

THE WORKING  
CLASS  ISSUE

March 15th, 2021 - April 14th, 2021



# COLORADO

*Needs a*  
**GREEN NEW**  
*Deal*

**How we can combat  
climate change &  
guarantee jobs for  
all.**

*Illustration by Noah Tabone*

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

*Dear Neighbors,*

In 2020, we learned that hope is something we build and share ourselves. In dark times, hope is our most precious — and also our most scarce — resource. In spite of everything we’ve been through, we believe there is good reason for us to keep hope alive for creating a better world on the other side of the challenges we face.

As you know, our community is faced with unprecedented times. In the last year, Colorado Springs has felt the economic impact of the COVID pandemic, we have seen our forests shrivel and die with the climate-fueled advance of northern pine beetles, and we spent last summer choking on the smoke from climate-fueled wildfires that fed on the newly dead tinder. We enter 2021 with few solutions to these crises, not because we lack the technology and innovation to overcome them, but because our leaders lack the political will to create the changes we need.

When our leaders cater to the fossil fuel industries instead of paving the way to lower emissions and rebuild our economy with clean, renewable energy, we, the people, suffer for it. When they support policies that allow business to put profits over people, we, the people, suffer for it. And when the media fails to hold our leaders accountable for their trespasses against their citizens, we, the people, suffer it.

This is why we, the people, have decided to take the news into our own hands. No longer can we allow corporations to write our stories for us. No longer can we leave it up to cor-



**WE, THE PEOPLE, MUST WRITE OUR OWN NARRATIVES. THIS IS HOW WE CLAIM POWER FOR OURSELVES, AND HOW WE GAIN SOVEREIGNTY OVER OUR OWN LIVES.**

rupt leadership to decide what is best for our world. We are too smart, too capable, too strong to let this destruction go unchallenged, and the stakes we face are too high. We, the people, must write our own narratives. This is how we claim power for ourselves, and how we gain sovereignty over our own lives.

To overcome the enormous challenges we face and the powers that enable them, we must work together. This is why we stand in solidarity with workers of all backgrounds. We work to support marginalized and oppressed people in their struggles for climate justice; guaranteed, high-paying jobs; free universal healthcare; racial justice and equity; indigenous sovereignty; immigrant rights; an end to police brutality and mass incarceration; economic, racial, and gender equality; LGBTQ+ rights; disabled rights; reproductive rights; guaranteed housing; and a right to live a life of dignity and freedom. To achieve these victories, we stand together to demand all power go to all the people.

With all the work ahead of us, we have to start somewhere. So, we have decided to begin by advocating for a Green New Deal, which will address many of these struggles in one package.

As long as we stand together, we will always be our own best reasons to keep hope alive. It is our honor to serve our community and we look forward to working together to build a more just, livable, and equitable world.

*In Solidarity,* Jack E. Othon (she/her/ella) & *The Working Class Issue* Editorial Team

## 3 COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE GREEN NEW DEAL

### IT'LL BANKRUPT THE U.S.!

Not pursuing the Green New Deal would be a much more costly option. Disregarding the cost-benefit analysis, the continued destruction of the environment will inevitably be a worse quagmire than transforming the economy. In fact, according to Data for Progress, “Investing in building efficiency and a national smart grid for carbon mitigation would boost GDP by \$147 billion annually and create 1.1 million jobs in the first year.”

### NO PERSONAL VEHICLES!

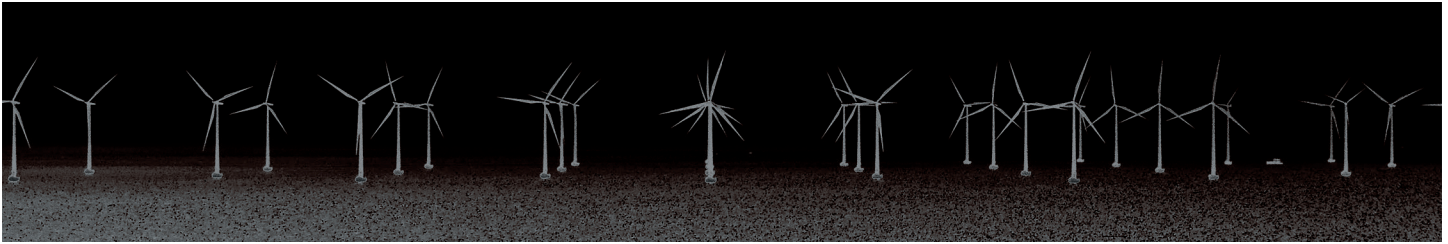
Not really, its aim is for efficiency. Private transport is horrendous in many ways, and our public sector of transportation is moribund as well. The GND’s clean approach to expanded public transit would ultimately benefit everyone, and would improve our current transit system.\*

*\*PrismReports.org: “Debunking the Myths and Misinformation about the Green New Deal.”*

### HUGE SACRIFICES!

The Green New Deal does not seek to hold each person individually accountable for climate change. Instead, it is the corporate elite as well as the systems they operate that must be held responsible for their actions. We working folk are not going to pick up the slack for the greed we can’t control. The GND does not function as a punishment, but an equalizer, a bringer of justice.\*

**BY A. BEWLEY**



## DON'T MYTH WITH TEXAS: DEBUNKING SOME COMMON MYTHS ABOUT THE TEXAS BLACKOUTS

*By Joe Mangels*

As is common knowledge by now, on February 13th, a massive winter storm caused record low temperatures and snowfall in many parts of the country, with Texas seeing the worst impacts. In the Lone Star State alone, upwards of 15 million folks lost power, 13 million lost access to clean water, and 32 people died. *So, why did Texas face the brunt of the damage and loss compared to other states?* To answer this question, let's examine some common myths floating around.

### **Myth 1: This was totally unprecedented.**

**FACT:** Texas experienced similar weather events in 1989 and 2011. Both times, the state was warned by federal regulators to winterize their energy facilities. Both times, the state of Texas ignored the warnings.

### **Myth 2: Frozen wind turbines are to blame for these outages.**

**FACT:** Despite what white supremacist Tucker Carlson may claim, wind turbines were a minor part of the problem. According to a statement made by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), wind turbines accounted for less than 13% of the total lost energy output during the storm.

### **Myth 3: Texas isn't used to cold weather, that's the only reason why this happened.**

**FACT:** To enable deregulation, the Texan power grid is separated from the Western and Eastern Interconnections, which allow all other 47 contiguous states to draw from neighboring states during an emergency. Furthermore, rather than a vertically integrated energy commission planning the distribution of energy, ERCOT acts as an auctioneer selling energy to middle-men. Because of this, wholesale energy prices are

comparatively high and it's not profitable for energy companies to winterize their facilities.

### **Myth 4: The extreme winter storm proves that climate change is a myth!**

**FACT:** The Polar Vortex is a circulation of Arctic air contained by the jet stream. As polar ice continues to melt, the temperature gradient between the poles and mid-latitudes decreases. Thus, extreme polar vortex weather events like the one in February will become increasingly common as the greenhouse effect continues to spiral.

So, what is to be done? Demonstrably, the profit motive has failed to provide the most basic needs for millions of people amid a crisis (shocking no one). The solution is twofold: Public ownership overall utilities, and adoption of a Green New Deal which would transition us to renewable energy, modernize our infrastructure, create a jobs guarantee, and many more desperately needed changes.

#### Works Cited

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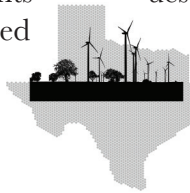
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# THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPERATIVE FOR A GREEN NEW DEAL

BY WILLIAM SMITH

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we need to keep the planet from reaching 1.5 degrees Celsius in warming. Otherwise, we will face global ecological disaster.<sup>1</sup> To do this, we must reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, a goal we are nowhere near achieving.

Thus far, those in power have only approached this impending societal calamity with gradualist, market-based strategies that see little to no pay-off. Since the public was made aware of climate change in



1988, our carbon emissions have only increased. And while corporate executives profit from ceaseless extraction and burning, billions of people - and many in our backyards - face deprivation

and death. In addition to the rising levels of wealth inequality, stagnant wages, and decreasing living standards, terrible disasters such as floods, famines, drought, and energy loss are ruining the lives of working-class families daily.

We're fast approaching a breaking point, and we need radical, imaginative solutions to address this monumental hurdle. A multi-faceted approach that addresses many modern-day adversities and can garner popular support may be our only option in staving off cataclysm. This approach is the Green New Deal.

Colorado Public Radio states that, in 2020, Colorado experienced its "third driest year on record," saw a fourth of the state in extreme drought, and lost 175,000 acres to wildfires.<sup>2</sup> Climatologists have directly attributed these historical phenomena to climate change and believe that these disasters will only increase in magnitude and frequency alongside the heating Earth.

Degrading air quality, another result of burning fossil fuels, constitutes an additional threat to our state's health. Ozone pollution comes from car emissions and industrial activities, and the EPA has linked high levels of ozone pollution to various ailments. Examples of such ailments are lung damage, chest pain, and severe respiratory problems. Recently, the American Lung Association assigned Denver an 'F' quality for levels of ozone pollution,<sup>3</sup> meaning that Denver residents are at significant risk for health problems. This pattern of rising air pollutants, however, is not isolated to Denver. It is repeating itself across Colorado and the United States at large, especially in metropolitan centers and areas near large extractive industries.

We can expect these conditions to worsen without sweeping

change to our ceaselessly extractive economy, and many Coloradans can expect to lose their land and livelihood in consequence, especially those in lower-income communities. Humanity is at risk, not just humanity in the abstract; those at risk are the people on your street and in your workplace, home, and community.

Market-based approaches to these issues have colossally failed. And how could they succeed? Fossil fuel companies are valued based on their reserves, which presently contain five times the amount of carbon we could burn without witnessing humanity's end. These same companies are given massive federal subsidies and bailouts, leaving them with no incentive to cease extraction and burning, despite their industries killing people across the planet.

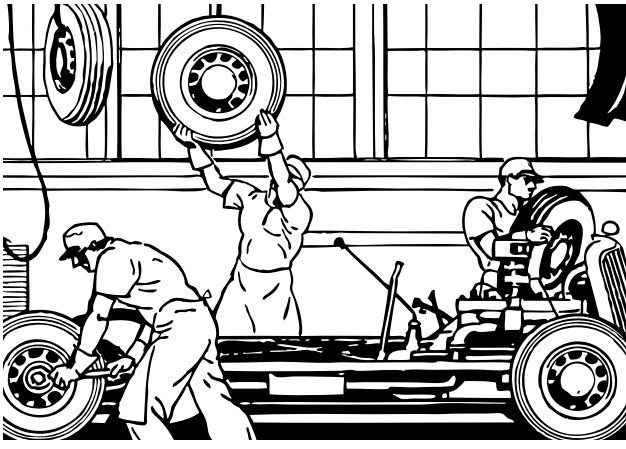
Luckily, there is an option that we can take. By structuring the economy the way the Green New Deal proposes — in a genuinely democratic, ecologically-sustainable way — we can confront these issues head-on while simultaneously offering revamped infrastructure, high-quality union jobs, accessible and affordable housing, and guaranteed healthcare nationwide.

Imagine a Colorado with environmentally friendly, publicly owned ride-sharing services and public transportation; a Colorado where union jobs, housing, and healthcare are guaranteed rights; where energy is publicly owned and guided by those in our community, rather than a few corporate executives. This is a future that is possible under the Green New Deal, and this is the future toward which we must work.

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1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Global Warming of 1.5 oC." *Ipcc.ch*, 2019.
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4. Aronoff, Kate, et al. *A Planet to Win : Why We Need Green New Deal*. London, Verso, 2019.





# LABOR IMPLICATIONS OF THE GND

BY DEREK SAWYER

Let's set aside purely environmental concerns for a bit and shift focus to the boons a Green New Deal would bring to workers in the US. By strengthening unions, providing healthcare to all Americans, and guaranteeing a job to all who want one, the Green New Deal would be a huge leap forward for labor and working-class interests.

One of the tentpoles of the Green New Deal is the strengthening of unions as we move deeper into the 21st century. Union work pays better, offers better benefits, and generally has higher workplace satisfaction rates than non-union jobs. Currently, most union labor is in skilled trades, which the included expansions to job training and education will bolster when coupled with increased demand for workers to rebuild our infrastructure. In the past, unions had to expend a lot of their negotiating power securing good healthcare for their workers. Under the Green New Deal, every American will get coverage from Medicare, freeing up labor representatives to negotiate harder for better pay and conditions.

As mentioned above, the rebuilding of American infrastructure will need a lot of workers, both skilled and unskilled. Green New Deal plans include a federal jobs guarantee, which will provide much-needed work for the substantial unemployed and underemployed populations while meeting a desperate public need. These jobs would pay a living wage, offer family, personal, and medical leave, and ensure retirement security. Providing a solid union job to anyone who wants one would allow us to effectively upgrade our nation to be both green and

fully functioning, while also promoting the development of a more equitable economy.

With any major change comes the risk of people falling through the cracks, and the Green New Deal's architects have long had an eye on that potential. It includes funding for retraining programs and education expansion, which will help smooth the transition from work in fossil fuel energy and related fields to work in industries that will be on the rise in a new green economy. Another measure being considered is a plan to replace lost wages for those hit the hardest by the shifting economy, much like was done to backstop former redwood loggers. As oceans rise, climate refugees will likely come to the US. Rather than being a competing labor force, Green New Deal initiatives will help smooth their transition into the workforce as well.

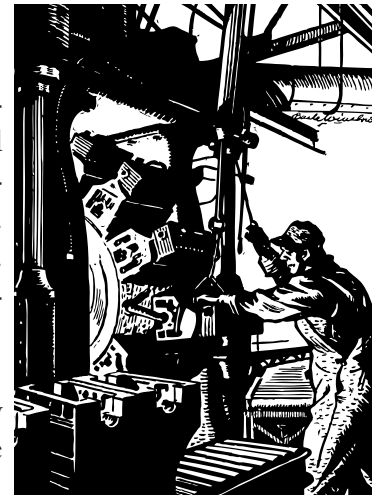
In short, workers everywhere stand to benefit from supporting a Green New Deal. It not only aims to save our environment, but it may save our economy in the process.

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## YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD TATTOO ARTIST, JOE OTHON

Deep in the belly of downtown Colorado Springs is the working lair of a tattoo madman. Only the bravest dare venture inside the walls of Pins & Needles Studio on N. Weber Street, where Joe Othon, of [Othon—Ink], works his dark ink magic. With a light touch and an art style that is at times witchy and gritty, while at other times delicate, colorful, and whimsical, Othon's work is becoming widely recognized across the city and his appointments are in high demand.

*The Working Class Issue* was fortunate enough to win a few moments of Othon's time, though it took a rather lengthy summoning ritual and a sacrifice of bourgeoisie tears to open a communication portal with the famed ink master. We asked the master for some insights into his art and the challenges that artists face to build a full time career with their work, though our editorial team is still working to decipher his cryptic answers. Here is what we've learned so far.

**Pursuing a career as a full-time artist isn't an easy thing to do. What drew you to art, and what made you want to be a professional artist?** My art was a good way to manage my A.D.D. when I was younger. Drawing and painting were the only things I could focus on, so I just kept doing them. My mom took me to art classes when I was a kid, so I blame her.

**Who or what are some of your major artistic influences?** *Dragonball Z*, *Akira*, Ralph Steadman, Alex Grey, Tim Burton, and Jhonen Vasquez were my first big influences.

**What inspires you the most with your art?** I'm going through a cyberpunk phase now, so that's my main inspiration at the moment.

**What jobs did you have to work while you built your career as an artist?** Janitor at the Fine Arts Center and server at Olive Garden.

**If you didn't have to work those jobs and could've dedicated yourself to your art full time, how do you think that would've impacted your art & ca-**

**reer?** If I didn't have to work those jobs, I might not have had as much pressure on me to succeed. Cleaning and dealing with sh\*tty people made me want to sharpen my skills as an artist and build a career where I didn't have to cater to their sh\*tteness.

**One big aspect of the Green New Deal is shifting away from a consumerist culture. The plan is to replace the consumption of goods with a focus on art, entertainment, and culture because these activities are less dependent on resource extraction and are low-carbon. If the government sponsored artists to take a more prominent role in society, how do you think that would change our culture?** I think this question is beyond me.

**What is the most important thing that artists contribute to society?** Freedom from reality.

**Do you feel hopeful for the future? Why or why not?** Yes, because robots are cool. Plus, we all get to die in the end.

Instagram: @othon\_ink

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Facebook.com/othonink



# WORKING CLASS SPEAKS



We asked three working class people the following questions: “Would you be more likely to support rebuilding infrastructure and switching to green energy if it meant a guaranteed union job for anyone who wants one, government subsidized housing, and updated public transportation? Would this policy meaningfully impact your life, and if so, how?” Here are their answers.

**E.F., Online Grocery Pickup Clerk, Walmart:** “Yes, even if there wasn’t a guaranteed anything. We need to take care of our planet, and I’m all for green energy. Yes, my brother has been homeless for a while now, so a job, home, and a way to get to work would be amazing.”

**C.P., Delivery Driver:** “Of course I would support those policies. But unions make people vulnerable to being fired because the corporations don’t want to pay a living wage. The corporations want to keep us under their thumb.” **Fact Check:** *While in today’s labor climate the process of forming a new union often leaves workers vulnerable to being terminated by anti-union employers, once unions are formed, they provide MORE protection against wrongful termination. The Green New Deal would provide strong worker protections, including workers’ rights to form unions.*

**Anonymous Worker:** “Even without the jobs guarantee, I’d support this. Green energy is the future anyway, and even though it wouldn’t help me much, subsidized housing would help a lot of people. Upgraded public transit would be life-changing since it would allow me to get around town much easier.”



LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

RENNIE DAVIS

3.24.1919 - 2.22.2021

Godfather of Beat poetry. Co-founder of City Lights Books. Anti-war advocate. Defender of free speech.

“If you would be a poet, write living newspapers. Be a reporter from outer space, filing dispatches to some supreme managing editor who believes in full disclosure and has a low tolerance for bullshit. ... And the people, the people, yes, all around the earth, speaking Babel tongues. Give voice to them all.”

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Poetry as Insurgent Art*

5.23.1940 - 2.2.2021

Anti-war activist. Vietnam War protest organizer. Defendant in the trial of the “Chicago Eight.”

## WATCH



## READ



## LISTEN

### Books

*A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green New Deal* by Kate Aronoff et. al, Verso Books, 2019

### Videos

*The Intercept:* “A Message From the Future with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez” & “A Message From the Future II: The Years of Repair.” Available on YouTube.

### Podcasts

*Citations Needed:* Ep. 121: Climate Chaos, Part I & Ep. 122: Climate Chaos, Part II. Available on Apple Podcasts & Spotify.

### Articles

*Jacobin Magazine:* “Organizing to Win a Green New Deal” by Jane McAlevey, 3.26.19. Available on the Jacobin website.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 20th:** People's Climate Tribunal Part II: The People v. The State, 12:00 PM

**March 23rd:** Service Workers Organizing Panel w/Augie's Union & Wild Neighbors Workers, 6:30 PM

**March 24th:** Worker's Rights & the PRO Act: Socialist Night School, 7:00 PM

**March 27th:** Building Capacity & Developing Leadership Skills Training, 9:00 AM

**April 5th:** Structured Organizing Conversations Training, 5:30 PM

*All events will be online. Please visit [Facebook.com/SpringsDSA](https://www.facebook.com/SpringsDSA) to register.*

## Chinook Center

### Announcing People's College 2021!

We are gearing up to start our second year of People's College -- education for the people, by the people. People's College will run from April through June of 2021. If you would like to participate, we are currently seeking proposals for presentations and workshops. If you have a skill or knowledge you would like to share, please contact [info@chinookcenter.org](mailto:info@chinookcenter.org).

The Chinook Center is launching the second annual People's College in Colorado Springs. This educational series brings together volunteers, educators, community activists and justice workers to share skills and knowledge in a 3 month long semester covering a wide range of educational presentations and hands-on workshops. All are free and open to the public and will include in-person and online options.

People's College aims to create a forum to share the skills and knowledge of people working for social change in this community. But the series is not just for those who are already plugged into activism. People's College is also designed to create an opportunity for those who just want to learn more about what's happening and gain some practical skills for making an impact in their community, even if they have no prior experience. People's College offers folks an opportunity to learn about an issue and meet others interested in the same issue. The goal is to bring people together, learn from each other and build from what each person brings toward a bigger collective body of knowledge.

### OUR WRITERS

**Jack E. Othon (she/her/ella)** graduated from UCCS with a Bachelor's in English in 2012.

**Joe Mangels (he/him)** is from St. Louis, and as an Earth science teacher, helping others to have a greater appreciation for the natural world is his greatest passion.

**A. Bewley (he/him)** is a member of *The Working Class Issue* editorial team.

**William Smith (he/him)** is co-chair of Colorado Springs DSA, Sociology major at UCCS, and political organizer within the southern Colorado area.

**Derek Sawyer (he/him)** is a working-class stiff who likes guillotines and tabletop RPGs.

### PEOPLE'S GROCERY

*People's Grocery is a free grocery distribution that runs every Sunday from 12-2 at the Chinook Center. The program is supported by donations and community collaboration! We have recently launched a delivery as well for those with limited transportation. Check out [chinookcenter.org](http://chinookcenter.org) for more info.*



*The Working Class Issue* is written and published by Colorado Springs DSA, an official chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. From our national website: "Democratic socialists believe that both the economy and society should be run democratically—to meet public needs, not to make profits for a few. To achieve a more just society, many structures of our government and economy must be radically transformed through greater economic and social democracy so that ordinary Americans can participate in the many decisions that affect our lives."

If you'd like to get involved, visit [act.dsusa.org](http://act.dsusa.org) to become a member!