</sup>

- e. **Low-income weatherization programs may not be structured to achieve maximum impact.** The Green Justice Coalition made a tactical decision not to focus on the federally funded low-income program (Weatherization Assistance Program or WAP) when it took on this work. However, in the process it has discovered that many coalition members who qualify for the low-income program may not be able to access it because of long wait-lists. Furthermore, similar to the utility programs, these programs have traditionally paid low wages – perhaps in an effort to weatherize as many homes as possible with limited resources – but this means that those working in weatherization jobs in the low-income program may themselves not be able to come out of poverty.

**LESSON** *It may be useful for you to consider ways to improve access to low-income weatherization and the quality of jobs in this program as part of your efforts. The agency running the program in your region may or may not be open to these changes.*

- f. **Pilots are time-consuming and of course limited in scope, and may take time and attention away from focusing on the real need to make deep systemic changes to a flawed program.** The Green Justice Coalition decided to engage in implementing pilots so that it could show how its model could work, with the idea that it could then make a case for expansion of the model into the overall energy efficiency program. While the lessons learned from this experience are extremely valuable, it is important to remember that broader expansion will still likely require a large organizing effort. Furthermore, groups engaged in pilots may find it challenging to do direct action because of concerns of disrupting negotiations on a particular project.

**LESSON** *While it is important to find ways to learn about the specific structures in your area, it may be possible to do this without limiting initial demands to a pilot program. In this way, the Green Justice Campaign's pilots may serve as a useful example, combined with some other research on your local conditions, to be able to push for and win incorporation of your demands into the overall energy efficiency program, without needing to run your own pilots.*

a person who earns 61% of the median income is required to pay the same upfront costs as a person who earns 600% of the median income. With research to support its conclusion, the GJC has determined that people in the 60-120% of median income category do not have extra disposable income and should not be required to take on new financing if they want to participate in the system.

- **Renters:** Many tenants are in the same position of not having money for upfront costs, but they also face a greater risk and less incentive to invest in the program. As renters, they usually pay their own utility bills and as such pay system benefit charges. However, they are very unlikely to invest in energy efficiency work both because they might be uncertain as to how long they will remain in the unit and because they aren't inclined to invest in their landlord's property improvements.

In addition to these serious obstacles, many homes, particularly in working class communities, need pre-weatherization work done before they can participate in these programs. Without public funding streams for pre-weatherization projects, many more community members are unable to access energy efficiency programs.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

**Access to energy efficiency programs is inextricably linked to access to financing.**

For this reason:

- It is important to understand the details of how your region's programs serve different constituencies based on how rebates are distributed, and to then shape your demands or the restructuring of your program around these needs. Access to the program is the crux of the issue for working class communities, and is crucial to ensuring the programs can adequately scale up to meet aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals.
- In order to ensure that working class communities can access home weatherizations, energy efficiency programs must be linked to a source of pre-weatherization funds. We recommend connecting this issue early on to your demand development.

- The Green Justice Coalition is developing several additional demands to address issues of access to financing, including:
  - › Establishing a **sliding scale for those making 60-120% of median income**, so that those with lower incomes contribute much less than those who can afford to pay;
  - › Developing a **Tenant/landlord** split incentives and outreach proposal.
  - › Working with local cities and towns to coordinate their home-improvement programs (and **pre-weatherization funds** these programs could deliver) with the utility weatherization programs.

2. **Because energy efficiency work is subcontracted, with responsibility for workers outsourced to various employers, it has historically been a “low-road” industry.** It has been almost exclusively nonunionized, prevailing wages are low, and it is rare for companies to provide benefits or adequate protections for workers’ safety.

### LESSONS LEARNED

The Green Justice Campaign’s efforts to create a “high-road” industry within this context take a great deal of commitment, for contractors may be forced to compete with other contractors to pay lower wages in order to get more homes weatherized or produce higher profits for contractors.

- Responsible contracting language is one way to create a level playing field and make sure that employers are accountable, and do not pay their workers sub-standard wages in an effort to secure a contract.
  - In the case of the Chinatown Pilot program, the painters’ union, CPA, and Aulson Company developed an innovative way to raise the floor in this industry. The union created a new wage and benefit structure for these workers (approximately \$18/hr in wages with \$4/hr in benefits), which was more competitive with the weatherization industry than with their commercial rates, yet still provided living wages. The union made the workers members, but because they are not in the commercial apprentice program, the union also created a pipeline for the weatherization workers to move into that program (through which workers can earn even higher wages). GJC’s organizing succeeded in getting the utilities to commit to paying reimbursement rates through the pilot projects high enough to ensure these living wages.
3. **Despite a local and national focus on creating ‘Pathways Out of Poverty’ through green jobs and in particular, through energy efficiency work, people in lower income communities many of whom have barriers to employment continue to face those barriers in this work. These barriers include people with arrest or prison records (called “CORIs” in Massachusetts), people who are not proficient in English and undocumented workers.** Disproportionately large numbers of people in working class communities and communities of color experience the effects of criminalization, including arrests, incarceration, and detention. For this reason, unless jobs are accessible to people with a record, large segments of the population – including many of those who most need economic opportunity – will be kept from having a chance to benefit from the work. For the pilots, the Green Justice Coalition has been able to secure agreements with specific contractors to ensure that they do not discriminate against workers who have a record, but these agreements are not yet codified into all of the energy efficiency work. The Massachusetts legislature’s recent passage of “CORI Reform” takes some steps to improve job prospects for people with a record, but additional language is needed to ensure that people with a record have access to energy efficiency employment. In addition, other requirements such as drivers’ licenses create barriers to employment for people coming out of prison. Similarly, disproportionately large numbers of people in working class communities and communities of color are immigrants with language and documentation barriers. These potential workers are either shut out of the work opportunities or exploited through being paid low wages under the table. When the work is linked to strong training programs, like is happening in our pilots, most of these barriers can be overcome, however in the industry at large they remain significant problems.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- It takes concerted effort to ensure that energy efficiency jobs are accessible to the large segments of the community that have barriers to employment.
- The Green Justice Coalition is interested in developing anti-discrimination language as part of a broader effort to require use of “Responsible Contractors.”

- 4. With energy efficiency work, multiple targets and technical details can be overwhelming.** In addition to the utility companies, the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council and Department of Energy Resources have oversight, and the Department of Public Utilities has final say on structure and rate-setting. Diana Bell, CLU Organizer, notices how these details can make it difficult to maintain strong member engagement & decision-making.

*“So many decisions are made behind closed doors and between the ‘experts’ that it often becomes challenging to engage members. Meetings and hearings are so full of technical details that it can often feel dis-empowering from a community-based perspective. As organizers and organizations committed to transforming this system, it is our responsibility to constantly push open ALL these spaces or create new ones. Our constituencies deserve to be part of all the ongoing decision making processes.”*

– Diana Bell, CLU Community Organizer

## LESSONS LEARNED

While it’s useful to do your research and understand the different components of energy efficiency work, it’s also important to make sure your organizing efforts don’t get paralyzed by all of the details. Sometimes we need to learn the nuances, but other times, we can just show that the current system is inequitable, and push to figure out how to make it just. Find ways to constantly agitate your base:

- Use research to expose injustices in a way that relates to members’ lives (see *“Calculating Collective Savings”* page 15).
- Revisit your principles and vision to reflect on what your campaign is fundamentally about. Use it as a source of inspiration, and continue to update them as you go. For example, CLU Senior Organizer Soledad Boyd has recently been raising the idea of “Green Zones” as a way to bring community control to a neighborhood level, and many grassroots groups are excited about how they could use this concept on the ground.
- Keep mobilizing! Direct action and other pressure tactics help build energy and power.

*“The EEAC is this really complicated bureaucratic entity and it was pretty ambitious for us to take that on. I would definitely not profess to understand everything that happens at the EEAC, but I feel like we were able to really shake things up. I remember several times going to the meetings, and there are these super quiet, wonky meetings about things like kilowattage. We would come and be ourselves - that’s really important because they’re making decisions that are going to affect people’s lives and they need to not forget that.”*

– Kalila Barnett, ACE

- 5. Inside strategies can be effective in combination with a strong outside strategy, but there is sometimes a pull to the “inside” that makes it challenging to maintain this balance. And sometimes our “inside” game isn’t really how the game is played.** In some cases, coalition partners have relationships with power-brokers that help the campaign achieve its victories, but when working within a system, there can be pressure to compromise in an effort to seem “reasonable.” While some compromise may be justified or necessary, it’s important to remember not to compromise so much that the victory loses its impact. Also, in some cases, the coalition may delay moving an outside strategy because certain partners or allies believe the case is being achieved through an inside strategy. This is a classic organizing dilemma, which can cause campaign delays and the Green Justice Coalition encountered this challenge frequently with this campaign. The GJC had access to decision makers in state government, and at times tensions developed within the coalition and with allies over how much we were pushing to do public events and accountability sessions over working with our “friends”. In retrospect,

we believe we have erred too much to date on an insider strategy. Similarly, with our pilot projects, we encountered this problem because the utilities pretty quickly entered into negotiations with us around developing the pilots. However, when the negotiations began to drag on and problems developed it was challenging to use direct action to increase the pressure on the utilities to negotiate in good faith, because the parties involved in the pilots were concerned about jeopardizing their work to date.

We also learned many months into the campaign, how our insider tactics were not really insider. Rarely were decisions being made at the EEAC meetings, rather the EEAC seemed to be ratifying proposals made in between meetings by smaller groups of people. The true inside dealmaking was happening in full force in smaller meetings between the utilities, their consultants and a few other parties experienced in this work. For all of our progress in moving our agenda forward, we lost opportunities many times because we did not realize discussions that were happening – sometimes in small sub-committee meetings and sometimes in private behind the scenes meetings. We thought we were more on the inside than we were but also our way of public accountability and operating in the public sphere was contrary to how the industry and those who regularly influence the industry operate.

### LESSONS LEARNED

- It can be helpful to have allies on the “inside,” but only if they are connected to your organizing strategy and accountable to the members of your campaign. *“I wouldn’t be [on the EEAC] if it weren’t for the outside strategy. For me to be able to play a direct role in the inside has been fun, but only because it’s connected to an outside.”*  
– Penn Loh, EEAC Member
- Clearly understand how decisions are shaped. Make sure you understand how the inside game is played and figure out how to monitor it, and how to either strategically engage in it or work to change it.
- Maintain public pressure from the grassroots to counteract the effects of institutional stagnation. This pressure can also help support inside allies in advancing your agenda.
- Above all, remember the centrality of community control. Soledad explains, “Win or lose, how we throw down is ultimately so that people can feel ownership.”

#### 6. A free-market outlook can pose barriers to collective solutions and community well-being.

The Green Justice Coalition’s work has benefitted from positive relationships with many local companies, including union contractors and small minority businesses that are genuinely connected to their communities. At the same time, organizers recognize that not all local businesses truly benefit the communities in which they work.

*“Building wealth’ often means making one or two people rich in the community – or ‘my friend who’s a contractor wants to build his wealth off of the community, and therefore must pay low wages.”*

– Jeremy Shenk, CLU Senior Organizer

### LESSONS LEARNED

**It’s important for a campaign to be clear on its own definition of building collective, community wealth.** For the Green Justice Coalition, this could include:

- Well-paying jobs through local union contractors that offer career pathways. *“‘Green’ is a check on corporations doing whatever they want to, and ‘Green’ is about giving economic control to the communities so that they can plan what’s healthy for them, what products they want, and who’s making them.”*  
– Aaron Tanaka, Boston Workers Alliance
- Cooperatives that keep profits among community members, while maintaining community control of resources (Alliance to Develop Power’s “United for Hire” workers co-op is one exciting model);
- Social wealth, which many not be measured in dollars. Soledad Boyd asks, “What does it mean to have more days when you’re healthy, or to have a longer lifespan, or freedom from all of the environmental ills that are leading to a shorter lifespan for

communities of color? Social wealth allows you to contribute back to your community without what you've put in being used to gentrify you out of the neighborhood."

**7. We are organizing in an economic and political climate that is generally hostile to the interests of our base groups.**

Over the past several years, working class communities and communities of color have had to deal with the harshest realities of the economic and environmental crises, at the same time that the right-wing forces have gotten stronger. This means that grassroots organizations working in these communities are pulled to take on more fights, with the same amount of resources – or even less resources, in many cases. Unions may feel pressure to compete with each other or with unemployed community members pushing for local hiring, in order to get their own workers “off the bench.” These issues may contribute to tensions between organizations, particularly in Boston, which has a history of conflict and distrust along the community-labor divide, especially in the building trades.

*“The regulators, the politicians, the utilities—the attitude is that we don’t have to answer to this group, because they’re immigrants and everybody hates them right now. We don’t have to answer to that group, because we’re post-racial and so we don’t have to worry about black people... And we don’t have to answer to unions because we’re busting unions now. Systematic classism and racism is more prevalent, and is championed. People feel very free to openly hate us—they’ve been liberated from their political correctness.”*

– Soledad Boyd, CLU

**LESSONS LEARNED**

- **It’s important to have a pro-active approach to resolving potential conflicts between labor unions and/or unemployed workers, who have similar needs for access to quality work opportunities.** The Green Justice Coalition has found it extremely helpful to enlist the assistance of key labor allies in resolving jurisdictional issues between unions, and more broadly, to develop relationships and understanding between organizations so that they feel a sense of solidarity with each other. An important component of this approach has been to address conflict quickly and directly when it has risen or seems to have the potential to arise, particularly across the community and labor sectors. (See “Addressing the Wedge between Community Groups and Unions,” and “On Working through Tensions,” under “Internal Goals,” Part 2).
- Organizations whose resources are stretched find **that sharing coalition responsibilities among several different staff and leaders** helps ensure meaningful engagement without putting too much burden on any one individual or organization.
- **The Green Justice Coalition’s capacity to raise and distribute funds to base-building member organizations builds organizational capacity and makes it possible for them to invest time into the campaign.** CLU has worked with funders on the need to have policy campaigns grounded in a base-building organizing approach. Through this work, several funders, in particular the New World Foundation, Barr Foundation and Surdna Foundation, have committed resources to our partners groups to ensure they have the capacity to engage in this important work. This approach has been really important to the campaign’s success. The Green Justice Coalition needed to be diverse across the three sectors, and needed to have the ability to consistently mobilize a grassroots base. Without significant added resources, many of the coalition’s base-building organizations would not have been able to participate in the campaign to the degree that they have.
- **Taking on energy efficiency fights at a time when there is wide spread disinvestment in our communities and people are losing their homes is both needed and challenging.** Low and moderate income families struggling with their monthly bills need the relief of energy savings more than anyone else. However, in the face of looming foreclosure battles, both at personal and organizational levels, focusing in on energy costs can be difficult.
- **As we take on policy fights, we also must be active in the battle of ideas.** Coalition work to develop and publicly project shared analysis on the root causes of the issues our communities face is a key component of these struggles.



Hundreds of community residents and labor leaders involved with the Green Justice Coalition gathered at an EEAC hearing last fall to demand that the state’s \$1.4 billion energy efficiency plan have strong equity measures and clear commitments to increasing access both to home weatherization itself and to jobs in the growing industry of home weatherization.

## Part 5: NEXT STEPS

To date, we have developed an integrated, comprehensive strategic organizing plan. High-quality research led us to the state energy efficiency process as the largest, consistent source of energy efficiency funding. Ongoing power analysis helped us identify and visit the decision-makers we needed to get on our side. Meticulous coalition-building pulled together key players – environmentalists, unions, community organizations – some of whom had not been on the same side of issues in the past. Most importantly, building a strong and cohesive coalition has enabled us to mobilize grassroots forces and put our agenda on the table in ways the state and the utilities have found it difficult to ignore.

However, we have been very challenged by how large a system we are working to change and how institutionalized their past practices are. The utilities are very set in their ways and extremely resistant to exploring new approaches to their work. They are defensive about what they have achieved to date and who they are and are not reaching. It has been a struggle and will continue to be a struggle to bring meaningful change to this system.

We are currently gearing up for several months of more intensive mobilizations. This fall is a critical time in Massachusetts where the utilities have to file “midterm modifications” with the EEAC and the DPU. We will be mobilizing and organizing to affect what goes into these modifications with a continued focus on policy changes aimed at ensuring there is equitable access to the energy efficiency work and policies implemented which support local access to good jobs in this industry. And of course, implementing our pilot projects will continue to be a priority.

Changes in policy and mindset within this work are challenging endeavors. It is very difficult to get efficiency program administrators to bring equity with a racial and economic justice lens into their calculations. Over time, inside and outside strategies – stronger relationships plus pressure and public opinion – may wear down this blind spot.

Community Labor United will continue to grow through the Green Justice Coalition and look to expand into new issue areas. Our coalition and programmatic work are grounded in an analysis of systemic oppression that includes a deep understanding of how race, class and gender are intertwined and connected. We will continue to use strategic campaigns as a vehicle for leadership development as well as as a way to expose and change the economic and social inequities that exist in our society. And, we will continue to be intentional about expanding base-building organizing across both the community and labor divides and uncovering ways to unite our sectors towards building power collectively for working class communities.

## End Notes

- i. See "The Green Justice Solution: A Win-Win Plan to Prevent Climate Crisis and Jumpstart and Equitable and Sustainable Economy," Green Justice Campaign and Community Labor United, 2008. <http://massclu.org/system/files/TheGreenSolution-full.pdf>
- ii. See "Industry at the Crossroads: Energy Efficiency Employment in Massachusetts," Apollo Alliance and Community Labor United, 2010, for more details on the Green Justice Campaign's distinction between high road and low road jobs. <http://apolloalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/energyefficiencyemploymentmassachusetts.pdf>
- iii. The Chelsea pilot involves the Chelsea Collaborative and the Carpenters Union. The Lynn one involves Neighbor to Neighbor and the Laborers Union and the Springfield one involves the Alliance to Develop Power and their worker-owned cooperative, Workers United.
- iv. Movement Generation's Justice and Ecology Project has a series of relevant workshop curricula available to download from their website: <http://www.movementgeneration.org/programs/trainings-and-curriculum>
- v. In Massachusetts, most homes are served by for-profit utilities that are regulated by the state's Department of Public Utilities. Across the US, there are also significant numbers of people served by municipally-owned utilities and rural electric cooperatives. The politics in Massachusetts will be similar in other states dominated by for-profit utilities.
- vi. Penn Loh suggests looking into the type of utility structure in your area. If you have municipal-owned utilities, examples of organizing for energy efficiency programs in Wisconsin could be a source of inspiration; if you have third-party providers, Vermont could be a useful model. Massachusetts is utility-owned so it's a bit more difficult, but still possible to challenge.
- vii. This EEAC process is pretty unique to MA, but is an example of a stakeholder-based collaborative process that is built on top of the utility regulation process, which is very legalistic and adversarial.
- viii. Shannon Bade of Alliance to Develop Power explains precedent for this type of bidding process, "[Under] the Fair Housing Act, there is a different kind of contracting - that is, instead of the lowest bid, if you employ people within a three mile radius where the work is being done that that is as valid a contract as the lowest bid."

## **GREEN JUSTICE COALITION STEERING COMMITTEE**

Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), Alliance to Develop Power (ADP), Boston Climate Action Network (BCAN), Boston Workers Alliance (BWA), Chelsea Collaborative, Chinese Progressive Association, Clean Water Action, Coalition Against Poverty/Coalition for Social Justice (CAP/CSJ), Community Labor United (CLU), Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), Greater Four Corners Action Coalition, Laborers' New England Regional Organizing Fund, Massachusetts Energy Consumers Alliance, MassCOSH, Neighbor to Neighbor, New England Regional Council of Carpenters, New England United for Justice, Painters & Allied Trades DC35, Project RIGHT

## **GJC BROADER COALITION MEMBERS**

Action for Regional Equity, Adaptive Environments, ARISE for Social Justice, Boston Youth Environmental Network, Conservation Law Foundation, The Construction Institute, Coop Power Metroeast, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation, Foundation for a Green Future, Greater Boston Labor Council, Green Roundtable, Greenport, Home Energy Efficiency Team, JP Green House, Mass AFL-CIO, Mass Climate Action Network, Mass Communities Action Network, Mass Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, Mass Interfaith Power and Light, Mass Power Shift, People First of Southeastern Mass, Plymouth-Bristol Central Labor Council, SEIU Local 615, Sheet Metal Workers Local 17, Somerville Climate Action, UMass Dartmouth Labor Education Center, Unitarian Universalist Mass Action Network, Urban Ecology Institute, Urban Mass Green Alliance, Utility Workers Union Local 369, Western Mass Green Economy Working Group, Western MassCOSH, YouthBuild Boston

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