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Background:

350Vermont held the Just Transition Study Group in March-April 2022 as a way for our community to delve deeper into what Just Transition means; how people in other communities have done this kind of organizing; how it relates to power and privilege; what the impacts of it would be in Vermont; and how to talk about it effectively with a diverse range of people. Attendees left with a deeper understanding of how and when climate solutions center justice and what this framework means for us and our communities.

The Study Group was held at the same time as 350Vermont's Just Transition Campaign was doing strong organizing pushing our state legislators to center justice in climate policy. The materials and conversations included examples from current and recent campaigns.

The curriculum was put together by 350VT staffers Lily Jacobson and Sonia Silbert with input from many others. Please feel free to use it to deepen your own or your group's understanding of Just Transition. If you do use the curriculum in a public setting, please give credit to 350VT and (as appropriate) the original sources of the materials we included.

Group Agreements:

- We live on occupied land
- Oppressions exist
- Speaking from the "I"
- Move up/Move back
- Presence
- Intent vs Impact
- Accept/expect lack of closure
- Come as prepared as you can

Discussion Guidelines:

- Each group has a Discussion Leader to help the conversation flow and make sure everyone is able to speak. Please make sure they have a chance to share as well!
- Start with a go-around in which each person shares their answer to whichever one of the questions they'd like
- General conversation - Discussion Leader to take "stack" (list of people who want to speak next)
- At the 5 minute warning, do a final go-around where each participant can share any final thoughts
- Our questions are suggestions and conversation-starters - no need to get to all of them or force the conversation to follow our guide.

Session 1: Just Transition Overview

Description: What do we mean when we say “Just Transition”? How is Just Transition different from climate justice, environmental justice, and other ways of working for change? What does a Just Transition mean for people with different backgrounds and life experiences? And how can our different backgrounds and relative power and privilege inform us in organizing for a Just Transition in ways that are appropriate and authentic? In this first session of the study group, we’ll be laying the groundwork and starting to explore these questions.

Session Pre-Work

Reflecting

Before you begin engaging with the materials below, we invite you to journal, sketch, collage, or spend some time reflecting in another way on these prompts:

- What are your values?
- Why are you engaged in or drawn to climate activism?
- What’s the most important thing you’re working for right now?

We’ll invite you to reflect on these same prompts at the end of the study group, and take a look back at how your perspective has changed. This exercise is optional but encouraged!

Intentions and Materials

Below are the materials we’d like you to read or watch before the first session, arranged by topic. In each topic, we’re offering a question or a few questions to consider as you engage with the materials. *You don’t need to come to the session with answers to these questions* — you’re welcome to explore them actively if you like, or simply read the questions before diving into the materials.

- Establish Just Transition (JT) as a framework and understand the concepts and background.
Questions to consider: What does Just Transition mean? What would it look like globally and locally? Why is it a powerful framework to use as an organizing tool?
 - [How We Live](#) video from Movement Generation (~7 min)
 - [Climate Justice Alliance webpage about JT](#) (~7 min)
 - [Green New Eskom](#), South Africa case study - especially the first two videos (~8 min)
 - Optional:
 - [Movement Generation zine on JT](#) (~15 min)
 - [Good Work Institute manifesto](#) (~7 min)
 - [Just Transition Alliance Principles](#) (~ 3 min)
- Understand the overlaps and differences among key terms
Question to consider: How is Just Transition both related to and different from climate justice? Environmental justice?
 - Some basic [definitions](#) (1 page)
 - Additional definitions on pg 2-3 of the Guiding Principles for JT from the VT Climate Council’s Just Transitions subcommittee (see below)

- Explore what JT looks like in Vermont and how this framework could change how we actually organize, advocate, and make policy decisions
Questions to consider: What could Just Transition mean in Vermont? How could using this framework change the way we make policy and organize here?
 - [Guiding Principles for a Just Transition](#) from the Vermont Climate Council's Just Transitions Subcommittee (Draft, June 2021 - 9 pages). *Note: The Vermont Climate Council (VCC) was tasked by the legislature in 2021 in drafting a Climate Action Plan for the state and the Just Transitions subcommittee created these guidelines to guide the Plan's creation.*
- Self-reflection on identity/power/privilege (optional)
For those of you who haven't read some core texts, and especially for those who identify as white, we suggest reading the pieces below as well.
Questions to consider: What are you bringing to this conversation from your own background and experience? What experiences do you have that are relevant to this conversation? What blocks or missing pieces of knowledge do you know you have?
 - [Decolonization is Not a Metaphor](#) by Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang
 - [Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture](#) by Tema Okun & Kenneth Jones
 - [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) by Peggy McIntosh

Discussion questions

- What are the things that stand out to you as most important about what Just Transition means?
- How is Just Transition both related to and different from climate justice and environmental justice?
- Why could Just Transition be a powerful framework to use in organizing?
- What are the possibilities and challenges you see if we used this framework to organize on a global scale?
- Movement Generation defines "economy" as the "management of home" and discusses moving from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. In what ways did that concept resonate for you? How does it relate to or impact your understanding of the climate crisis and solutions?
- What could Just Transition mean in Vermont and how are you seeing this happen in your communities?
- What are some examples from your own community or life of extractive economy/culture and regenerative economy/culture? Are there any that you'd like to continue building on?
- What could utilizing the Just Transition framework mean for the organizing you're doing?
- What could utilizing the Just Transition framework mean for how you're showing up in your community, in your relationships, in your life?
- How do your identity and your own levels of privilege and power influence what it means for you personally to take action for a Just Transition, or your role in working for a Just Transition? How is that different from what it might mean for other people from different backgrounds?

Session 2: Class and Economic Justice

Description: When we think about transitioning away from fossil fuels, workers and low-income communities may be impacted first and worst in many ways. Through the readings and discussion, we'll explore how examining class and economic in/justice are central towards working for a Just Transition. We'll discuss how these issues relate to the climate crisis and the climate solutions being put forth, both here in Vermont and around the world.

Session Pre-Work:

Big Picture:

- 2021 [Just Transition Listening Sessions Report](#) from the Labor Network for Sustainability. Pg 2-12. (Read more if you have the time - it's great!)
- Video: [A Message from the Future II: The Years of Repair](#)

Case Study

- Portland Clean Energy Fund
 - [Executive summary](#)
 - [Full report](#): read p. 24 - 34 (pre-campaign), bottom of p. 37 - 45 (explanation of the ballot initiative and how they decided on the focus), p. 49 - 53 (labor).
- United Mine Workers of America [letter](#) to Joe Manchin about the Build Back Better Bill (optional)

Vermont and Policy

- VT AFL-CIO's Executive Director's [op-ed re the Climate Action Plan](#)
- [Class and Climate Legislation in Vermont in 2022](#) - 350Vermont's opinions (2 pgs)

Class and Classism - *please read/engage with these especially if class and economic justice are relatively new topics for you*

- [Class Distinctions](#) from Resource Generation
- [About Class](#) from Class Action
- [Class Privilege Quiz](#) from Resource Generation

Economics in Vermont:

- During Tropical Storm Irene, mobile home residents made up 8% of VT's population but 40% of flooding victims [[source](#)]
- The average income among the bottom 20% of VT households by earnings is just \$15,054, accounting for 3.6% of all earnings statewide. [[source](#)]
- Between 2010 and 2019, incomes declined for Vermonters in the bottom tax brackets while those who made more than \$1 million in 2017 reported 70 percent more income. [[source](#)]

Journal reflections on class/economic justice: (optional)

- What are you taking away from these materials?

- What does it bring up for you?
- How does your personal economic situation impact how you think about Just Transition and climate solutions?
- What is the significance of someone with your class background taking action for a Just Transition? How is it similar and different from how others from different backgrounds might take action?

Solidarity Asks (optional)

- VT AFL-CIO is asking the state legislature to remove barriers to unionization. [Click here](#) to add your name.
- Join the [online launch](#) of VT's Poor People's Campaign on April 4.

Discussion Groups:

ANALYSIS

The main case study (Portland Clean Energy Fund) was a unique campaign in many ways. What strikes you about it? What were the main reasons for its success? What were the main challenges you saw?

REFLECTION

How does your own class background and experience impact:

- how you think about the climate crisis?
- what it means for you to take action for a Just Transition, particularly in VT?
- how you show up in your community and in your life?
- And how is this different for people from other class backgrounds?

VISION

What could our communities look like if we really had economic justice in Vermont? If our world went through a Just Transition, what might things look like in Vermont in 20 years? How would the world be transformed and how would we be connected to the global struggles, supply chains, energy sources, etc?

APPLICATION

What would the push to weatherize our housing stock look like in Vermont if we applied the lessons from the Portland Clean Energy Fund campaign and the recommendations from the Labor Network for Sustainability?

- What would our organizing look like? Who would be involved? What kinds of relationships would need to be strengthened? Where would the leadership come from? What infrastructure would we need — coalitions, communication networks?
- What would the policies we ask for look like?
- What would we build or do in our communities that's different from how things are now? What kinds of solutions could we have that go beyond or alongside policy changes?

Session 3 - Race and Indigenous Sovereignty

Description: The climate crisis impacts communities of color, and particularly Indigenous communities, disproportionately all over the world. As we transition from an extractive economy to a more just one, we need to center the experiences and wisdom of these communities in order to build true solutions that meet the combined crises we live in. Through the readings and discussion, we'll look at how race and Indigenous sovereignty relate to the climate crisis and how these communities are imagining and building new possibilities.

Session Pre-Work:

BIPOC organizing, solutions, and solidarity

- Prioritize:
 - [Indigenous Principles of Just Transition](#)
 - A People's Orientation to a Regenerative Economy from It Takes Roots - [download here](#). Make sure to read p. 18 - 23, but the whole thing is great if you have time! (It's 48 pages but a lot of that is photos.)
 - [Moving Beyond a Politics of Solidarity Towards a Practice of Decolonization](#), Harsha Walia
 - Thacker Pass lithium mining for electrification: read [this article](#) and check out the [Protect Thacker Pass website](#).
 - [Every Town](#) project for BIPOC land access in VT
 - In summer 2021, a group of volunteers at 350VT created the zine *Grounded: How Vermonters are cultivating transformative relationships with the land*. A few of the pieces are aligned with the theme of race, Indigenous sovereignty, and a Just Transition. [Read the zine here](#) or [download here](#): SUSU pieces (p. 8 - 13), Radical Imagination piece (p. 18 - 21). Also recommended: Kerry Royce Wood and Joseph Bruchac pieces (p. 2 - 4).
 - State Senator Keshia Ram Hinsdale's [testimony to the Vermont Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee](#) about the needs for and impacts of the Environmental Justice Bill currently in the VT House, Jan 2022. Watch 1:50-17:10. (see Solidarity asks below for what this bill needs now!)
- Optional:
 - Listen to this [interview](#) with Thacker Pass activists
 - [As Miners Chase Clean-Energy Minerals, Tribes Fear a Repeat of the Past](#), Jack Healy and Mike Baker
 - Sogorea Te' Land Trust - read [this article](#) and feel free to check out their [website](#)
 - [Power in Our Pride: Two Spirit Nation Leads the Way](#), Jen Deerinwater
 - Climate Justice Alliance/Grist panel discussion: [Climate Solutions from the Frontlines of Environmental Justice](#) - from minute 52 to the end (more if you want)

Optional Foundational Information (optional - very encouraged if you don't have much knowledge on these topics)

- Disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis on BIPOC communities
 - [Why Climate Change Is Inherently Racist](#), Jeremy Williams
 - [EPA just detailed all the ways climate change will hit U.S. racial minorities the hardest. It's a long list.](#), Darryl Fears and Dino Grandoni
 - [Environmental Racism in VT](#) and [REJOICE project](#)
- Race, colonization, and white supremacy:
 - [Decolonization is Not a Metaphor](#) by Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang
 - [Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture](#) by Tema Okun & Kenneth Jones
 - [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) by Peggy McIntosh

Journaling prompts - reflecting on your own identity (optional)

- What are you taking away from these materials around race and Indigenous sovereignty?
- What does it bring up for you?
- How do your racial identity and background impact how you think about Just Transition and climate solutions?
- What is the significance of someone with your race taking action for a Just Transition? How is it similar and different from how others from different backgrounds might take action?

Discussion Groups:

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- How does your personal racial identity and experience with race, racism, and white supremacy impact your climate action/organizing?
- How does it impact how you imagine a Just Transition?
- How does it impact how you show up in your community?
- And how are those impacts different from those with other racial identities and experiences?

FOCUS ON ELECTRIFICATION

- Electrification is touted as a major solution for our global, national, and statewide transitions off of fossil fuels. How does applying a Just Transition framework, the [Indigenous Principles](#) in particular, impact your opinions of electrification as a solution?
- How does the push for electrification intersect with Indigenous sovereignty and our relationship to land?
- How does it fit into the legacy of colonialism?

TAKING LEADERSHIP FROM BIPOC COMMUNITIES

- Acknowledging that a lot is asked of the relatively small number of BIPOC activists and communities here in VT, what does it mean for Vermont to take leadership from BIPOC communities on what a Just Transition looks like? When and how should this happen? How does it intersect with taking leadership from other disproportionately impacted communities, such as rural and low-income white folks?
- Given that we live in a global system where our energy use impacts BIPOC communities

around the world, what does it mean to take leadership from BIPOC communities on just solutions?

VISIONING OUR JUST FUTURE

- What would it look like if racial justice and Indigenous sovereignty were truly realized, in Vermont and beyond?
- What would a Just Transition look like, both the process and the outcome, if we followed the Indigenous Principles for a Just Transition, policies recommended from It Take Roots, and other solutions demonstrated by BIPOC communities?

Session 4 - Confronting Vermont's False Climate Solutions: Voices from the Frontlines

Description: On the evening before Earth Day, we'll hear from people from the front lines of communities directly impacted by Vermont's false energy "solutions," mega-hydropower from HydroQuebec and "renewable" natural gas from Vermont Gas. *This is the only session that wasn't discussion-based, but offered pre-readings and opportunities to reflect afterward.*

Session Pre-Work:

- On so-called renewable natural gas and biogas: [fact sheet from Food & Water Watch](#)
- On megadams:
 - [Hydroelectricity](#) page from Hoodwinked in the Hothouse
 - Green Mountain Power's [2020 energy sources](#)

Recording of the panel discussion:

[Watch the video of the panel here](#)

Session 5 - Communicating about Just Transition

Description: How we transition away from fossil fuels, an extractive economy, and systems of oppression, toward a just, regenerative way of life, affects all of us. That means that in order to organize for this kind of transition, we need to be able to communicate authentically and effectively with people whose backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are very different from our own. We'll explore communicating and organizing appropriately across difference, and we'll make personal commitments for next steps after this study group ends.

Session Pre-Work:

Organizing across difference

- [Coalition Politics: Turning the Century](#), Bernice Johnson Reagon
- [Indigenous justice for environmental movements: A tool for aligning environmental work with Indigenous organizing](#), Catalyst Project and others
- [Tips from Working-Class Activists](#), Class Matters

Talking with and listening to people with different viewpoints and political orientations

- New Yorker [interview with climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe](#)
- Across the Fence [interview with Susan Clark](#)
- Kiah Morris of Rights and Democracy spoke at 350VT's webinar on our legislative asks in Jan 2022. [Watch her clip, min 6:50-16:20.](#)

Putting theory into action

- [Just Transition planning tool](#), Climate Justice Alliance, pg 1-13
- [3 JT-related curricula](#), Climate Justice Alliance (optional)

Optional additional materials on cross-class organizing:

- [Middle-Class Organizers in Working-Class Communities](#), Dorian Warren
- [Answering This Moment: Poor White Folks & Organizing in Maine](#), Southern Maine Workers Center
- [Cross-Class Capacity Tool](#), SURJ

Journaling prompts:

➤ Pick 1 or 2 of these:

- When you think about working for a Just Transition with people from different backgrounds from you, what does that look like for you? Who are the communities you're thinking of? What are the challenges that you think could come up in working together?
- What privileges do you have that could impact your work for a Just Transition and how can you use them to further the work? What does it mean for you to do this in a way that's authentic for you, that builds power WITH others, doesn't speak FOR them?

- How might you begin finding common ground about Just Transition with people in your community who aren't familiar with this concept and who may be coming from a very different political perspective than yours?
- What personal commitments do you want to make about how to orient your organizing towards a Just Transition? How do you want to incorporate the thoughts and learnings from this study group?

Discussion Groups:

ORGANIZING ACROSS DIFFERENCE

When you think about working for a Just Transition with people from different backgrounds from you, what does that look like for you? Who are the communities you're thinking of? What are the challenges that you think could come up in working together? What gets in the way of your reaching out or starting a conversation?

PRIVILEGE AND JT ORGANIZING

What privileges do you have that could impact your work for a Just Transition and how can you use them to further the work? What does it mean for you to do this in a way that's authentic for you, that builds power WITH others, doesn't speak FOR them?

AT THE RALLY - ROLE PLAY

Person 1 is at a climate rally with a sign that says "Save the Earth". Person 1 doesn't think we can talk about race, class, justice, etc, when doing climate organizing because the climate crisis is too urgent to bring in other issues and we just need to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Person 2 is holding a sign that says "We Need a Just Transition" and believes we must center justice in our climate work in order to actually address the crises we're in. You have 10 minutes to talk to each other in your roles and then switch roles for another 10 minutes. We'll debrief as a group afterwards.

DOOR TO DOOR - ROLE PLAY

Person 1 is a climate justice activist organizing for housing weatherization in a rural, largely poor, largely conservative part of Vermont. Person 2 is a farmer who's just scraping by, is concerned about anything that will cost them more money, and is wary of liberal politics. You have 10 minutes to talk to each other in your roles and then switch roles for another 10 minutes. We'll debrief as a group afterwards.

COMMITMENTS

What personal commitments do you want to make about how to orient your organizing towards a Just Transition? How do you want to incorporate the thoughts and learnings from this study group?

PLANNING

What would it look like to do a Just Transition Planning Process (based on the Climate Justice Alliance framework) in your community? Who would need to be involved? How would it connect to ongoing organizing or planning processes? How would you get it started?