



## Teleseminar Transcript: “Just Transition” with Mateo Nube of Movement Generation

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*Marissa Mommaerts:* I’m so happy this teleseminar is happening, because personally I believe that making social justice more explicit in our work is not only the right thing to do, it’s also the only way our movement is going to become powerful enough to rise to the challenges of our time. And I’m very excited to welcome a friend and mentor, someone I deeply respect and admire, Mateo Nube of Movement Generation, to lead today’s call.

Mateo is one of the co-founders of the [Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project](#). He was born and grew up in La Paz, Bolivia. Since moving to the San Francisco Bay Area, he has worked in the labor, environmental justice and international solidarity movements. Mateo has spent the last two decade integrating concepts of popular education into his movement work. He is also a member of the Latin rock band Los Nadies.



We’re grateful Mateo has agreed to lead today’s teleseminar, because we respect and appreciate the work of Movement Generation and the other organizations he will be talking about - and because we recognize the need for more conversations on the link between Transition and social justice.

Our team at Transition US has begun exploring the connections between race, class, and ecology, as have a number of local initiatives and regional hubs in the US and around the world. And in doing this work, we’ve learned that it can bring up a lot of assumptions. So I to get the most out of today’s call, I invite us all to participate with an open mind and heart, in the spirit of reflection and collaboration.

And with that, I will turn it over to Mateo.

*Mateo Nube:* Thank you Marissa and Carlyne. I’m excited and humbled and flattered to be having this conversation with folks from – if I gather correctly – not just the United States but also a few folks calling in from around the world. I have a lot of admiration for the work of the Transition Towns movement, and a special respect for both Marissa and Carlyne for the work of Transition US. And as has been expressed, what I will be talking about today is the concept of a “Just Transition.” I will both speak to it conceptually and give examples. As you may hear in the background, the garbage truck is passing by our office. It makes it real – I will be talking about zero waste among other concepts – it’s the Ecology Center truck from Berkeley, California where our office is located.

I will start by stating what I think is obvious and will serve as a platform of sorts for the conversation we will be having today, which is that Transition is inevitable. It’s upon us, and it’s why those of us who are on this call are compelled to be doing the work we’re already doing: because we’re living at a highly pivotal moment in our planetary history, or human history as it relates to human impact on the planet.

So Transition is inevitable, but justice is not. And that’s what the conversation today is meant to really focus on: how is it that we ensure that the lens we’re bringing to the work we’re doing, that is so important and pivotal, is really centered around this concept of a Just Transition.

And to ground us I really want to say that the departure point of our analysis really informs our journey and our action. So how we come to think about what Transition is—what we're transitioning out of and towards—and how we got into the conundrum we're facing on a planetary scale, as well as locally and regionally, is very central to how we then proceed with our work.

I want to share with you all how we at Movement Generation conceive of both the causes of this crisis, the solutions to the crisis, and the paths that get us toward the solutions. And as a starting point I want to say that we firmly believe that social inequity is a form of ecological erosion. And that is not a metaphor – I mean it in a very literal sense: that if we apply an ecological systems-thinking cap to our understanding of how we function as a society currently, we come to that conclusion. So that is one of the concepts I want to ask that we anchor our conversation in.

Just a few minutes ago I referenced the concept of zero waste, and I'm guessing the majority of folks on this call have probably more than once watched Annie Leonard's brilliant ["Story of Stuff."](#) And one of the things she really brings home in that is the concept of "There is No Away," as a way to get us to really take a deeper appreciation of what it means to center on the concept of "zero waste," which is so elegantly offered to us by how nature actually works.

And I want to put forth that if we take the concept of "zero waste" to heart, as we approach what we're doing, we need to be thinking about the concept of "zero waste" not only as it relates to *stuff*, but as it relates to *people*. And what I mean by that is that we live under an economic system that has predetermined there are places and people that are actually completely disposable. And unless we appreciate that that is part of the inherent logic of the dominant economy that you'll hear me reference as the "banks and tanks" economy (but we can also call it the "growth economy," or the "suicidal economy"), unless we appreciate that there are full swaths of peoples, cultures, segments of society that have been deemed worthy of being sacrificed, of being disposed of – that we are not really taking this concept of "zero waste" to its full dimension.

So these are some concepts I wanted to put forth as I move forward. I wanted to give a very specific example as a departure point –and I want to use the example of a player in this economy that I feel represents many of the contradictions that many of us grapple with as we start to move toward relocalization and living within our bioregion –a corporate entity that speaks to many of the contradictions in this economy. And the company I want to reference is Whole Foods.

I'm making an educated guess that most of us in the Transition Towns movement appreciate the contradictions as we're trying to build short-chain exchange food systems where folks know where their food comes from and know who grows their food and how it's grown and that the structure really incorporates dignity at every step of that food chain process. We see how Whole Foods in many ways has tried to apply a dominant economy logic to relocalization and use it for a profit-based motive, and we share a critique, I'm guessing, of how that really isn't a solution. That's not Transition as we see it applied well.

And I want to take it a step further. I want to point out that in the last year, one of the really interesting and I feel key indicators of what it means to live in an economy that decides there are not only places and species that are disposable and completely displaceable, but also people, is that when the Baltimore uprisings happened in the context of the movement for black lives in this country, and the folks in Baltimore said "No more, we will not tolerate how police are destroying the lives of young, innocent black folks in our city," when Freddie Gray was killed by the police, Whole Foods made a decision. They went out into the streets and started distributing free food. They didn't distribute it to the protestors in the streets. They gave it to the National Guard who was occupying the streets of Baltimore.

And I found this to be a highly emblematic and intentional expression of how this economy states again and again that there are segments of this economy that deserve to be disposed of and deemed unworthy. In fact, if you walk into Whole Foods today you will find artisanal cheese and God knows how many other things—I think farmed tilapia fish—

that are harvested by prison labor. And that is where I feel the contradictions of an economic system that is stating that there is a whole segment of society that doesn't matter and that we are either going to kill at will, or imprison and use their labor, is emblematic of what I was describing as social inequity being a form of ecological erosion.

So I give that somewhat long-winded example as a preface to getting into a deeper exposition of what we mean by a "Just Transition," and a deeper exposition of the root causes of the crisis we're facing and the solutions we're trying to move towards. One of the things I really admire about the Transition Towns movement and its genesis, which we really share at Movement Generation, is an elegant truism that we need to return to right relationship with place... that we need to return to a reflexive, responsive, reciprocal relationship with home again, and that to do that we need to understand home well.

And for those of us who have grown up in cities in particular, it's about returning to an understanding of what the true ecological boundaries of how home works are. We need to understand our watersheds and our foodsheds and our energysheds, and to build human settlements around this deep understanding. What I want to add to this is that part of what I think we are all collectively attempting to do is ensure that every person has the right to a productive livelihood.

We have the means at our disposal to collectively build a dignified life for ourselves, within the context of this reflexive, responsive, reciprocal relationship to place. What we're really trying to do is manage home well. And I use the phrase "manage home" intentionally because if we look at what the word "economy" means, if we break it down into "economy," "eco" means home, literally. It comes from the Greek word "oikos," it means home. And "ecology" means "knowledge of home." I think you all are at the vanguard of, in the US context, trying to get folks who have grown up illiterate about home to return to proper knowledge of home. And "economy" simply means "management of home." It doesn't mean GDP, it doesn't mean stock prices at the bottom of our TV screen – those are just manifestations of a particular form of economy, but there are many ways to build economy. And the fact is that the dominant economy we have today has globalized mismanagement of home.

And when I said that the departure point of our analysis informs our journey and our action, I said it because it's really really important—as we try to understand what are the impacts of the dominant economy—to understand how we got here, because how we got here informs the logic and structure of what is playing out. And the fact is that the current economy is built of the backs and the blood of whole peoples that have been dispossessed of proper relationship with home. Whole populations have been dispossessed of land, of resources, of home. What do I mean by that? When you build an economy that is premised on the centrality of growth and profits at all costs, when you are always trying to grow, and build bigger, and sell more, what that means is that inherent to your economy is a colonial logic, that "I need more resources, to build more stuff, to make more money." And what that has meant over the arc of the last 500 years, certainly, is that we have today what manifests as multi-national corporations backed by whole armies saying "I need the oil that is under the ground where you live. So I'm going to take that land away from you." So this colonial logic economy, this "banks and tanks" economy, doesn't see a forest – it sees timber waiting to be tilled. And we came to this moment, as we again appreciate if we think about peak oil and dependence on fossil fuels, through a process called the Industrial Revolution. And the Industrial Revolution would not have happened without the slave trade. It would not have happened without land conquest. It would not have happened without the genocide of indigenous peoples on this continent.

Why am I saying all this? Because the social structures that are still informing how we relate to each other today, and who has power, and who has access to this economy and who doesn't, and who is considered disposable and who isn't, is inherently related to the way this economy has played out over time. And mismanagement starts here, with this colonial imperial logic to the economy that has colonized not only our lands and our social systems, but our minds.

So what that brings us to is that part of our view—what the Transition movement is about—is reclaiming right relationship with home, reconnecting with home. But what does that mean in a social context where huge parts of society have literally been ruptured from relation to the land they live on and been moved to a whole new place, and even in that new place have been disposed of, for the most part, access to land, access to capital, access to any capacity to build a right to productive livelihood? In this context, if we appreciate how the dominant economy has been built, one can then come to the conclusion that – and this is our view at Movement Generation—the #BlackLivesMatter movement is a frontline struggle in the struggle for ecological justice, that the concept of #BlackLivesMatter is getting to the heart of this notion that there should be no sacrifice zones.

The logic of the dominant economy is that there are places and people that can be exploited—and some can be forced into exploitation—and that’s deemed acceptable in the context of “growth.” And #BlackLivesMatter is challenging that by saying “No! No one is disposable. There is no *away*.” Even when you send us into prisons or you confine us into ghettos, our lives are still full of dignity. Until we abolish the prison-industrial complex, until we challenge how cities have been constructed in this way that says some people live in misery and others live surrounded by amazing material wealth, we will not find true balance.

So that’s trying to really bring home this notion that there is no “away.” What I’m trying to say by that, is that in the same that way we have come to a place where planned obsolescence and the height of disposable products is an emblem of what’s wrong with our economy, which again I think the Transition Towns movement is really challenging centrally, if we apply this to the social context, there is not only a tremendous garbage bin that is expressing itself through, say, the Pacific Gyre and plastic in the ocean, there are also swaths of our population that have been confined to—to be very crass about it—the garbage bins of society. And it behooves us, if we apply ecological systems-thinking properly, to actually be thinking about not only the things this economy produces, but also the impact it has on people.

So let me dig into that a bit deeper: if we think about how any economy works, there are five pillars that are central to any economy, a regenerative economy or a degenerative economy. Any economy needs these five things:

We need **resources**: things we build like houses, or things we grow like food.

We need **labor**: work to make it happen.

Then we need a **purpose** that informs what our economy is arcing toward, what its core intent is.

We need a **worldview** that justifies this purpose, and we need a form of **governance**.

What I would argue, and the reason I gave this historical context to the current economy, the dominant economy, which is not the only economy but it is the dominant one –this global, mismanaged home economy—is that the way it gathers **resources** is through **extraction**; it deploys **labor** through **exploitation**; its **purpose**, as I said earlier, is **profit** and **growth** at all costs; it has a **worldview** that then justifies this purpose: individualism, consumerism, American exceptionalism, and I might say white supremacy and patriarchy at the center of justifying its purpose; and its mode of **governance** is militarism and violence.

That’s why I gave the example of the National Guard and Whole Foods. There is a logic to war and militarism and violence that isn’t a consequence in this economy, it’s actually a central mode of governance. As I said before, you can’t build an economy that’s premised on growth without taking stuff—like land and labor—from other people, and not expect those folks to resist, either when you’re taking things away or when you’re insisting over time, again and again, that they don’t have a right to a productive livelihood. And that’s why when you see Whole Foods giving food to the National Guard or you see the bloated spending on military in the US, it’s not a coincidence – it’s actually central to the form of governance.

So this brings us to: what are the five pillars of a **regenerative** economy?

Those are again, as I mentioned before: **resources, labor, purpose, worldview, governance.**

Resources can't be gathered through an extractive mode – it has to be regenerative. This brings us back to the concept of “zero waste”—which again I think the Transition Towns movement is at the forefront of bringing this into consciousness in the United States.

Our labor needs to be deployed through cooperation, not competition, and that's where I think in some ways the Transition Towns movement is at the vanguard, and in other ways isn't. Because it isn't I think fully incorporating what I'm putting forth in this presentation, which is a deeply centralized appreciation of how racial justice and an understanding of class and gender needs to inform that in terms of access.

And the purpose of this economy is taking care of all – people and place and planet. That's where I think concepts coming from permaculture are very useful – Earth Care, People Care, Fair Share. That's purpose.

Then we need to create a whole worldview to support this regenerative form of economy, and traditional cultures from around the world historically have, for example, revered water. And that's just one way through which we build worldviews that tend towards care for all and tend towards reverence – it's the “we” versus the “me,” the “us” versus the “mine.”

And then governance needs to be rooted in a sense of deep democracy, which returns me to one of the points I've been making about social inequity as a form of ecological erosion. I think, for our Transition Towns to really take our work to the next level, we need to incorporate the concept of reparations into our work. When we think of the word reparations, we can think of it as repairing our relations. And when I talked about the historical context of how this economy arose and how it continues to play out, the fact is, as I mentioned, there are whole swaths of the population that have been deemed not worthy of having access to, among other things, *land*.

Which then brings me to the next point that I want to put forth, which is the idea that I'm arguing – when we talk about Transition and justice, justice needs to be at the center of our action logic, right? And to make it so, I would posit that land reform is the key ingredient that moves us towards really winning a Just Transition. What I mean is that this economy has commodified everything for the purposes of profit, and it centers around land. And we can see that in our food system, where a handful of multinational corporations control everything from actual ownership of land, ownership of seed, ownership of transportation from farm to table, and all the rest.

But another expression of how this tremendous lack of democracy around access in distribution of land is playing out in cities across the United States where we see gentrification taking place, and it's distinctly related to, among other things, how the profit-based mentality is being applied to the concept of “greening” cities and climate adaptation and mitigation. We're seeing cities being rebuilt around, for example, transit-oriented development. But if it happens in a market-based economy, what we're seeing playing out is that only folks who have a lot of money can live in “green cities.”

So where I live, in the San Francisco Bay Area, what ends up happening is that in the span of the last decade or two, the black population of San Francisco has been cut in half. Neighborhoods that were historically black have lost cores of their historic population because they can't afford to live there anymore. I live in Oakland, and the same thing is playing out here – and Oakland is the birthplace of the Black Panthers.

I'm saying all of this because one of the rhetorical statements we like making at Movement Generation is that we need to break the chains of the market and return to the web of life. And as that relates to land –we need to decommodify land. And we need to really create full community access to land. And that's going to look different in different places,

and I know many of you are already working in these arenas, building land trusts—whether they're agricultural land trusts or housing land trusts—so there are many expressions to this work, but again what it calls for is a radical democratic conception of how we challenge notions of private property and how we challenge notions of who has access to land and who doesn't.

I'll name one example: we speak in the US a lot about the generational loss of farmers. We often point to these statistics that show a good portion of folks who lived in the US many years ago working the land, and now it's a miniscule portion. The fact is, we have all the farmers we need in the US right now. We just don't call them farmers, we call them *farmworkers*. And we call them farmworkers because they actually don't control the land that they work on. I say that purposefully in a somewhat provocative way to get us to appreciate folks who are invisibilized in this current economy.

If we don't visibilize those realities, what we see is a trend which I think most of us are familiar with, where we see younger, upper middle class white folks who are interested in going into agriculture being seen as the vanguard of people who care about tending the land in this country—and actually, we need to complicate that. We need to appreciate, again, the many social nuances that are playing out as it relates to how land is managed and who has access.

So as a way, maybe, of summarizing what I've shared thus far—and there are multiple other ideas I'd like to put forth—what I'd like to do is land what I've put forward thus far, and then open it up to questions, and then get into specific examples of solutions as we see them playing out across the United States.

What I'm trying to argue is a couple of things: one is that frontline communities who are experiencing the brunt of the damage of this “banks and tanks” economy, this dominant economy, need to be at the forefront of the solution design. And I think that's one of the really exciting challenges for the Transition Towns movement in the US right now – and that's why I'm very excited this call was organized, and why I chose to be very direct about linking the #BlackLivesMatter moment and the movement for black lives into this conversation, because it's one of the most important and transformational struggles that is playing out right now in the United States, and in our view is central to the struggle for ecological justice – and if we don't think of it in those terms, there are some gaps in our analysis that need to be, at a minimum, brought to the table and discussed. So again, this notion of frontline communities being at the forefront of solution design is very important.

And a second is this notion that there can be no sacrifice zones, that if we're really going to get at the root of what's not working, if we're going to dismantle the bad and build the good, we can't substitute this dominant economy with new forms of economy that still allow for certain peoples and certain places to be sacrificed. Said another way, a solution that exacerbates other problems is not a solution. To get there, we need to have the multiplicity of voices in that solution design at the front-end, to make it work. And I know this is complicated, and hard, but it's a necessary challenge we need to step up to in order to get this right. And again, what I'm trying to bring forth is that a race, class, and gender analysis needs to be central to how we approach Transition Towns work. For this to happen, we need to be asking really important, hard questions—some of which we may not have immediate answers to, but the process is as important as the landing point, often. So that's one of the things I'm hopeful that this call will help foster, and I'm thankful for Marissa and Carolyne's leadership in making it so.

So again, I think I'm going to press pause, with the full knowledge there are still specific examples I wanted to speak and hope to speak through the question and answer period.

Carolyne: We will now open it up for questions, and take a few questions at a time and then let Mateo respond to them.

## Q&A

Participant: In helping to develop these Transition neighborhoods and including the invisible, marginalized groups – I’m a person with numerous disabilities and have been advocating this for a long time –how do we get people who are all marginalized to come together, because the bureaucracy doesn’t allow that to happen.

Participant: These are pretty radical concepts, and I’m completely in support of them, but what is the language we use to talk with people who are not really familiar with these concepts; and also, can you share some super specific examples of success stories using the Just Transition model and concepts?

Participant: I’m in a rural area in Northern California, and I’m looking at dry-farming of almonds to replace the irrigating that’s happening in the Central Valley, and I imagine if it’s done the right way it could provide some sort of opportunity to people that are currently –I really like the idea that the US is not short of farmers, but they’re all called farmworkers— but it could be a root for workers to become land-users in a more strategic way, but I’m not sure how to make that happen, and I feel like I could use some mentoring.

Mateo: Thank you, all great questions. I will try to weave an answer into the multiplicity of important questions you all raised, and give some examples. I’m going to name a couple of organizations I feel are doing amazing work as a point of reference.

I know Virginia and Kentucky aren’t exactly the same place, but Appalachia, being a fairly large bioregion, has an incredible expression of Just Transition work happening through an organization called [Kentuckians for the Commonwealth](#). Especially in Eastern Kentucky—coal country, mountain-top removal country—folks have, by the thousands, organized and literally been able to successfully not only confront the coal industry and mountain-top removal, but at the same time have been building multiple forms of regenerative economies that have, in essence, as I’ve mentioned before, been both dismantling the bad while building the good. Folks have really been building economies centered around worker-owned and run cooperatives that are centered not only in agriculture but also have many other manifestations, and are rooted in the working class communities in Appalachia that have borne the brunt of the extractive economy. So I name that to, given the nature of this call and the time constraints, give you a very cursory sense of these organizations and the work they are doing, and invite you to explore what it is they are doing. And Kentuckians for the Commonwealth is doing so well that one of the things I want to point out about where this is happening with highest degrees of success, is that folks are recognizing the need to meet their needs by deploying their own labor, and also recognizing the need to confront power. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth has built up a membership of thousands of people who, amongst other things, engage in civil disobedience: literally stop or prevent mountain-top removal and have worked in conjunction, in coalitions, with many organizations that have been engaged in this struggle for awhile now. Part of what I think is important for us to highlight is that as we build the alternatives—and they’re not alternatives, right, they’re imperatives if we’re to survive and thrive—is that it’s not enough just to be building them, but we also need to be confronting power in a really direct way, and KFC has found that sweet spot and is building at scale.

A second example I want to give is the work that’s happening in Richmond, California. There are several expressions, and three organizations which I’ll call out in Richmond California are [Urban Tilth](#), APEN—[Asian Pacific Environmental Network](#), and CBE—[Communities for a Better Environment](#). What makes Richmond, California unique is that it’s been a company town for almost a century. Chevron, who now has its headquarters in San Ramone, nearby, but has one of the major oil refineries on the West Coast there in Richmond, and has had political control of Richmond for a long time. What folks are doing there is confronting Chevron very directly and have reconfigured, amongst other things, the political make-up of the City Council. And Urban Tilth has very specifically reclaimed 20+ acres of vacant land in Richmond and is growing food as a way of getting people to appreciate what a regenerative economy looks like. And

what all these organizations I mentioned are doing is starting a whole worker-coop incubator to get at everything: from building out bicycle repair shops to many other things that get to the notion of what it looks like for a working class city that is historically black and brown for folks to be building out new forms of economy that we control in democratic, autonomous ways, that free us from the monopoly that has become our town, that can get us to the point of not only shutting down the refinery because its literally killing our kids from asthma and other things because the schools are literally 100 yards from the refinery, while at the same time us manifesting a degree of economic autonomy by building generative expressions of managing home well.

So those are a couple examples, I could give more. I think the final thing I want to say to the question of how to get marginal folks involved are two examples of many. So I want to challenge the notion that folks who are at the frontlines aren't involved. They are incredibly involved. I think part of what the Transition Movement is challenged to step through is the idea that Transition is happening, Transition work is happening, in many places. A lot of people simply aren't calling it that, yet, or don't identify with the Transition Towns Movement. So that's one piece of it. And I fielded this question at a recent talk where someone said, "I work at a high school, it's primarily students of color, we're trying to get the kids down with our recycling program, and we're not having very much success." The notion was like, "How do I bring people into *my* conception of how this work should be organized?" I'm paraphrasing. And my response was that the young people you're working with fully appreciate how this society and economy has deemed them as disposable. So that's you're starting point. If you're just talking about it in terms of recycling stuff, or zero waste versus consumer culture, but you're not connecting it to their lived experience, there's the rub. So again, as I was saying before, the departure point of your analysis informs your action. That this economy has decided to deem them and their families completely disposable, and starting the conversation from that point I think builds a whole other trajectory to the realm of what is possible.

*More questions...*

Participant: Mateo said something along the lines that he thinks there should be land reform, and my question is what is he suggesting.

Participant: I've got another seminar in about an hour with John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods, about how a man should know his place in the world and what he was born to contribute. What I'm looking for is a hard-hitting question about how we as a society can tell Whole Foods that using prison inmates, who are mostly men, is absolutely unacceptable. How can I show that's a microcosm of American buying from Chinese gulags and the like.

Participant: I'm interested, because I'm involved with a Board that's working on a Native American reservation, if there are any examples of this work happening in First Nation communities in the United States.

Mateo: Great, I love all three questions and will take them in order.

So first, on land reform. One of the things that is missing in the United States when we talk about social movements is getting into a deeper transformation, from what is to what needs to be. When we look at social movements in other parts of the world, Brazil and the [Landless Workers Movement](#), or internationally as [Via Campesina](#), the largest social movement in the world, is a coordinated effort, a peasant movement around the world. And they often say to allies in the US "Where is your land reform movement?" You can't manage home well unless you actually have autonomous, democratic control of home. So when I talk about land reform, I mean that we actually need to challenge the notion of how private property came to be a sacrosanct concept in the US. We, in the Transition Towns Movement, talk a lot about "the commons." And it's really "the commons" versus "enclosure," and enclosure is rooted in this colonial logic. Enclosure is the process of control and consolidation of land into private property. And all enclosures must be enforced through violence, ultimately. So when I talk about land reform, there's maybe three ways to think about it. We can ask the question "Who owns the land?" And maybe we move from "the few" to "the many." We can ask "How is land

used?” Is it for purposes of private development, or public benefit? And we can ask “How is land governed?” Is it through private process, or public process, through commons? Those are central questions, but ultimately what we need to be doing on a massive scale is taking land back. We need to seize land. We need to make it better. We need to put it into productive use, and we need to protect it forever. Again, the MST – the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil—is a great example of folks who are doing this at scale. Hundreds of thousands of families have identified land owned by huge land owners, and occupied it in a very shared form, not just doing things individually but in new expressions of how to organize human settlement that is about the “we” versus the “me.” Obviously we could speak for hours about this, but I’m really glad you asked the question.

Moving on to the next question, I’m really glad you have this call with the CEO of Whole Foods. One of the things I didn’t mention earlier is the folks who are working to challenge, confront and abolish the prison industrial complex actually have been pressing Whole Foods very strongly, like a social movement based in Texas called [End Mass Incarceration Houston](#), have been calling out Whole Foods for using prison labor and it’s become quite an embarrassment, to the point that just recently Whole Foods has come out and said that as of April 2016 they will not have any products that are produced by prison labor. So I’d start on the call by maybe commending the organizations that have made this possible, because again it was through confronting power and organizing social movement work that this happened. It happened just a few weeks ago so it’s not a done deal, but they’ve made a pledge and it’s been very embarrassing. And also, I would call him out: “Why did you distribute food to the National Guard in Baltimore rather than serving the #BlackLivesMatter movement, and what are you going to do to support #BlackLivesMatter? I think that would be a great question and I’m very curious about what he would have to say. And finally, “Why do you continually bust any efforts to form unions in your shops? Dignity of the workplace is central to being in right relationship to home and place. How can you say you are good stewards of the land and earth if you aren’t good stewards to the people who work in your shops?” He will most definitely give you a very canned response, because they pay union-busting lawyers millions and millions of dollars to fight labor organizers in their shops all the time. But nonetheless, I think it’s very important to state.

And to the final question – yes. I made an allusion to the Climate Justice Alliance, which is an alliance of almost 50 organizations at a national level who are all engaged in Just Transition work around the country. And the website can be found at [ourpowercampaign.org](#). The Climate Justice Alliance runs [Our Power Campaign](#). I named Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and Asian Pacific Environmental Network [who are part of the Climate Justice Alliance]. The [Black Mesa Water Coalition](#) in the southwest, in Navajo and Hopi land in Arizona, is a key leading organization in the Climate Justice Alliance and is doing amazing work and has successfully confronted both coal mines and coal power processing plants—which among other things have depleted water tables severely and polluted groundwater—and have both been able to shut some of these down as well as rebuild regenerative forms of traditional shepherding economy and other forms of economy that have been at the root of how regenerative economy has been organized there. So yes, Black Mesa Water Coalition is a great example, leaders in the Climate Justice Alliance. I could say a lot more about the work they’re doing, taking for example lands that have been essentially destroyed by coal companies, meaning they’re extremely polluted, and Black Mesa Water Coalition is looking to building worker-owned, fully community controlled, solar power plants at scale on the land, recognizing that there isn’t much else that can be built there, unfortunately. There are other examples – the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#) is part of the Climate Justice Alliance and are close allies to Movement Generation, they have been key to the struggle against Keystone XL and key in really raising up the folks in the Athabasca region in Western Canada where tar sands development happens. So Indigenous Environmental Network would be another go-to organization.

*More questions...*

Participant: Are there people in this area (Central Appalachia) that anyone knows of for creating community land trusts?

Participant: My question is, just from my analysis, it really seems that as white people and as privileged people, we can never understand the lived experience of people of color in oppressed communities. It almost seems like as white people we're more encouraged to find immediate solutions rather than listen, for example, to the leadership of #BlackLivesMatter or other organizations doing important social and environmental work. So I just wanted to get your perspective on what that listening process looks like and who we deem as leaders.

Participant: My question is around the "white savior" mentality, about folks who are coming from privilege and wondering "How do we save the brown people?" How do you as an organization that works with people of color combat that or ally yourselves with helping people see they're not the savior?

Marissa: After this call, I can send out some resources related to land access, as well as privilege and oppression.

Mateo: Regarding the last two questions – for those of us who have privilege, humility is a central ingredient to how we approach the work. There is a "white savior" mentality that needs to be confronted within us, and around us. We need to start from a place of appreciating that folks who have been bearing the brunt of the damage of this economy have been resisting it for hundreds of years. And there's deep wisdom in that struggle that we can look to not just as sources of inspiration, but as departure points for the work we're doing now. That should not incapacitate us, it should not paralyze us. The notion, for example, just to state an obvious control methodology that's patently untrue, is that people of color care less about the environment than white folks. But it's been built into popular culture with deep intention. So we now need to not only complicate it, we need to make visible what has been invisibilized. Folks that live in front of power plants and next to coal mines have been fighting to protect home for a really long time. Or if we look at permaculture, "permaculture" is a "new" concept that's been around for thousands and thousands of years. It's simply a methodology put together by folks who had the incredible privilege of traveling around the world and looking at how indigenous place-based cultures have been tending home forever. And it's great, it's a wonderful contribution. But to then confuse and make people think it's a white innovation is a tremendous error in process – just to name the obvious. So I think it's a) looking around us and seeing what those frontline struggles of ecological justice playing out in our community are – I'm inviting you to think about struggles of displacement and gentrification in your urban centers—to expanding your notion of this, if I haven't already. And as alluded to in the question about listening, as white allies our task is to challenge the blind spots where we see them within white communities that aren't recognizing this importance. I found it really instructive and informative to read the answers you all put forth as a collective when you registered for this call and were asked whether your Transition work is already connecting issues of race, class, and ecology. I got some really inspiring answers, and some really sincere answers like "not yet, but I would like to," and then I got some answers like these ones which I'm going to read out:

*"Race and class make little difference to me. I'm focused on how we as a species live with the rest of the planet."*

*"I'm more interested in ecological aspects than the non-scientific classifications of race and class."*

I feel that these are emblematic expressions of this privilege playing out in our movement. That is, if we have the privilege to ignore realities that are killing whole communities—that's what it is, a privilege—and to call it irrelevant to the work that we're doing, that needs to be challenged. I appreciate the question, because it's inviting us to do that as movements, and I think that's what this call is all about.

And I will end by reminding us that to get to where we want to get to is going to involve struggle. None of us like struggle – it's actually really unpleasant. But we're not going to dismantle the banks and tanks economy and build the good in its place without the resistance of those who profit from this economy.

Frederick Douglass said it well: "Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the

roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

And I want to end with this because I think there is a tendency within parts of the Transition Towns movement that think that if we only build the good where we live we’re going to be fine, and that’s simply not true. If we’re going to bring down the Monsantos, and the Shells, and the Chevrons, we’re going to need to struggle. If we’re going to dismantle the prison-industrial complex, and dismantle white supremacy, and dismantle patriarchy, there’s going to be a struggle. And the sweet spot is how we build expressions of love and care and new forms of social organizations that are built on cooperation, not competition, that inspire thousands of people to appreciate that “Yes – that is what feels right in my heart and my hands and my body when I build it, and in turn is going to make me step forth to challenge what needs to be challenged to get where we need to go.”