



The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems

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Provocative, personal, and inspirational, *The Green Collar Economy* is not a dire warning but rather a substantive and viable plan for solving the biggest issues facing the country — the failing economy and our devastated environment. From a distance, it appears that these two problems are separate, but when we look closer, the connection becomes unmistakable.

In *The Green Collar Economy*, acclaimed activist and political advisor Van Jones delivers a real solution that both rescues our economy and saves the environment. The economy is built on and powered almost exclusively by oil, natural gas, and coal — all fast-diminishing nonrenewable resources. As supplies disappear, the price of energy climbs and nearly everything becomes more expensive. With costs and unemployment soaring, the economy stalls. Not only that, when we burn these fuels, the greenhouse gases they create overheat the atmosphere. As the headlines make clear, total climate chaos looms over us. The bottom line: we cannot continue with business as usual. We cannot drill and burn our way out of these dual dilemmas.

Instead, Van Jones illustrates how we can invent and invest our way out of the pollution-based grey economy and into the healthy new green economy. Built by a broad coalition deeply rooted in the lives and struggles of ordinary people, this path has the practical benefit of both cutting energy prices and generating enough work to pull the U.S. economy out of its present death spiral.

Rachel Carson's 1963 landmark book *Silent Spring* was the pivotal ecological examination of the last century. Now, rising above the impenetrable debate over the environment and the economy, Van Jones's *The Green Collar Economy* delivers a timely and essential call to action for this new century.

The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems Details

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From Reader Review The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems for online ebook

Michael says

So: Van Jones. Mr. Jones was appointed to be the "Green Jobs Czar" in the Obama administration, then was forced to resign when it came out that he was a professed communist and a 'truther.' He lasted about six months. Bye-bye, Van.

I am a Green dude myself, so I listened to Mr. Jones give a speech about a month back, and I was impressed. He is smart, funny, and seems like a nice man who cares a great deal about the environment and the poor, so we have that in common. I picked up his book from the library yesterday, read half, and returned it today. Here is why:

In 1997, I read Hillary Clinton's book *It Takes a Village*. The book was full of great ideas for helping children--especially poor children. Clinton worked for Marion Wright Edelman's Children's Defense Fund way back in the day, and her policy expertise, as well as her passion to help poor children, were obvious. There were programs, and programs, and more programs all aimed at helping poor families, and poor children, become successful. It was heart-warming.

And it will never happen, for the same reason that Van Jones's Green Collar ideas will never take off on a national scale: both authors depend almost entirely on the federal government to initiate, fund, and maintain their programs. There is simply no political will to create more massive federal spending programs. Even now, in the midst of the Great Recession, with the official unemployment rate at 9.5% (but it's really higher if you take into account those who have stopped looking for work, or those who are just now entering the workforce), we can't muster the political will to pass unemployment insurance extensions without bruising political battles. People are, quite literally, wiping food banks out; food stamp enrollment is at an all time high; millions upon millions have been forced out of their homes...and we can't extend unemployment insurance. *That's* how rotten our politics has become. *That's* how dysfunctional Washington is.

There is plenty of blame to go around for this state of affairs, but suffice it to say that we are in no danger of launching a "Green jobs New Deal." Mr. Jones has some excellent ideas, made some great points, and certainly gives food for thought, but ultimately he is preaching to a choir that left the old New Deal Coalition in 1980 and hasn't returned. Our political environment has changed, and the taste for big government is gone, even when big government may actually be the solution to a specific problem.

With all that in mind, I read half the book then put it back on the shelf. No point in continuing. If the Social-Democrats (and I think that's where Mr. Jones would fall on the political spectrum) can't make much progress with the White House, the House of Representatives, and the Senate under their control, and with (what was) a very popular, young, new president, it's fairly pointless to write detailed plans for a program that's never going to see the light of day.

Perhaps Mr. Jones could pitch his very good ideas to states instead of Washington. Vermont, for example, would be all in for this sort of thing, as would (I think) Massachusetts and Maine and New Hampshire. "Great strokes fell mighty oaks," and all that. But save the "Only Washington Can Do It" slogans, dude. No one is listening.

Benjamin says

I first heard about this book while listening to NPR a few months ago. Van Jones sounded like he had devised one of the greatest solutions to poverty and racial equality that can be adopted by all Americans with the benefit of generating wealth for everyone. Then he said that the bravest thing he had ever seen in his life was Nancy Pelosi standing up to Big Oil and "drill, baby, drill" in the summer of 2008. After the nausea subsided, I still decided that I should give the book a chance. The jacket is plastered with many liberal leaning quotes about the book and Van Jones. I only make reference to my experience before reading the book to point out the disappointed that I have in the press and advertisement of the book when the message contained in the book is all-inclusive and about what everyone brings to the table to make a Green Collar economy work.

Van Jones elegantly outlines his vision of a Green Collar worker ("blue collar employment that has been upgraded to better respect the environment) and the economy that supports this worker. He also spends a great deal of time in the book outlining the challenges and solutions to overcome the problems of retooling an economy. He gives a very good overview of the history and specifics of the problems he would like to address, proper ways to engage the movement and other people, solutions that already exist in energy production, transportation, waste management, and water management, and an outline for what the President needs to prioritize in his first 100 days. Critical takeaways for me were: any solutions for a societal issue like the environment, poverty, or urban development should provide ways to include everyone, that we must be honest with ourselves and that hanging onto our egos, faults, shortcomings, and coping mechanisms will never allow the honesty and cooperation that is needed to tackle these big issues, understanding the planet we live on should be the first step of any "eco" project, and that solutions already exist to remove foreign oil from the American economy forever.

Resources can be found at <http://www.greenforall.org/>. Movements start with individuals and Van Jones website outlines many of the ways that individuals can get involved.

The biggest issue that is not addressed directly in the book is the negatives related to the huge involvement of all levels of government that Van Jones relies upon to get the ball rolling. While the Government is responsible for most of the regulation of the energy and transportation industries, that does not mean that it is their job to drive the green revolution. I agree with Van Jones that as a large consumer of energy and an employer of many Americans, all levels of Government should find ways to embrace the Green Collar economy. However, I firmly believe that the expansion of power the Government amassed in the 20th century is coming to end and that any Green solution that involves the Government making an upfront investment must have an exit strategy that allows a community or private institution to take over the administration of the program from the Government. We live in communities that need our involvement to survive and a bloated and bureaucratic governmental program is never the way to go.

Livia says

Bill Maher recommended this book on an episode of his Real Time with Bill Maher show on HBO. It's a very informative book. I wish more energy companies would embrace a greener method to extract/create energy.

Phillip Rhoades says

Van Jones presents a fair yet passionate treatise about America's need to transition to a "Green Collar Economy"(GCE); Van Jones defines GCE as a economy that creates "family-supporting, career track job(s) that directly contributes to preserving or enhancing environmental equality."

The environmental movement has spawned a million books that harp on the same themes: policy change, pollution, global warming and ecological devastation. Van Jones' contribution, beyond being the first African American to write an environmental book, is to weave these themes, and adding social equity, into a coherent narrative that is solution driven. While the book is initially polemical in nature, driven by the lessons and passions of the minority experiences in post-Katrina New Orleans, the book quickly matures into a powerful expose about our country's current dilemma. As a nation faced with growing environmental catastrophes, we would be wise to heed Van Jones' words. We would be wise to do so as urgently as possible.

In summary, "The Green Collar Economy" is a passionate, affective and accurate diatribe about the changes needed to face our country's most historic problems. It reads well for the novice to the expert and deserves to be on everyone's shelf; it needs to be placed in the hands of students, citizens and politicians alike.

ProgressiveBookClub says

Review of The Green Collar Economy by Van Jones

By Bill McKibben

Van Jones is, beyond any doubt, one of the rising stars of the American environmental movement and the American civil rights movement. He's fused the two of them in a new way, and in so doing constructed a powerful political argument for how we might move forward with the twin challenges of preparing the country to fight global warming and pulling our economy out of its dangerous current weakness.

The longtime head of the Ella Baker Center in Oakland, and now of the Green For All campaign, Jones took advantage of the odd politics of the Bay Area to reach a vital epiphany. He saw the very real environmental passion, and very real wealth, of folks in San Francisco, the Berkeley Hills, and the coastlines of Marin County, and he saw as well the abysmal poverty of the flatlands along the East Bay. How did they need each other? Well, in a practical way, and in a political one.

Practically speaking, the task of actually making all those affluent homes "green" would require lots of workers. Workers that could, and should, come from the communities passed over by prosperity in years past—"green-collar workers" who would need to go past high school but perhaps not to a four-year college to learn the real skills required to make American energy-efficient. "Let's be clear," he writes. "The main piece of technology in the green economy is a caulk gun. . . . Another bit of high-tech green technology is the clipboard . . . used by energy auditors as they point out energy-saving opportunities to homeowners and renters. . . . Other green-collar workers can then follow up with other tasks for building owners: wrapping hot-water heaters with blankets, blowing insulation, plugging holes, repairing cracks." The point, he insists,

is that when we think “green future” the image that should spring to mind is not George Jetson with a jet pack but “Joe Sixpack with a hard hat.”

And one of the best features of this kind of work is, it simply can’t be outsourced—no one is going to ship their house to China for new insulation.

The investment in real training for real jobs for people in real need would pay all kinds of dividends for traditional environmentalists, he insists. Recounting the sad tale of California’s Prop. 87, when the oil companies managed to manipulate black voters into helping turn down a tax that would have brought their communities huge gains, Jones concludes that “the eco-elite cannot win major change alone, not even in the Golden State.” (By the way, for those interested in the political futures market, I’ve heard more than one person murmuring about the possibility of Jones making a strong bid for the California Senate seat now held by Dianne Feinstein. He is a sparkling orator, with a mirthful soul and a commanding presence—this book would have been even better with a DVD insert of one of his speeches.)

Jones includes a number of examples of this budding coalition, including the quite inspiring story of how entrepreneurs in the poor and violent California city of Richmond managed to build a powerful solar business in short order, meeting the fast-growing demand for solar panel installation with local hires. He tells local food stories from Chicago’s inner city, and tales of innovative water, trash, and transport projects. But he’s canny enough to know that data is not the plural of anecdote: For real action, we’ll need much stronger involvement from the federal government. If there’s one sadness to reading this book in the weeks after its publication, it’s that the federal bailout of our pasteboard suburban home-mortgage crisis has likely eaten much of the money necessary for this work. But if a like-minded new president was looking for a plan, it’s spelled out in enough detail here to let him get down to work: Jones proposes everything from a new Clean Energy Corps to a serious effort to address the “Greenhouse Development Rights” of poor countries around the world.

This book could be read quite profitably next to Tom Friedman’s new tome, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*. Jones takes Friedman’s high-octane account of the next green revolution and brings it right down to earth, which is where it needs to be. This is an important contribution to the environmental debate, from an important environmentalist, one who’s redefining the meaning of that word.

To learn more, visit The Progressive Book Club: <http://www.progressivebookclub.com/bl...>

Camille McCarthy says

A concise book addressing the two biggest problems facing America, those of social justice and the environment, and how to solve them both with a “green collar” economy, which is an economy with well-paying blue collar jobs that are good for the environment and for people. For instance jobs installing solar panels, jobs maintaining wind farms, jobs retrofitting old houses with better insulation, and jobs growing organic food in cities. It hit just the right note of urgency and hope; he included some depressing statistics but he put forth a lot of great ideas for solving the problems he talked about and also wasn’t overly optimistic, so that the reader felt that there was a big problem but it could be solved with a lot of hard work and determination, as well as lots of collaboration.

He was direct and to the point in his writing. I felt that at no point was he rambling on. It is a quick read and not a very long book because he was able to say what needed to be said in the shortest amount of words possible.

This was published before the election of 2008, an interesting turning point in the nation. I feel that if someone spoke to him today he would say he was disappointed with the last eight years because while there may be some growth in the green economy, it is nothing like what the world was hoping for before that election. I am hoping that the new election will be a different story and I feel that this book is an important one to read as we are preparing to elect officials once again. The environment is an even bigger issue today as we are now eight years further down the road, yet I feel that it was addressed more by candidates in 2008 than today. Sanders is the only candidate who has said he is against fracking, pro-labeling of GMOs, and puts the environment and jobs first. I hope he has read this book.

He makes a lot of good points about organizing as well - he points out that we need to focus on the solutions more than the problems especially when talking to people about the issues we care about, and since the environment is such a global issue we need to look for partners and allies rather than looking for enemies to take down. It also made a distinction in how people address those who are struggling financially when talking about the environment - it is important to talk about the financial incentives and improvements of lifestyle that would come with a more sustainable way of life rather than focusing on the horrible crises which will occur if we don't do anything, because people who are used to dealing with a lot of crises don't want to hear about more of them and feel even more burdened.

HIGHLY recommended. It is only about 200 pages so it doesn't take long to read and it is very well-written. It has a lot of great ideas and I am sure you will be inspired by reading it.

Franklin says

A "green-collar economy" might sound appealing at first. After all, environmentalists have been fighting for years against reactionaries who claim that measures to protect people and ecology from pollution would cost lots of jobs. But this book is not just an argument that the right kinds of environmental programs can help people of color and the poor. Its main argument is for a "New Deal 2.0." In the process, Van Jones rewrites history to support an argument for class collaboration. He speaks glowingly of the New Deal without ever mentioning that it won ruling class support as a way to stave off revolution by workers, which was a real possibility in the Great Depression. Revolution is left out of his rewriting of history, except as redefined to mean only a technological revolution, not social revolution. Accordingly, while he praises the environmental justice movement, he marginalizes it in the history of the environmental movements, whose roots he sees only in the conservation movement of 100 years ago. Robert Gottlieb's *Forcing the Spring* brings to light the radical and working-class-based elements of that history, which Jones leaves out, including the movement's roots in movements for public health and sanitation. Leaving out revolution and the more radical elements of the movement's history allows Jones to shape an argument that people of color and the working class should collaborate with the ruling class and pretend that its government is potentially class-neutral and can be trusted (with the right "leadership") to drive the economy in a green direction supporting human rights and international partnerships. This book could only serve as a drag on the movement just at a time when revolutionary potential is rearing its head. Putting our faith in government is like committing suicide.

Karen says

Well written and well researched, The Green Collar Economy outlines a course of action which will save our environment and our economy. Encompassing a sweeping scope of the historical and cultural, this is by far the best articulated and most detailed blueprint for sustainability I have seen. Read it!

columbialion says

Author Jones offers a realistic and logical call to arms regarding the rapidly closing window of time left for humanity to solve global warming. Additionally, he lays out a detailed plan of action which if implemented in the U.S., would serve a multi purposeful solution; to the U.S. economy, its long term energy needs and push back substantially against global warming. The Green Collar Economy is really a inclusive manifesto meant to move the country away from its present course of eco-disaster. As in Jared Diamond's "Collapse", Jones dissects the current ravages of modern societies upon the planet and graphically illustrates our fate if these conditions are not eliminated or dramatically altered. Both authors clearly sound the alarm warning humanity that the planet is rapidly approaching the point of being unable to sustain life as we know it. Both authors look to the American people and their government to spearhead the necessary corrective policies which will globally impact and reverse the coming eco-armagedon.

I certainly agree with 95% of Jones's arguments and solutions contained in the book, and I do wish him god speed in his work. Unfortunately, I believe the political malfunctioning condition of both the American electorate and the American Federal government make any meaningful change in the status quo recommended in The Green Collar Economy virtually impossible. The book's initial optimism draws from the results of the 2008 election and the ascendancy of Barrack Obama to the White House, and all its corresponding "green" initiatives his administration would bring. The subsequent political "push-back" and the rise of the regressive Tea Party resulting in the loss of Congress in 2010, stands as the prime indicator that the USA is collectively incapable of dealing with ANY serious crisis; global warming notwithstanding. As of this writing unbelievably, POTUS Obama is being seriously challenged by plutocratic poster boy Mitt Romney, representing a European style of economic austerity and old world corporate status quo. A Romney presidency would empower the exact polar opposite of what leadership is needed to remotely address the eco-crisis. Sadly I believe the necessary eco-inititives will ultimately have to come from outside the incapable borders of the U.S. as a malfunctioning impotent Washington fails to act on this ever growing calamity. The book itself is very well intentioned and offers both solid and philosophical solutions to an already dire ecological situation....however when cast upon the contemporary political realities within the U.S. it is another edition to be filed alongside Harry Potter and other works of fiction.

Online-University of-the-Left says

Green Jobs Meets the Solidarity Economy:
A Dynamic Duo for Changing the World

A Review of 'Green Collar Economy':

How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems'
By Van Jones, Harper-Collins, 2008

By Carl Davidson

SolidarityEconomy.Net

It's time to link the newly insurgent U.S. Green Jobs movement with the worldwide efforts for the solidarity

economy. Both are answering the call to fight the deepening global recession, and both face common adversaries in the failed 'race to the bottom,' environment-be-damned policies of global neoliberalism.

That's the imperative facing left-progressive organizers with connections to these two important grassroots movements. It's even more important in the wake of the appointment of a key leader of one of these movements, Van Jones of 'Green For All', to a top environmental and urban policy post in the Obama administration.

Jones is a founder of an urban-based campaign focused on low-income young people, multinational and multicultural, that first developed as a progressive response to police repression, gang killings and all-round "criminalization of youth." He saw the exclusion of this sector of the population from living-wage work and other opportunities as a key cause of the violence and destruction. Putting young people to work at low-to-medium skill levels retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency seemed like a no-brainer, so the demand for 'Green Jobs, Not Jails' was raised.

The slogan found deep resonance as it spread across the country. Its all-round implications were spelled out in Jones' widely acclaimed book, "The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems." It spells out a string of ingenious, interconnected programs aimed at resolving the savage inequalities of structural unemployment and the global dangers of climate change rooted in carbon-based energies systems.

"Let's be clear," says Jones in the opening pages of his book, "The main piece of technology in the green economy is a caulk gun. Hundreds of thousands of green collar jobs will be weatherizing and energy-retrofitting every building in the United States."

He doesn't leave the matter there, but makes use of this picture to point out what's "shovel ready," to use the lingo of debate around stimulus spending. Green jobs span the entire range of occupations, with a special focus on high-tech manufacturing in emerging alternative energy industries.

"Green Collar Economy" was instantly a powerful voice in policy circles. It gained a wider and deeper significance in light of the financial crises that hit the fan soon after it reached the bookstores. Just as the voter revolt against Wall Street helped lift Obama to the Oval Office, so too was Van Jones's urban policy monograph raised into a "What Is To Be Done" manifesto for deep structural reforms capable of busting the onset of a major depression.

"The best answer to our ecological crisis also responds to our socio-economic crisis," Jones explains. "The surest path to safe streets and peaceful communities are not more police and prisons, but ecologically sound economic development. And that same path can lead us to a new green economy."

How does it connect with the solidarity economy? This parallel movement with even earlier roots is widely known throughout the Global South, especially Latin America, as well as Europe and Quebec. It has been comprised of a range of projects where social capital is partnered with worker, community, consumer and peasant cooperative ownership structures. These were designed to fight back against the economic devastation wrought by neoliberal IMF-imposed "solutions" that left people without a safety net or means of survival. People turned to each other at the grassroots in common efforts, hence the term 'solidarity economy.'

Both the solidarity economy and the green economy are "value centered" schools of economic thought. They are in the classical tradition of political economy, which in turn is rooted in moral philosophy. They are not

simply descriptive of supposedly objective economic processes, but are prescriptive. At full throttle, they are organizing principles for shaping the future, locally and globally, via local organization and mass mobilization. For its part, the solidarity economy stresses the values of cooperation and mutual aid, especially in governance structures of productive, consumer or financial units. The green economy emphasizes ongoing sustainability and harmony between people and the eco-system of which they are a part.

The solidarity economy is about how people relate to each other, while the green economy is about how people relate to their wider environment. Naturally, there is considerable overlap between the two. Both see the current order as destructive of people and planet, and are working to turn things around.

"Equal protection of all people, equal opportunity for all people, and reverence for all creation." --these are what Jones terms the "three pillars" of the new green global economy.

Neither economic vision is monolithic. Both schools of thought span a range of views, some of which are in contention. In the Green Jobs movement, for instance, there are debates on nuclear power and "clean coal," and what role, if any, these might have in a low-carbon future. In the solidarity economy movement, there are discussions on the place of markets and government, and whether cooperative structures can use either or both to their advantage. There is also debate over the importance of "high road" allies within the business community, "high road" meaning traditional business structures that bring wider community and environmental responsibility into their business plans, rather than simply short-term shareholder profit.

Where Van Jones' approach to both the green and solidarity economies most compels our attention is that he starts where the need is greatest, the millions of unemployed and underemployed inner city youth. The structural crises of neoliberal capitalism has long ravaged this sector of our society through deindustrialization, environmental racism and a wrecking ball approach to schools in favor of more prisons. To borrow from Marx, these young people are bound with radical chains, and when they break them with the tools suggested in 'Green Collar Economy,' they free not only themselves, but the rest of us are set in a positive direction as well.

"The green economy," Jones explains, reflecting on Hurricane Katrina, "should not be just about reclaiming thrown-away stuff. It should be about reclaiming thrown-away communities. It should not be just about recycling materials to give things a second life. We should also be gathering up people and giving them a second chance. Formerly incarcerated people deserve a second shot at life-and all obstacles to their being able to find that second chance in the green sector should be removed. Also, our urban youth deserve the opportunity to be part of something promising."

Jones is a strategic thinker who gives definite answers to the question, "Who are our friends, who are our adversaries?" He narrows the target to speculative capital with roots in carbon-based energy industries and the militarism needed to secure their supplies. He seeks close allies in the wider working class of all nationalities, especially in the Blue-Green Alliance formed on the core partnership of the United Steelworkers with the Sierra Club. He also looks for allies among faith communities, environmentalists in the suburbs and rural populations suffering at the hands of anti-ecological agribusiness, offering a vision of wind farms and solar arrays for sustainable rural development. He sees the importance of cutting back defense spending and opposing unjust wars abroad.

Finally, he holds out a hand to green businesses in alternative energies, the current and future manufacturers of clean power:

"Our success and survival as a species are largely and directly tied to the new eco-entrepreneurs-and the

success and survival of their enterprises. Since almost all of the needed eco-technologies are likely to come from the private sector, civic leaders and voters should do all that can be done to help green business leaders succeed."

Jones is not talking just about mom and pop operations here, but an important and growing sector of productive capital. These will range from small upstarts to T Boone Pickens-type investors wanting to create giant wind farms and large coastal arrays of wave generators, along with the manufacturing firms that build their equipment. Some on the left who want to see a clean renewable energy future will have to make adjustments in their "anti-corporate" strategies if they want to pursue this goal effectively with these high-road allies. Dan Swinney of the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council explains his current project, the Chicago Green Manufacturing Network, as a case in point:

"CMRC is working with the Cleveland-based Great Lakes Wind Network/WireNET and the City of Chicago in building the capacity of local manufacturing companies to become the supply chain for the explosive wind turbine industry. Illinois and other states currently have ambitious Renewable Energy Portfolios that create a huge market for wind turbine companies and others in the renewable energy field. Currently the components for these companies are principally made by European and Asian suppliers. We will rise to the challenge of building the capacity of local companies to supply the high quality components for wind turbines and other renewable energy companies. This will be a means to diversify the markets for some of the 12,000 manufacturing companies in our region and an opportunity to create hundreds if not thousands of new permanent, full-time jobs in manufacturing."

But Green Collar Economy's core mass base remains a united Black and Latino community in close alliance with organized labor, the same engine of change that put Obama in the White House. And by asserting the interests and needs of that base, the green jobs and infrastructure proposals in Obama's stimulus package serve to drive the entire recovery effort in a progressive direction.

"We want to build a green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty," says Jones, 'We want this green wave to lift all boats...In the wake of Katrina, we reject the idea of 'free market' evacuation plans. Families should not be left behind to drown because they lack a functioning car or credit card...In an age of floods, we reject the ideology that says we must let our neighbors 'sink or swim'."

The nature of the Green New Deal's adversaries--the carbon-based energy speculators and the military industries defending them--is the key reason Jones' strategy requires a massive mobilized base. The structural reforms needed to dislodge and displace them are going to require a great deal of popular power from below. The petroleum-coal industrial nexus alone is subsidized to the tune of \$1 trillion annually, according to Congressman Robert Kennedy Jr. in his foreword to Jones' book. Some are outright opposed to any "New Deal," green or otherwise, as the GOP in Congress reveal with their votes against the Recovery Act. The Green Jobs components were often cited by the right as "pork" or "the road to socialism." Others want to destroy the Green New Deal from within, via "greenwashing." These are politicians who take their lead from some corporations that have become skilled at changing their ads to "green" but continue producing toxics and other waste from the polluter's agenda.

Jones singles out Newt Gingrich, the GOP's neoliberal-in-chief, as particularly devious: "He has skillfully used rising fuel prices to stoke public support for climate-destroying measures...Their new tactic is to spread confusion about the real solutions by deliberately blurring distinctions between themselves and the champions of genuine answers." Jones has to take the battle into the government and electoral arenas. The resources of state power are required to bring the green economy to scale, even if it requires a gut-wrenching struggle with polluters who have a good number of politicians on their payrolls and with revenue streams

long fused to the public trough.

The solidarity economy faces these battles as well. For the most part, it overlaps with the green economy at the grassroots. Its mission can be summarized as generating new wealth in a green way, but with a worker-community ownership or control component built into a project's agenda from the start. As a major finance capitalist and former oilman who wants to invest in wind farms in a major way, T Boone Pickens is clearly part of the green economy, but not part of the solidarity economy. A wind farm on an Indian reservation cooperatively owned by the tribe and employing its members and selling power both locally and regionally would be very much part of the solidarity economy.

But the picture is more complex. "Stakeholder" solutions are not quite as clear-cut. For instance, GAMESA, a Spanish high-tech firm and a leading European manufacturer of wind turbines, recently opened a plant in Bucks County, PA. To do so, it formed stakeholder partnerships with the county and state governments, getting tax allowances and land-use easements to refit an old closed steel mill. The United Steel Workers union was brought in as a partner: 1000 new union jobs were created, hiring many of the unemployed steelworkers. The "solidarity" here is between high-road capital, the USW, local government and the unemployed of the area, but it's a stretch for some who might want to reserve 'solidarity' strictly to cooperative ownership structures.

The stakeholder solidarity offers practical flexibility in the wider struggle to bring both movements to scale. Cooperative structures that evolve out of deeper structural reforms have the quality of altering the relations of power in production and local governance. Even if on a small scale, they can point to a future of wider economic democracy, acting as a bridge to new socialist relations.

In any case, a powerful high-road alliance opens the door to those on its left wing who want to take it farther. Van Jones himself has no problem with either form; his book celebrates the stakeholder green jobs alliances implemented by the Green Party mayor of Richmond, CA, as well as the Green Worker Cooperatives in building salvaging businesses in the South Bronx, NY.

At one point in his book, Jones uses a metaphor of two ships to sum up the current crossroads facing the American people, the Amistad and the Titanic. The latter carried the wealthy elite indulging in idle pleasures, and a proletarian crew labored below in an unsound structure. The former had been taken over by insurgent slaves, taken to safe harbor, but still lacked wider resources for the crew's future. The folly of reshuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic has long been a metaphor for doomed tinkering at reforms in a closed system. The Amistad, however, offers a more open future. Those familiar with the story know it involves further complex struggles, with new allies, high born and low, against a dying system. But it offers hope and change, both of which are in high regard these days.

[Carl Davidson is a member of the coordinating committee of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network, and a national committee member of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, and currently webmaster for 'Progressives for Obama.' He is co-author of 'CyberRadicalism: A New Left for a Global Age,' and co-editor of 'Solidarity Economy: Building Alternatives for People and Planet,' both available at <http://lulu.com/stores/changemaker>. If you like this article, go to <http://progressivesforobama.net> and make use of the PayPal button.]

David R. says

Nothing new here. Some books stand the test of time, this is not one of those books. Everything detailed in the book is fairly introductory to the green movement, especially on the political left. The people interested in the topic hopefully know this content by now (10 years later). Needless to say, do not waste time or money reading this book. It might be okay for middle schoolers who are becoming politically active and have an interest in the environment but beyond that, it has little to contribute as far as stimulating ideas go.

Best quote: "The original Americans knew and tried to teach their conquerors: We don't inherit the Earth from our parents; we borrow it from our children. The Earth doesn't belong to us; we belong to the Earth."

Nicholas Kitson says

Focus more on solutions

Chapters 4 and 5 are incredible, solid pragmatic policies and programs that you could pick up and run with anywhere. I wish the author had expanded on this and not spent so much time scene setting in chapters 1-3. The book is well worth an update now it would be really interesting to see how many of the programs have fared and indeed what new initiatives have sprung up, especially in the face of the Trump / Oil and Coal industry backlash.

Laura says

Oh, the bias. It hurts.

Make no mistake about what this is: the author is a Democrat who put together ~175 pages of Democratic buzzwords for other Democrats to read, agree with, and feel good about themselves. It is utterly lacking in any in-depth, intelligent analysis. I only made it through the introductory chapter before giving up, and even that was a challenge.

I am not a Republican; I don't identify as either liberal or conservative. In fact, I am currently a graduate student at one of the better-known programs in environmental affairs, so I'm not some climate-change denier or anything like that.

I am, however, someone who knows a moderate amount of information about energy issues, so I couldn't get through a single sentence of this book without cringing at how biased, misleading, inaccurate, improperly sourced, and sensationalist each and every line was.

Do not read if you are looking to actually learn something. If you're just looking to have your pre-conceived notions validated, have at it. (And hey, I'm not judging. I watch the Daily Show religiously for that exact reason. I just know to treat it as a source of entertainment, not fact.)

Professor says

Another book I read because it was one of the titles the committee I'm on is considering to be our "One Campus, One Book" title, I found the book an easy read that made some great points. I really would like to see us put our resources into a greener economy-in my mind an "Green Deal" could really change things. Unfortunately, the book was very much "date stamped" as being before the 2008 election and reading it is reading a list of things that *could* happen that are already not happening. I felt, too, that while Van Jones' core argument is very good, he spends a lot of time delivering wishy-washy platitudes designed to sell the book to various constituencies. An interesting read of a policy that could be but fast seems to be becoming "what could have been".

sdw says

Van Jones describes the two crises he feels threaten the country: environmental destruction and socio-economic inequality. He feels the solution lies in creating a "green economy" where good blue-collar jobs with a family wage are replaced by an expanding sector of family wage "green-collar" jobs that extend economic opportunities to people of color and those returning from prison. One of his favorite slogans is "Green Jobs, Not Jails."

Van Jones believes the environmental crisis is so bad that to survive we will have to build a green economy. However, he highlights the failed opportunities of the environmental movement in the past to expand such a transformation to social justice issues. This is the moment, he believes, that a broad coalition of civil rights activists, labor unions, and environmental organizations can push for a transformation to a eco-friendly socially just economy. Writing at the end of the Bush administration and before the election of Obama, he calls for the next administration to implement a green New Deal.

At the center of Van Jones's vision are entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs will use inventiveness and creativity to come up with the technologies that will green our way of living. The rich who buy these products and services today are fueling the innovation. The coalition he envisions should push for wide-spread government investment in these innovations to create the green collar jobs to implement them and to allow such services (from organic food to solar panels) to be accessible for all people, not just the rich.

This book is well-written. It is direct. It is clear. The prose is sometimes cliché, but always functional. His metaphor of the four quadrants and the amistad/titanic are particularly useful (you'll have to read the book for his explanations of these). The book attempts to speak to multiple audiences while offending none. He talks about the need for environmentalists to reframe their issues to address the concerns of poor denizens and non-white denizens in particularly useful ways.

However, I found the discussion of Native America to be lacking depth. The heterogeneity of Native America is ignored and instead the vision is of Native Americans as spiritual guides. While the rich have the resources to care about the fate of polar-bears and the poor must focus on bread and butter issues and those that directly affect them like air pollution (he wants us to rename clean air campaigns as campaigns against asthma), Native Americans somehow transcend this and due to their spirituality care about the polar bears despite their poverty.

Moreover, while Jones's vision of partnership rather than confrontation is sometimes useful in advising social movements, I also think it neglects the true power relations of society (where power concedes nothing without demand). Yet it fits his vision of economic and environmental justice as part of a "sustainable" "natural" capitalism. Those who agree with Paul Hawkins might not share this critique of Jones.

I found the book's alliance with Paul Hawkins, and focus on entrepreneurship as the lynchpin of a blue-green coalition distributing. The author separates himself from what he calls the "far left." I do not believe the capitalism is sustainable, even altered slightly with massive government regulation. On a practical level, I have no objections to his suggestions. I think any of plans implemented would be a huge leap forward to an economically and environmentally just world. However, taking advantage of these opportunities will not lead to a racially-just, economically-just ecotopia. Moreover, the role of the labor unions in this coalition and relationship to green-collar work needs to be more fleshed out. I do not see how the plans in the book fundamentally alters the class relations of U.S. capitalist society.
