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The financial crash and global economic crisis of 2008 gave us all a glimpse of the rot at the center of our economy and politics. Despite the repeated efforts of elites around the world to put everything back together, that crisis has only been held at bay, not resolved. In the everyday lives of the majority of people, it is clear that there has been no real recovery. The elites — big business interests allied with mainstream political leaders across parties — have become increasingly discredited. Here in the US, polls show a large progressive majority standing well to the left of both Republicans and mainstream Democrats. Until now the political establishment seems incapable of recognizing, let alone respecting, the wishes of this large but disorganized group.

In moments like this — when the old system is crumbling and a new one is not yet in sight — progressive activists and organizers can change the course of history. But to succeed, we'll have to change our perspective and start thinking in ways that are unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable. The pragmatic left — the unions, mainstream environmental groups, human rights organizations, and community organizations — must look beyond small-scale, short-term, so-called “winnable” fights. In contrast to the years before 2008, fundamental change is becoming not just desirable but unavoidable. We must set a bold agenda for a radically more progressive future, or we will end up in a world even less humane than the one we already have. The more radical and idealistic members of the left will also have to adjust their approach. We must move from a politics of merely exposing injustice through condemnation and critique to reshaping society in order to end injustice. As such, strategic compromise and unwelcome alliances may be necessary in the short-term to win a just society in the long-term.

For decades, the two sides of progressive politics — the practical and the idealistic — have stood at odds. To seize the historic opportunity that confronts us, we must break this impasse. In what follows we offer an approach that combines the impulse of pursuing a radically new society with the pragmatic sensibility needed to arrive there.

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ANALYZE THE UNDERLYING SYSTEM

Those of us on the left are rightly accustomed to thinking about the injustice that pervades our society and identifying its perpetrators. But we have to move beyond identifying injustice to understanding why it happens in order to change it.

Let's start by looking at society as a whole—as one single system. Society is like a factory. Although there are struggles within the factory, everything is ultimately working in concert, and if you change one part then all the other parts have to be adjusted or the whole thing will break down. This factory produces a lot of things, from airplanes to weddings to poems. But one set of products stands out: **our society produces injustice.**

Machines in a factory all require certain kinds of workers to keep them running. Those people have to be found and trained, or else the machine will stop running. In the same way, our society locates and trains the people who will administer the production of injustice. Bosses, chauvinists, abusive police officers — these people are produced by the needs of society itself. If we try to eliminate them without changing the way that society reproduces itself, then new ones will simply take their place.

We have often been transfixed by the individual products of our society, failing to understand the mechanisms of production itself. If we want to eliminate the injustices we're fighting, we can't just limit ourselves to the unjust products of the factory. **We have to change the way the whole thing functions.**

THE SYSTEM IS NEOLIBERALISM AND IT BLOCKS JUSTICE ON ALL FRONTS

The system we face today is called neoliberalism. This is a commonly used term on the left, but here we are expanding its meaning beyond its normal use. Neoliberalism includes the reigning economic doctrines and policies of the last four decades: free trade, deregulation, privatization, reduced taxes and government spending, suppression of wages and upward redistribution of wealth, and far-flung global production networks. These economic policies, and their consequences for working people, are familiar to those on the left.

But neoliberalism is also an entire way of life, a self-reproducing system of culture, politics, and economics that has swept the globe since the economic crisis of the 1970s. It has changed the way we think, act, and behave. And this has had major consequences for the forms of oppression and inequality suffered by women and minorities of all kinds. In general, neoliberalism has allowed for significant (if still limited) progress against many forms of subordination stemming from personal prejudice. At the same time, however, it has intensified impersonal forms of subordination that operate through the economy. While forms of injustice against women and minorities are often portrayed as distinct from economic issues, the subordination of these groups is inseparable from the structure of the economy. In order to make progress on the issues facing women and minorities, we need to transform the way the economy works

A full discussion of these topics is beyond the scope of this document. For now we restrict ourselves to briefly discussing three oppressed identity groups in the US. In each case, we note ways in which neoliberal economic principles block progress towards justice for people in the identity group in question.

WOMEN: A key source of gender inequality is the fact that women continue to take on a disproportionate burden of caregiving and other domestic activities. When combined with the forces of the labor market, this gives rise to a wide range of gender imbalances both in the workplace and in private life. Policies to address these imbalances must include improved funding for childcare and improved maternity leave and parental leave policies. However, even in European countries where strong childcare and maternity leave policies are well established, there still remain gender imbalances related to caregiving. More radical social changes are likely required to further equalize caregiving along gender lines. All such measures involve increased state intervention into the labor market and new government spending programs, which contradict neoliberal economic principles of deregulation and reduced government spending.

AFRICAN AMERICANS: The seemingly colorblind forces of the economy contribute to deep sources of racial inequality, including the

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neglect and abuse suffered by black communities at the hands of the state. While the more economically egalitarian postwar period saw some progress toward racial economic equality, this progress has stalled or retreated under neoliberalism. A disproportionate number of black people have been rendered entirely superfluous to the economy's demand for workers. Real progress towards racial equality is impossible without addressing this racialized economic exclusion. This requires massive new investment in low-income black communities and an improved social safety net in order to greatly increase the availability of living wage jobs and end the exclusion of millions of African Americans from mainstream economic life. In all likelihood, this new investment and job creation will have to be led by the public sector. Again, these measures involve increased state intervention into the market and new government spending programs, which contradict neoliberal economic principles of deregulation and reduced government spending.

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS: Movements for immigrant rights have made some headway in the US, but so far there have been no serious attempts to deal with the underlying economic forces which render so many immigrants so vulnerable in the first place. A key feature of the neoliberal economy is a global labor market that maintains enormous pools of cheap and expendable workers, found especially in the so-called "Global South" and in developed countries among low-income immigrants. These cheap and expendable workers are essential to the neoliberal economy. Many industries in the US (most obviously agriculture) could not exist in their present form without a sufficient supply of immigrant workers who feel too vulnerable to fight for decent wages and safe working conditions. Any movement to address the vulnerability of immigrants will find itself constrained by the demands of the neoliberal labor market, which must therefore be transformed if full progress is to be made on immigrants' rights. True justice for immigrants will eventually require that we eliminate the grotesque inequality that currently exists between countries.

These are some examples of how we must move beyond the current neoliberal economy in order to make progress towards greater equality for oppressed groups. We must move toward a more inclusive economy, supported by a greatly expanded public sector. These changes must be global in scope, reducing inequality not just within countries, but between countries as well. We have arrived at a point in history where this kind of deep transformation has become possible.

NEOLIBERALISM IS IN CRISIS

The crisis of our time is the paralysis of neoliberalism. The social order that in the past four decades seemed to triumph over all challengers is now a victim of its own success. Faced with mass unemployment, crumbling infrastructure, and looming environmental catastrophe, the neoliberal elite no longer triumphantly proclaims the end of history.

The economic causes of the crisis are straightforward. Neoliberal policies were originally adopted in response to the crisis of the 1970s, only to set the stage for our present crisis. In the 1970s, stagnating productivity and growing social unrest had generated the economic dysfunctions of stagflation and undermined popular faith in the postwar establishment. The neoliberal solution was to break the back of organized labor and inspire an even more intense atmosphere of competitive individualism. Although productivity growth continued to slow markedly, corporate profits remained healthy — not because workers' wages were rising quickly, as in the postwar era, but because wages weren't rising at all.

But this posed a dilemma. Economic growth relied more than ever upon the endless expansion of consumer demand, yet corporate profits depended on suppressing wages. How could workers afford the goods they made? The solution to this dilemma was easy credit.

The financial crisis of 2008 marked the moment at which that unsustainable growth strategy finally ran up against its limits. The mountains of debt came crashing back to earth. But the neoliberal state, under first Republican and then Democratic control, leapt into action. The banks were bailed out and the Federal Reserve began a years-long, unprecedented intervention in the economy in the vain hope of breathing life back into the neoliberal zombie. The rest of the world's major central banks followed suit, and the danger seemed to pass.

Yet every new economic indicator demonstrates over and over again that neoliberalism has not been restored to health. The quality of global growth is lackluster and dependent to an alarming degree on speculative investment. Global economic instability is now the norm. Wage stagnation is as bad as ever, good jobs are not being created, and income inequality is increasing. Strong and sustainable economic growth is impossible under these conditions. The crisis of neoliberalism has not been solved but merely prolonged.

Neoliberalism transformed government from the public's guardian against market excesses to an instrument for expanding the tyranny of market forces. Now the most powerful nation-states stand bewildered

before the growing imbalances of the global economy. Neoliberalism unleashed the dynamic power of capitalist development only to now find itself stymied by ever-expanding stocks of capital and ever-narrowing opportunities for their investment. This marks a moment of great danger. Yet the paralysis of a global system also presents us with the chance, for the first time in decades, to fundamentally change the course of our society. It's an opportunity we must start taking seriously.

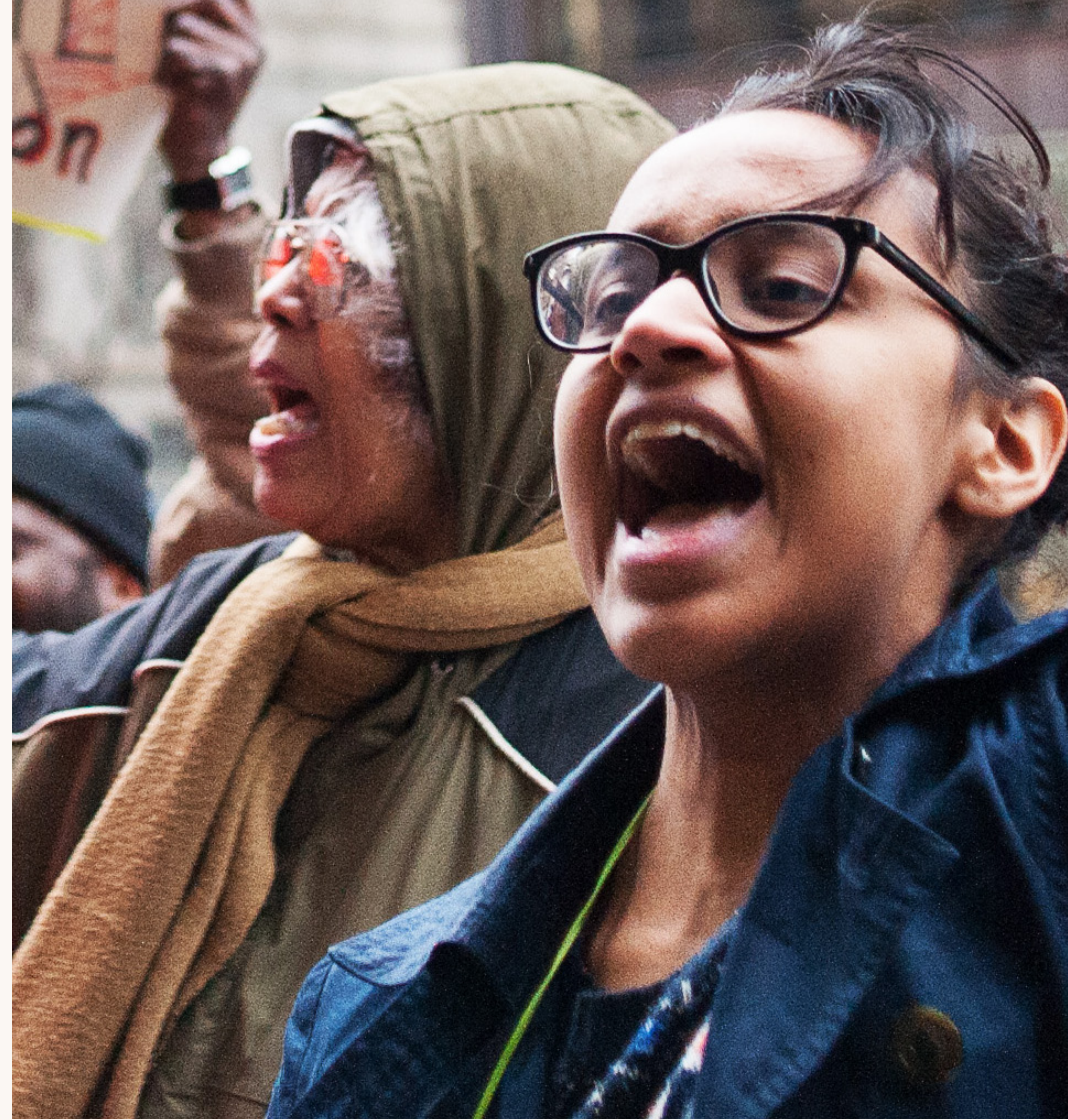
THINK STRATEGICALLY, ACT STRATEGICALLY

In order to take control of the future that lies beyond the current crisis, we need to think in terms of a strategy encompassing the entire system. This demands that we greatly expand our imagination and our hopes.

Neoliberalism brought a climate of pessimism and defeat to the left, and the prospect of sweeping change that animated the movements of the 1960s was abandoned. Pragmatists on the left have thought small — in highly parochial terms of defending the interests of a particular community or a particular workforce. Radicals, on the other hand, have thought about the wider picture, but they almost never moved beyond exposing injustice and criticizing those perpetuating it.

Before 2008, the divide between these two approaches was perfectly understandable. The left was structurally disadvantaged by the political and cultural environment of neoliberalism, which nurtured rightwing sensibilities of individualism and competition in the face of artificial scarcity. The status quo was virtually unassailable. The system itself increased inequality, destroyed unions, narrowed the public sector, and tossed whole communities onto the waste heap. Those who wanted something better were reduced either to impotent condemnation or to narrow defensive campaigns against the rightwing offensive.

Almost unrecognized on the left, the situation has fundamentally changed since 2008. The deep-seated dysfunction of the economy has made radical change not only possible, but necessary. Yet the left is not alone in its potential to define and shape the post-neoliberal world. In addition to the guardians of the status quo, the left must also contend with the forces of the anti-establishment right as they raise bold and disturbing responses to the deterioration of neoliberalism. We can see the beginnings of such movements most clearly in Eastern Europe, from Russia to Ukraine to Hungary, with the rise of militarism, nationalism, and even explicitly fascist appeals. The same impulse can be seen in the Tea Party of the US, the Front National in France, the Modi government of India, and Japan under Abe Shinzō.



As the right has surged ahead, the left has lagged behind. Too many pragmatists are still fixated on small defensive campaigns and single-issue struggles, while the radicals' call for an immediate revolution finds no popular audience. We need a completely different approach to break through this impasse.

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In this moment of crisis, there are strategic interventions that can transform society in ways that are both tangible and deep. When a person is off-balance, a relatively small amount of force applied at a key pressure point can cause their entire body to dramatically change its trajectory. Under the right conditions, a small martial artist can throw a much larger and stronger opponent across a room. Similarly, neoliberal society has today lost its balance, and relatively small groups can have an outsized effect on society and rapidly grow in power. To do this, we must analyze the key pressure points of neoliberalism and develop strategies for action based on that analysis.

The left has done this before. In the 1920s, the great corporations had reduced organized labor to insignificance, and free market ideology reigned supreme. Beginning with the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the Great Depression thoroughly discredited the old economy, yet labor unions remained divided and weak. Then, in a late-1936 dispute with General Motors, the United Automobile Workers occupied the Fisher #1 factory in Flint — a key link in the GM supply line — and vowed to continue the strike until GM reached a national agreement covering all UAW workers.

Because the UAW targeted a strategic vulnerability, victory in this strike unleashed an avalanche of change. The union itself expanded dramatically, enrolling a hundred thousand new members. But beyond that, the Flint strike immediately opened the way for victory after victory of organized labor against big corporations. This laid the foundations for the restructuring of the entire economy and the emergence of a new kind of more equitable growth.

Today we must again identify strategic pressure points that will shift the momentum of our entire society towards progressive transformation. There is no need for a detailed blueprint of legislative changes and institutional reforms before the fact; such a blueprint might, in any case, get in the way of a movement's organic development. A genuine political movement will take care of the details on its own. Once the movement is set in motion it will change the foundations of society itself, unleashing a process of upheaval and adaptation that will sweep everyone along with it, whether they like it or not.

But the movement does need direction, especially in its earliest stages, or it might start moving along a self-defeating or destructive course. Deep and rapid social change is now inevitable. The organization we build now and the demands we formulate will decide whether this social change amplifies our power or pushes us to the sidelines. All our decisions should be made with this expectation in mind.

OUR AGENDA: PROGRESSIVE GLOBALIZATION & EGALITARIAN GROWTH

The direction for the movement cannot be set by utopian fantasies of a completely new society. It must be based in the possibilities at hand — those generated by neoliberalism and its crisis. Just as neoliberalism invests everything good with poison, it also hides a progressive potential in many of things that we rightly deplore. This insight requires us to think in a new and uncomfortable way. We will have to judge every part of society by its potential to advance our strategic agenda, and not according to how much it is implicated in ongoing oppression. Instead of assuming every piece of neoliberal society must be dismantled or laboriously refashioned, we should use its progressive elements as a pivot from which to throw its weight in a new direction — launching society into a progressive future.

EGALITARIAN GROWTH

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In light of the unfolding climate crisis and environmental degradation of all kinds, it's tempting to abandon the concept of economic growth in favor of a "zero-growth" economy that appears to promise much-needed ecological sustainability. Creating a sustainable economy is of paramount importance. The end of growth, however, would give us not sustainability but disaster.

Capitalism is an intricately connected system whose continued operation depends upon growth. If growth suddenly ceased, it would lead to acute global crisis, massive suffering, and increasingly desperate and extreme attempts to overcome the crisis by shifting the suffering elsewhere. This can take the form of terrifying far-right movements, as the catastrophes of the 1930s demonstrate. And even assuming such a crisis could be avoided, the end of growth would mean damning the people of the undeveloped world to poverty, malnutrition, and death.

The crucial question in our historical moment is not whether there should be growth, but what kind of growth there could be.



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Economic development can take a distinctly progressive form, one that not only makes ecologically sustainable life a possibility, but that also opens the door to even more radical political possibilities. An economic regime with widely shared prosperity is the true soil of radicalism, because it provides a standard of living that allows huge numbers of people to look beyond the present and to imagine something entirely different.

To achieve a more egalitarian and inclusive form of growth, we must shift our perspective from the time-honored question of redistribution to the question of control over investment. The current system utilizes the power of the state and corporations to produce cheap growth through short-term investment. Today this model of economic growth has run up against limits of its own creation. With all other outlets seemingly closed off, money sits idle or flows into socially useless speculation. Alongside an overabundance of capital on the speculative markets is a capital drought in the ghettos and the slums, the impoverished rural areas and the low-productivity informal urban economies. Billions around the world living off the scraps of the productive global economy cry out for investment, yet the mind of the neoliberal investor — obsessed with short-term payoffs — sees only barren ground.

A more progressive and inclusive society must be based on productive long-term investment. Rather than consigning the economically excluded to the ineffectual care of charities and aid programs, productive investment would actively integrate them into the global economy as workers and consumers. It would generate a form of growth that by its very logic would reduce inequality, raise the standard of living of those who suffer the greatest deprivation, and extend social recognition to those who are treated as trash under neoliberalism.

PROGRESSIVE GLOBALIZATION

Neoliberalism has been synonymous with the proliferation of globe-straddling businesses. These multinational corporations are correctly seen as a threat to democracy and a driving force behind rapidly growing inequality. They would seem to be antithetical to everything the left fights for. But the only way to rein in these immense, destructive forces is by working through them.

This can be achieved by turning the strength of multinational corporations — their vast geographical reach — back against them. Neoliberalism has laid waste to the economic boundaries between nations, rendering them increasingly irrelevant. Vast supply chains link workers across the continents from the US to Bangladesh, from the factory floor to the software company's corporate campus, creating in the process a comprehensive but delicate global division of labor. The more this economic system erodes any and all geographical constraints, the more a cosmopolitan global culture arises — laying the foundations for mutual communication and cooperation regardless of national origin.

The elite have forsaken national boundaries, running multinational corporations and sending their money to vacation in warmer climes. But the workers of the world are multinational as well.

The global division of labor provides the left with the means to make itself as international as the market already is. To do so, however, we must turn our back on restrictive nationalist ideas: the call to protect “American” jobs, the demand that corporations be patriotic, the demonizing of the Chinese and other “competitors.” Just as workers split by racial and gender divisions are easy prey for ruthless capitalists, people divided along national lines will not be able to challenge the current bosses of the global economy. The elite have forsaken national boundaries, running multinational corporations and sending their money to vacation in warmer climes. But the workers of the world are multinational as well.

We must seek progressive globalization, not the reversal of globalization.

The full power of transnational solidarity is not yet evident, but we have had glimpses of its potential. The brutality of the global economic system has been horrifyingly demonstrated by preventable disasters in Bangladeshi factories. Against this inhumanity, compassionate people from many countries have led a global campaign to establish a factory monitoring system to police the world's sweatshops. But a far greater potential lies in the possibility of connecting workers and activists transnationally to make demands on those who manage the global economic system — demands that could genuinely reverse the global race to the bottom.

Corporations are not alone in the business of global domination. Transnational bodies like the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization currently play the roles of enforcers and promoters of neoliberal doctrine throughout the world. Others, like the International Labour Organization, uphold progressive principles but stand ineffectually on the sidelines. Yet all of these could be transformed into instruments of a progressive global agenda. These institutions could enforce a mandatory regime of global labor rights and environmental standards. They could also help channel capital investment into the areas of the world that most desperately need it — the ghettos and slums that, regardless of nationality, have all been starved of capital by neoliberalism.

We must seek progressive globalization, not the reversal of globalization. This vision cuts against the grain of common sense on the left. Multinational corporations and transnational economic bodies certainly are our opponents as we seek to create a just society. Yet they also represent the grounds on which our fight for a more humane future will be waged, precisely because they are the institutions responsible for managing neoliberal society at the global level.

The only alternative is antiglobalization or economic nationalism. This would dismantle a global economy now marked by transnational flows, in which competition is primarily conducted between private companies, and replace it with a zero-sum struggle among states (and militaries) aiming to secure adequate markets and resources that they alone can exploit.

This is the short version of what led to World War II. It points not toward equality and democracy, but toward disaster. Rather than destroying the ground on which we stand, threatening to undo the progress we have made toward a borderless world, we must transform this terrain to overcome the limits that neoliberalism imposes upon the progressive promise of globalization.

Progressive globalization is also the key to addressing climate change. We already have the mix of policies and technology needed to contain climate change in a way that is consistent with continued economic growth. The question is how to create the political will and organizational capacity to make use of them. Once again, it is the ideological, institutional, economic, and political restrictions imposed by neoliberalism that stand in the way. Ideological, because large-scale state intervention in the economy is intolerable to free market dogma. Institutional, because the intense market competition that characterizes neoliberalism blocks those transnational forms of cooperation required for the fight against climate change. Economic, because the capital needed to finance the new energy infrastructure flows instead into unproductive speculation. And political, because people already pushed to the wall by the failure of neoliberal growth are easily swayed by demagogues claiming that environmental action will further diminish growth. Only a new progressive globalization underwritten by a new kind of egalitarian growth can overcome these obstacles and make possible the forms of global cooperation required for environmental sustainability.



PRINCIPLES FOR VICTORY

What is needed now is an agenda that will allow us to turn the insights we have offered above into a political strategy with real, transformative power. What follows is a broad set of principles, not a blueprint with precise policy objectives. As organizers and activists we know that our tactics will be many and varied, but we also believe that to win we must all be united in our strategic vision. The principles below are not meant to exclude existing activities of the left; however, we do critique certain proposals which are currently popular, but are counterproductive if we are going to create a progressive future beyond neoliberalism.

TAKE OVER ELECTORAL POLITICS

Populist, anti-corporate, anti-establishment sentiments are on the rise in countries across the globe. Thus far, populism has primarily taken the form of dangerous right-wing movements. In the US, this role is filled by the Tea Party — a minority movement within the Republican Party that nonetheless has an outsized influence on federal policy and is positioned to gain even more power. Though the Tea Party's policies are widely unpopular, its populist and (selectively) anti-neoliberal rhetoric give it a dynamism and appeal that the cautious mainstream Democrats notably lack. These mainstream Democrats continue to defend the neoliberal status quo, and, as a result, the Democrats risk sacrificing their natural policy advantage.



But there is silent progressive majority to the left of both the Tea Party and mainstream Democrats like Clinton and Obama, and it is ready to be transformed into a populist progressive movement in electoral politics. Such a movement would capture a much larger base than that of the Tea Party, and it would be much more powerful. We must seize this opportunity by building independent political organizations capable of electing movement progressives to office. Our focus here must be on building durable organizations, rather than a fixation on this or that progressive candidate. Progressives can be elected either as independents outside of the two-party system or as progressive Democrats, depending on the circumstances. Within the Democratic Party, the primary system can be a field of struggle for the left just as the GOP primaries are a field of struggle for the Tea Party.

There is a need for politics beyond the ballot box, but we must act strategically in all areas in which society can be transformed, without limiting ourselves to working exclusively in any one of them. There is much for the left to win in electoral politics. But there is also much to lose. If the left does not enter into electoral politics, we will allow rightwing movements to continue their rise to power.

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DEMAND PUBLIC SECTOR JOB CREATION

Under neoliberalism we have largely lost the idea that the public sector could have a central role to play in economic development and job creation. Instead we are expected to resort to ideas of “business incentives” (corporate tax breaks or subsidies), and even many people with progressive ideals struggle to imagine an alternative. Yet one of the major sources of job losses following the crisis of 2008 has been austerity policies which have cut public sector jobs at all levels of government. This has exacerbated unemployment and overall economic distress, and increased the suffering of vulnerable people; it has been especially devastating for women and people of color.

Meanwhile, we have a surplus of workers who would take on these worthwhile jobs if they were made available. Funding for these jobs can come from increased tax revenue from those who can afford to pay more: the very wealthy and large corporations.

Simply reinstating the public sector jobs that have been lost would be a step in the right direction. But there is also a great deal of public sector work that was neglected even before the intensification of austerity. For example, the physical infrastructure of the US is in serious disrepair. Massive investment is needed to simply maintain the country's roads, bridges, water works, etc., in their current state. Even larger investments would be required to face the challenges of the future, most notably the emerging threat of climate change, which requires that we rapidly transition to a system of low carbon energy and transportation infrastructure. The task of repairing and upgrading the country's infrastructure will require a great deal of public investment, which will in turn be a source of employment and economic development.

DISCIPLINE CORPORATIONS BY STRENGTHENING PUBLIC POWER, NOT MARKET POWER

The slogan “break up the big banks” has been very popular on the left since 2008, and progressives increasingly call for stronger antitrust enforcement against corporations of all kinds to prevent the formation of monopolies. But the problem with corporations is not that they are too large. Rather, the problem is that they are being used in socially destructive ways.

Breaking up major corporations would, perhaps, decrease their power over our political system. But in exchange it would strengthen the tyranny of the market. This is fundamentally a right-wing policy out of the libertarian playbook. It is true that the growing concentration of private economic power today is fundamentally unhealthy and undemocratic, but breaking up corporations would neither restore economic health nor revitalize our democracy. Fragmented, market-driven companies lack the insulation from market forces that is essential for long-term planning, large-scale investments, and the provision of steady wage increases and improving working conditions.

Instead of breaking up corporations, we should seize control of the power concentrated in private corporations and use it for the sake of the common good.

This is the lesson of the New Deal restructuring of the economy. The New Deal imposed not the blind discipline of the market on corporations, but the conscious discipline of public regulation. We on the left need to look further than simply smiting our corporate enemies. We must pursue a truly public good by imposing democratic control over corporate power.

Financial institutions should not be broken up. Rather, they should be nationalized and run directly in the interests of the public, on the model of a public utility. (An ideal opportunity to nationalize the banks will arise in the all-too-likely event of another financial collapse.) Today we are used to thinking of large financial corporations as necessarily predatory — but consider KfW Group, a publicly-owned German bank with revenues comparable to those of Wells Fargo. KfW has the mission of investing in sustainable economic development and promoting the common good. It has, for example, invested large amounts of capital in reducing carbon emissions in Germany — and it can do so, in part, due to its large size.

The most important communications companies — Comcast, AT&T, and the like — should likewise be regulated as public utilities. Pharmaceutical companies, which already survive parasitically off of publicly funded research, should be nationalized and medical drugs offered at-cost around the world. Health insurance companies should be abolished and replaced with Medicare for all.

REJECT NATIONAL BORDERS & BUILD GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Neoliberalism has created a global race to the bottom, and we have been taught to see people in other countries as our competitors in that race. Workers and governments have learned to compete with each other over who will work for the lowest wages in the deadliest conditions, who will offer corporations the lowest tax rates and the biggest subsidies, and who will allow corporations to abuse the environment with the greatest impunity.

But there is another way. By building alliances across borders, progressives in different countries can work together around a shared goal of ending the global race to the bottom. The American left has

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worthy potential comrades in other countries, such as the increasingly militant labor movements in countries like China, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and South Africa. Global unions and advocacy groups have already begun envisioning what a more just global labor market might look like, and how to get there. A new global movement must demand that transnational bodies, multinational corporations, and national governments participate in the creation of new, legally-binding global standards governing labor rights, corporate taxes, and environmental protection.

We must reject the unfortunate trend on the left toward economic nationalism, aimed at saving “American” jobs. This is incompatible with international solidarity, and buys into the key premise of the race to the bottom: that workers in China or Bangladesh can only ever be rivals to American workers. We must reject attempts to save “our” jobs by taking them away from much poorer workers in other countries, condemning them to lives of even greater poverty. This is not only immoral, it also threatens to deepen the crisis of neoliberalism, increases economic pain for everyone, and accelerates descent into disaster.

The best traditions of the left emphasize internationalism, human equality regardless of nation, and global solidarity among all of the excluded. Unlike the champions of neoliberal globalization, progressives understand that our current global society is not one of universal opportunity and progress, but one of inequality, exploitation, and exclusion. The answer, however, is not to destroy global society. The answer is to make it just.

DEMAND DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OVER INVESTMENT

The egalitarian instincts of the left have led to an emphasis on redistribution. This demand is crucial. Yet a more egalitarian distribution of wealth must go hand in hand with a more democratic system of investment. Otherwise it will merely exacerbate the ongoing economic crisis.

A sustainable and egalitarian new form of growth requires that investment not seek an immediate return on the market, but that it instead flow to those who have been starved of capital. It must not blindly follow market demand, but be consciously directed to meet the needs that neoliberalism has ignored: basic infrastructure, alternative energy, and collective goods such as schooling, healthcare, and public recreation. And investment must know no national boundaries but move to where the need is greatest, with the fundamental aim of including all of the excluded. Such a system of investment also makes possible far greater returns in the long term — returns that will continue to strengthen egalitarian progressive investment — than could ever be produced by the short-sighted policies of neoliberal economic elites.



Those guided by justice and love have been blessed with the terrible fortune of bearing witness to the slow motion collapse of our social and political systems. We have a choice: do we retreat into fear, or do we expand our compassion to new terrains? Do we huddle in desperate enclaves hoping to survive the looming environmental and social catastrophes, or do we address them head-on with a breadth of imagination and intensity of commitment that has been missing for decades?

What we have outlined is a sweeping new way to understand the intolerable injustices and excruciating dilemmas we face today. Our political and social agenda is ambitious, yet rooted in the real possibilities produced by a global society in crisis. Most important, it offers a way to think strategically about how a relatively small group of politically active people could catalyze a movement with the power to change the entire world. If the left can overcome the stubborn divide between analysis and action, between pragmatism and purism, between short-term tactics and long-term strategy — then a progressive future is within our grasp.

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