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Groups Rally in Albany as Part of Global Call for Climate Justice at COP26

(Albany, NY) 200 people from across the Capital District joined a demonstration for climate justice today in Albany. The march and rally were part of a global day of action coinciding with the COP26 UN global climate summit taking place in Glasgow. World leaders are meeting in Glasgow through November 12 to negotiate stronger climate actions than agreed to in the Paris Climate Accords in 2015.

Speakers highlighted the urgent need for a fast and fair global transition to a climate friendly economy. ([Some photos](#))

The global day of action has been organized by the [COP26 Coalition](#) which said:

“Global problems need global solutions. The decisions made at COP26 will shape how governments respond (or not) to the climate crisis. So far, governments have done too little too late, proposing steps that fail to match the scale of the problem. COP26 is happening at a crucial moment in history. Across the world and across movements, we are seeing a new wave of people standing up and making their voices heard through global solidarity and grassroots organizing. We have a unique opportunity to rewire our system as we recover from the global pandemic.”

The rally started in the South End to highlight the need to ensure that climate funding targets the communities and countries that are the principal victims of the burning of fossil fuels. For example, the state's \$200 million investment in offshore wind tower manufacturing at the Port of Albany must ensure green economic development in the adjacent South End, including good jobs for residents and clean energy upgrades and other improvements to housing. Speakers also focused on the need for racial justice, stopping the financing of fossil fuels and moving the state Capitol complex to 100% clean renewable energy.

Many are calling it the “last chance COP”. The IPCC and the United Nations have been issuing increasingly dire warnings that the world is barreling toward climate collapse. The pledges made by governments since Paris fall far short of keeping global warming below the target level of 1.5 degrees Celsius. Climate change impacts are already happening and getting worse, as extreme weather events become more frequent with massive hurricanes, flooding, drought, wildfires, and heatwaves.

The groups' demands are:

- **Mandatory Emissions Cuts** — The US must commit itself and push other industrial nations to binding emissions cuts sufficient to limit global warming to 1.5°C.
- **Climate Debt Reparations** — The US must pledge at least \$800 billion this decade to helping low-income nations mitigate damages from global warming and build their own clean energy economies.
- **Climate Jobs** — The US must create millions of good jobs building a 100% clean energy economy.
- **Just Transition** — The US climate program must provide good jobs to workers displaced by the transition and must ensure that disadvantaged communities get the good jobs and the improved housing, mass transit, and toxic waste clean-up they need.

Speakers included Mark Dunlea, PAUSE; Mert Simpson, SHARE; Scott Kellog, RadixCenter; Theresa Rodriguez, AVillage; Pippa Bartolotti and Mary Finneran, Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace; Howie Hawkins and Peter LaVenia, Green Party; Rev. Peter Cook, NYS Council of Churches; Center for Law and Justice; Doug Bullock, Capital District Solidarity; Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff, Westminster Presbyterian Church; Mark Schaeffer, DSA; Jamaica Miles, All of US; and Samanta Engelmyer, Progressive Schenectady.

The rally was sponsored by PAUSE (People of Albany United for Safe Energy), Green Education and Legal Fund, Extinction Rebellion Capital District, Upper Hudson Green Party, Radix Center, Green Sanctuary Committee of Unitarian Universal Church, Albany Women Against War, Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace, AVillage, Save the Pine Bush, Center for Law and Justice, 350NYC, Food and Water Watch, Citizen Action Capital District, Troy Area Labor Council, Albany County Central Federation of Labor, New York Youth Climate Leaders, NYPIRG, The Climate Reality Project (Capital Region, NY Chapter), Solidarity Committee Capital District, North Country Earth Action, Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline (SNYFGP), Community Advocates for a Sustainable Environment, South Asian Fund For Education Scholarship and Training Inc (SAFEST), Bronx Climate Justice North, North Bronx Racial Justice, Park Church, New York State Council of Churches, Capital District Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)..

Quotes from Groups and Speakers

“Solving the climate crisis requires wholesale system change, a Green New Deal that combines a rapid transition to zero greenhouse gas emissions and 100% clean renewable energy with investments in social programs such as health care, living wage jobs, education and housing that benefit all Americans and the world’s citizens. We need to set short-term mandatory actions with timelines and goals targeting the next five to ten years, not 2050 or later. We need to create a different world where the focus is on meeting the common needs. This includes creating an energy system that embraces the concept of public ownership and democratic control. We need President Biden to declare a climate emergency, following the leadership provided by FDR when he took control of the American economy after Pearl Harbor to respond to the crisis,” said **Mark Dunlea, the facilitator of PAUSE** (People of Albany United for Safe Energy).

“As the world’s governments meet at the climate summit in Glasgow, they currently plan to increase fossil fuel production between now and 2030 by 120% more than is consistent with staying below global warming of 1.5°C, the goal accepted at the Paris climate summit in 2015 to avert runaway global warming. The UN's International Panel on Climate Change says that to have a 50/50 chance of staying below 1.5°C, the world must cut its emissions in half by 2030 and 100% by 2050. We must respond to this climate emergency with an emergency response — a Global Green New Deal. As the richest country on Earth, the US must take the lead in financing a Global Green New Deal that takes public ownership of the energy and transportation industries and democratically plans and executes the rapid construction of 100% clean energy systems across the world. The US owes the world climate reparations due to its historical emissions and its current emissions abroad that are embedded in goods produced in the Global South by fossil-fuel-powered mines, factories, and agribusiness owned by US corporations. Paying climate reparations for a Global Green New Deal is an investment in the habitability of the planet for Americans as well as everyone else on Earth,” said **Howie Hawkins, the Green Party nominee for President in 2020.**

A spokesperson for **Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace** said “ We are painfully aware of the link between climate change, civil unrest and resource wars. We fully support every effort to stop the life-decimating effects of a warming planet, and believe leaders at this COP 26 must do all in their power to counter the powerful oil industry lobby groups, stop fossil fuel subsidies, and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from CO2 and methane. We would also like to point out that the US military is the largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world.”

The **Radix Ecological Sustainability Center** advocates for just global transitions where the interconnectedness of equity and ecological health are made explicit. As the world’s most vulnerable will suffer disproportionately from the effects of a warming planet and its ensuing climate chaos, wealthier nations must be held accountable for reducing the destructive impact they have upon the Earth and its peoples. We seek to build regenerative and reciprocal relationships between the human and more-than-human world that center justice, fairness, and equity.

"This year, wildfires, hurricanes, heatwaves, droughts, etc. have ravaged the world at more alarming levels than usual, and we’re seeing more than ever the danger that inaction on climate change poses to life on Earth. The climate crisis is here, and millions all around the globe, and particularly within marginalized communities, are already suffering and dying. And our time to act before it is too late is running out. As world leaders gather in Glasgow for COP26 to discuss ways of “uniting the world to tackle climate change”, we need to make it clear that the symbolic gestures of previous COP conferences are simply unacceptable. Combating the climate crisis in a meaningful way will require a systematic transformation of our way of life, not only through the means of shutting down the institutions sending us on the path to extinction, but also confronting the colonialist and capitalist ways that got us to where we are today and working to build an equitable world that provides for and values all life that inhabits the Earth," said **Matt Oill, Action and Communications Coordinator for Extinction Rebellion: Capital Region**

“Across the state, we have seen that the same frontline communities, largely working class and communities of color, are the ones least responsible for carbon emissions. At the same time they have been disproportionately burdened by the climate crisis for years, and they continue to be ravaged time and time again by catastrophic climate events. This past week we, as New Yorkers, passed the right to clean air and water. The climate crisis is not some future catastrophe; it is here right now. At least 13 New Yorkers lost their lives during Tropical Storm Ida last month, and our greenhouse gas emissions continue to go up, not down with each catastrophic climate event.

By passing the Climate and Community Investment Act, and other climate bills, we can finally make the ones who put us in this situation be the ones who pay to get us out of it by charging polluters for the toxic fumes they’re responsible for. It is of the utmost importance we create a racially and economically just transition to a fully fossil fuel free economy. To make sure that our legislators make climate change their priority in 2022, and to demonstrate again just how much of a priority it needs to be, we will be having a rally and march next weekend on November 13th at noon starting at West Capitol Park then ending at the Governor’s Mansion. We hope you will continue this fight alongside us.” **Sam Engelmyer (She/her), Progressive Schenectady Lead Co-Organizer**

"Pollutocrats like Charles Koch and the other the Big Fossil CEOs have spent vast fortunes on a smog of disinformation to confuse the public and corrupt politicians, to protect far vaster fortunes they make extracting wealth from the Earth and from the people who do the work. Meanwhile their emissions accumulate and the atmosphere overheats. As record shattering extreme weather becomes more and more obvious, the public now sees clearly that not just polar bears and future generations, but everyone is now at risk.

"Shutting down unsustainable industries and replacing systems we now rely on would be disruptive, eliminating millions of jobs. But continuing business as usual would be FAR more disruptive as overheated ecosystems, especially agriculture, collapse. So we need a Just Transition to a sustainable economy, guaranteeing good jobs for fossil dependent workers and better livelihoods for people in overpolluted, underpaid and disrespected communities in the US and around the world. But we are in a race against time - as they say at NASA, FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION." -- **Mark Schaeffer, Capital District DSA and Ecosocialist Working Group**

"A few weeks ago, Hurricane Ida visited New York and flooded out a lot of people with its torrential rainfall. Some people died in their basement apartments. Others lost their homes and businesses and did not have sufficient insurance to recover their losses. In the South End, we have people with cancer, asthma and respiratory problems because they must endure the toxic emissions of 1000 trucks a day emitting their fumes. Someone thought it was a good idea to build an affordable housing development many years ago near all those trucks and also back these residences up against train tracks transporting toxic freight. In Hoosick Falls, residents lost their lives or saw their property values demolished because some companies thought it was ok to release PFOA into the groundwater. A lifetime of compromises, cutting corners, inaction and corruption on a small and global scale has brought us to this place where people must needlessly endure the consequences of our environmental neglect. We must rise to this moment where we only do enough to look good but do not really do what it takes to be wise stewards of the earth. We call on COP26 to not celebrate half measures but redouble their efforts to call on nations to make far more aggressive commitments to reduce our carbon emissions and save us all from extinction." **The Reverend Peter Cook, Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches**