

Inclusion of Frontline Communities in the Sunrise Movement

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Abstract

Environmental activism and climate activism have a long history in the United States. Historically the membership of the environmental movement was white, old, educated and mostly male. This history led to the exclusion of communities of color, low income communities and indigenous communities from the mainstream climate movement. The Sunrise Movement is a youth climate movement, founded in 2017, fighting for the futures of young people in the face of the climate crisis. Sunrise has the unique angle of representing youth as a frontline to the future of the climate crisis, but as a movement how are they uplifting other frontline communities such as people of color, low income communities, island populations and beyond? How does the Sunrise Movement uplift and center frontline communities in their organizations, what are their tactics, where are they challenged and how are they succeeding?

I interviewed 11 current leaders within the Sunrise movement and asked them if Sunrise succeeded at uplifting and centering frontline communities and where they were challenged. Common themes came up for many participants, Sunrise embraces storytelling as a form of narrative around climate justice, but they tend to tokenize frontline voices. Urgency is necessary for the Sunrise Movement to act on the climate crisis, but Sunrise must curb their speed in order to focus on inclusion as a movement goal. Sunrise knows they cannot win a Green New Deal or mitigate climate change alone, they need to stand with frontline-led movements to accomplish this type of change. Sunrise was started by college educated and majority white young people, will they succeed in changing and shaping their climate movement towards climate justice?

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Introduction

"I've never felt so called to something in my life."¹
~ Neveah, 23, Sunrise Movement hub coordinator

Now, more than ever, young people are rising up around the world to demand action against climate change. Young people in the United States are standing up and demanding change because of their concern for their future as humans on the planet. Challenging the systems in the world through collective action is not new, and the climate justice movement is gaining popularity among young people from all backgrounds in the United States.

The youth climate movement comes from college campuses, public schools, community centers, libraries and in virtual space along with other types of community spaces. Climate movements are broad and they encompass many different angles of activism. Climate leaders, young and old, work to take charge of systems that do not serve them and move towards ones that do. Climate activism today, as in the past twenty years, comes from the necessity to fight for the future of the most vulnerable people. Climate justice deepens the concern for communities on the frontline of the climate crisis such as communities of color, low income communities and indigenous communities. Climate justice recognizes that the groups of people who created human induced climate change feel the smallest effects, while the most vulnerable communities, least responsible, on the frontline, are experiencing the worst.

In 2017, A group of college students, angry at Donald Trump's election, fearing for the future of the planet with an unchecked climate crisis, came together out of the college fossil fuel divestment movement and formed the Sunrise Movement.² The Sunrise Movement responded to

¹ Neveah, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, February 5, 2020.

² Witt, Emily, "The Optimistic Activists for a Green New Deal: Inside the Youth-Led Singing Sunrise Movement | The New Yorker," December 23, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-optimistic-activists-for-a-green-new-deal-inside-the-youth-led-singing-sunrise-movement>.

the fear for the future of the planet and humanity by proposing solutions that were the size of the problem and building people power to fight back. The Sunrise Movement was built by predominately white, middle and upper middle class, college educated young people in the United States.

The climate movement and environmental movement in the United States have a history of whiteness and exclusive behavior towards people living on the frontline of the environmental crisis. With the history of white environmentalists and colonization comes a parallel history of frontline communities and people of color fighting for inclusion in the mainstream environmental movement and building their own environmental and climate justice movements.

The Sunrise Movement states that they are a group of young people fighting for a safe future for all. As a climate movement they are continuing the fight against the climate crisis, but are they including a fight for racial justice, class justice and climate justice in their work? Is Sunrise including the communities which will be targeted the first and the worst by climate change? How does the Sunrise Movement uplift and center frontline communities in their organization, what are their tactics, where are they challenged and how are they succeeding?

Chapter 1: Environmentalism to Climate Justice

The Environmental Teach In

Senator Gaylord Nelson was born in 1916, on the backdrop of rural Wisconsin.³ In 1969, he spoke about his concern for the environment as industry continued to threaten the quality and viability of life in the United States of America.⁴ Senator Nelson represented Wisconsin in the Senate, and on October 8th, 1969 he addressed congress and proposed the first nationwide Environmental Teach In. This Environmental Teach In was not coming from a vacuum, but from the mass environmental destruction Nelson saw, while watching industry and chemical management in the United States lay waste to the natural world around him. His contemporaries, Dr. Samuel Hays at University of Pittsburg was developing works based on the industrialization of the United States and conservation. Hays' work along with Nelson's paired the struggle of environmentalists and the conservation movement with the danger of development and pollution from industry in the United States. They are an example of environmental activists during the middle of the 20th century.

Senator Nelson was born in the north of Wisconsin and he was an avid conservationist before serving as a US senator in the 1960⁵. When Nelson spoke to Congress on October 8th, he was not primarily focusing on the traditional American conservation narrative, he was beginning to address the concerns for the livable future. He put forth the outline for a national teach in day

³ Board of Regents at the University of Wisconsin System Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies, "Meet Gaylord Nelson," Gaylord Nelson and Earth Day, accessed January 6, 2020, <http://www.nelsonearthday.net/nelson/index.php>.

⁴ Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System and Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, "A Proposal Reprinted across the Country," Gaylord Nelson and Earth Day, 157, accessed January 6, 2020, <http://www.nelsonearthday.net/earth-day/proposal.php>.

⁵ Board of Regents at the University of Wisconsin System Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies, "Meet Gaylord Nelson."

every year solely for the purpose of securing a day for action and education on environmental concerns, building an environmental movement. Nelson quoted Biologist Barry Commoner, “We don't really know what the long-term effects of various types of environmental deterioration will be, and the kids are the guinea pigs.”⁶ Commoner spoke to the nature of the Environmental Teach In, young people are going to be inheriting the environmental disasters the United States and it is time that corporations and the government were made aware of this destruction.

Nelson's address to Congress on October 8th 1969, was the beginning of the largest day of environmental activism ever seen in United States. Many important movements and moments came before Senator Gaylord Nelson's call to action. Rachel Carson's famous book *Silent Spring* was released in 1962 outlining the terrors of the insecticide DDT.⁷ Carson's recent publication predicting the extinction that would occur by the use of hazardous chemicals was a wake up cry to the government, industry and chemical companies in the United States. Her work demanded a stop what they were doing and to begin to focus on the realities of their actions. Nelson also drew on the collective power of the antiwar movement to kickstart his idea.⁸

From the initial proposal of the Environmental Teach In, Nelson began to hire various young people to realize his plan. Nelson noted in various addresses and speeches that the Environmental Teach In should not be his creation, but should be made up of young organizers and college students. Dennis Hayes, a Harvard graduate student was the first national staff member and developer of Nelson's ideas. Hayes scouted and employed many different environmental and social justice concerned young organizers from all of the United States to

⁶ Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System and Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, “A Proposal Reprinted across the Country.”

⁷ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 40th anniversary ed., 1st Mariner Books ed (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

⁸ “When Earth Day Changed the World,” MSNBC, April 19, 2015, <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/what-the-original-earth-day-can-teach-us>.

work with him. These eight idealist young people, as Hayes refers to them, were sent out to recruit, gather and inform college students and communities young and old about the Environmental Teach In, which became quickly known as Earth Day.⁹

Nelson and Hayes set the date of Earth Day to be April 22nd, 1970, because this day was before students had final papers and examinations and after classes had finished, it was a time when there were no public holidays and when people were available.¹⁰ On January 18th, 1970 an advertisement ran in the New York Times, it stated in bold block letters, “April 22nd. Earth Day.”¹¹

This published ad contained the goals of the first Earth Day, they stated the need for community members to drive the movement, not simply the organizers or the government, but the need for change must come from communities all over the US. “We can help, but the initiative must come from each community.”¹² The first Earth Day outlined the importance of the initiative for each action and teach in to come out of the needs of local communities. The ad continued by writing down environmental concerns on minds of most of the United States in 1970. DDT, toxic waste, declining wildlife populations appeared in the ad along with the names of the organizers and leadership team of the Environmental Teach Ins from Michigan, New Mexico, Harvard, Stanford, Bucknell, Iowa and Missouri.¹³

Among the coordinators that Dennis Hayes hired was Arturo Sandoval. He was a self-identified Hispanic, radical organizer from the New Mexico and worked hard to convince Hayes

⁹ Rocky Barker-McClatchy Newspapers, “Marking the Day 40 Years Ago When the Green Revolution Began,” mcclatchydc, accessed January 6, 2020, <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/national/article24579817.html>.

¹⁰ Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System and Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, “A Proposal Reprinted across the Country.”

¹¹ The Environmental Teach In, “April 22. Earth Day.,” *The New York Times*, January 18, 1970.

¹² The Environmental Teach In.

¹³ The Environmental Teach In.

that the most strategic move was to send him back to his community of Albuquerque and to deploy news crews with him. On April 22, 1970, three different television stations sent members to walk with Arturo Sandoval through the dirt roads and adobe houses in his home city. He spoke to CBS during the march, "We are going to make people understand that the kind of things that cause air pollution and water pollution are the same kinds of things that cause poverty, that cause hunger in this county.¹⁴"

Sandoval took the message a step farther than concern for the insects and birds because of DDT or concern for the earth due to the threat of Nuclear Warfare. He noted that environmental health is directly tied to the health of poor people and people living in areas with waste and bad water quality. He made an argument for the assessment of poverty and class and even race being tied to the health of the environment and America's allocation of money and resources.

Arturo Sandoval spoke to national environmental concerns and the unequitable pressure placed on low income communities and communities of color in New Mexico. Sandoval's interview with CBS was a national call to environmental justice. In fact, many of the elements that made April 22nd have the twenty million people turnout nationwide¹⁵ was due to the decentralized, community focused organizing that the Environmental Teach In employed. Sandoval stood on a platform demanding environmental justice for his community, an end to poverty and health inequality in Albuquerque and the United States; his voice and platform did not resonate with the majority of the white environmental movement. This is a moment where the mainstream environmental movement made a choice to give space for an intersectional

¹⁴ Rocky Barker, "Marking the Day 40 Years Ago When the Green Revolution Began," McClatchy Newspapers, etc

¹⁵ "When Earth Day Changed the World."

environmental justice movement, but then not continue to fight for poor people and people of color.

Environmental Movements and Environmental Justice

Nelson's Earth Day moved millions of people to action because they felt connected to people like them. Communities were self-organized to tackle their major problems and concerns in the name of Earth Day, saving the planet, rallying for environmental protections at local and state levels, engaging in community action in their neighborhoods, and for some fighting for radical lifestyle change.

On October 8th 1969 Earth Day was conceived, but the environmental movement in the United States was over hundreds of years old. One of the beginning places of the environmental movement in the United States was conservation movements. Conservation organizations such as the Sierra Club focused on the natural world as its own entity, to be protected and preserved from humans and industrial activity that was destructive.

The Sierra Club began in 1892 with president John Muir, the famous conservationist, and they prevented the boundary of Yosemite from being minimized by the US government.¹⁶ John Muir is often considered the father of preservation and a "disciple of [Henry David] Thoreau."¹⁷ He was one of the co-founders of the Sierra Club and his work promoted, at times, racism and white supremacy through land grabbing with his conservation efforts. In his journal culmination book, *The Eight Wilderness Discoveries Books*, written by Muir, he refers to the indigenous

¹⁶ "Sierra Club Timeline - History - Sierra Club," accessed January 7, 2020, <http://vault.sierraclub.org/history/timeline.aspx>.

¹⁷ Julian Brave NoiseCat, "The Environmental Movement Needs to Reckon with Its Racist History," *Vice* (blog), September 13, 2019, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bjwvn8/the-environmental-movement-needs-to-reckon-with-its-racist-history.

people in Yosemite “as most ugly and some altogether hideous.”¹⁸ Later he notes that “they [Indigenous people] seemed to have no right place in the landscape, and I was glad to see them fading out of sight down the pass.”¹⁹ The racism seen here, demonstrates the connection colonizing Europeans had with the land they were on, seeing it as a wild empty land to be protected from humans, not a home destroyed. Displacement of community through preservation also effected poor people and rural white communities as well.

This brand of environmental conservation for the sake of ‘saving the land’ from humans takes the idea of humans as part of nature and removes them from the landscape in the minds of European Americans. In the 19th and 20th centuries, this type of saving place over working with indigenous people was far too common, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy and the Wilderness Society along with many other national movements worked to conserve perceived wild land and turn it into conservation land or parkland. As scholar Edwardo Lao Rhodes states, “[The] mainstream environmental organizations have tended to focus on things, rather than people.”²⁰ Rhodes noted that the movement as a whole began through concern about extraction and protection and viewed people as a “homogenous mass: if one benefits they all benefit.”²¹ William Cronon, in his paper *the Trouble with Wilderness* offers a perspective of wilderness as a manmade idea to reflect the desires of humanity and not a true reality.²²

“[Wilderness] is a product of that civilization, and could hardly be contaminated by the very stuff

¹⁸ Eric Michael Johnson, “How John Muir’s Brand of Conservation Led to the Decline of Yosemite,” Scientific American Blog Network, accessed January 7, 2020, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/primate-diaries/how-john-muir-s-brand-of-conservation-led-to-the-decline-of-yosemite/>.

¹⁹ Johnson.

²⁰ Edwardo Lao Rhodes, *Environmental Justice in America a New Paradigm* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 30.

²¹ Rhodes, 30.

²² William J Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 1995), 69–90.

of which it is made. Wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural.”²³

In Carolyn Finney’s book *Black faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*, she notes the construct of “white wilderness.”²⁴ This concept comes from the foundation of national environmental movements being focused on white men and the connections to wild lands²⁵. The idea that preserving wild land for the use of future generations is not totally evil, but the trends in national environmental movements today are ones that continue to value the perceived wild, and “untouched” spaces over the health and wellbeing of people and only recently has that started to change.²⁶ Donald Worster in, *Wilderness of History* notes that America has fallen into a pattern of valuing land over people but even more so profits over land. The need to reckon with this history is vital to begin fight for the people on the land and not only the land itself.²⁷

Around the turn of the 20th century the environmental movement was picking up force. By the 1960’s and Rachel Carson’s famous work *Silent Spring*, the movement as a whole grew by millions of people. The people filling out the movement through the Sierra Club, Audubon Society and the Nature Conservancy were primarily white, middle aged and upper middle class,²⁸ despite Nelson’s Earth Day pushing a social justice focus. At this time, the Sierra Club worked to establish more and more national conserved area such as the coastline of California and many different areas in Alaska²⁹. The Sierra Club was not alone in its work, they were one of

²³ Cronon, 69.

²⁴ Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 2.

²⁵ Finney, 3.

²⁶ NoiseCat, “The Environmental Movement Needs to Reckon with Its Racist History.”

²⁷ Donald Worster, “The Wilderness of History,” in *Wild Earth: Wild Ideas for a World out of Balance*, ed. Tom Butler (Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed, 2002), 221–29.

²⁸ Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces*, 26.

²⁹ “Sierra Club Timeline - History - Sierra Club.”

ten national conservation-focused environmental organizations who called themselves Group of Ten.³⁰

Group of Ten began in 1981, over ten years after the first monumental Earth Day, in response to the growth in the environmental movement and need for a coalition between all the mainstream organizations. They were the ten largest mainstream environmental movements at the time in the United States and included the Wilderness Society and the Audubon Society³¹. These ten environmental organizations represented the mainstream environmental movement as it worked to involve the government and other large entities such as chemical companies, hunting and game organizations, national resource management groups and other large mainstream and industrial entities. Compared to the original Earth Day actions, which called out corporations and chemical companies, Group of Ten was not a group of radical movements looking to take down the types of environmental dangers that existed in corporate America. They were not made up of young people fighting for justice, but a group of Big Greens looking to grow rapidly within the status quo.

On March 16th in 1990, a letter was sent to Group of Ten, now nicknamed “the Grassroots Letter to the Big Greens.”³² This letter was addressed to a long list of recipients who included, the Executive Director of the Sierra Club and five regional directors, the Executive Director of the National Wildlife Federation, the CEO of Friends of the Earth, the Executive Director of Environmental Defense Fund, The President and a number of executives from the Audubon Society, the President of the Wilderness Society, members of the state government in

³⁰ Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D.C: Island Press, 1993), 117.

³¹ Gottlieb, 123.

³² Harvey, Samantha, “A Movement Without Letters,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, August 15, 2016, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/a_movement_without_letters#.

Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado, as well as the director of the National Parks and Conservation Association³³.

This letter came from a group of people from all over the Southwestern United States, made up of members of a multitude of organizations, but called their coalition the Southwest Organizing Project. The letter called out the environmental movement's whiteness and colonizing history in the United States. This twelve page letter outlined the concerns of the one hundred and three signatories on the lack of attention paid to the inequalities seen in their movement. The members ranged from Albuquerque to Virginia to New York City and back to the Midwest, the group came about because of the lack of voice they felt they had in the direction and decisions of the mainstream environmental movement. The letter was blunt and called out Group of Ten and other similar organizations for poorly representing the interests, rights and liberties of communities of color and low income communities.³⁴

These one hundred and three individuals represented organizations as well as themselves. Some were Rabbis and Reverends, some were activists from urban areas, some were rural activists, some were filmmakers, some Hispanics organizers, some were HIV/AIDS activists, some were professors and some were parents. The list is a true definition of what a collective or coalition looks like, one that serves the interests of communities of color, low income people and other frontline communities constituted by members with many different reasons for pushing the agenda.

They began with a direct list of the types of practices that these organizations had been employing and the ways they were affecting the environment. They called out the National

³³ SouthWest Organizing Project, "Letter to Mr. Jay D. Hair, President of the National Wildlife Federation.," March 16, 1990, 12, <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/swop.pdf>.

³⁴ SouthWest Organizing Project, 3.

Wildlife Federation in engaging in debt-for-land swaps with states and foreign countries that owed money to indigenous communities whose land they took around the world. They called out the Nature Conservancy for banning grazing on recently acquired land, and so labeling long-established Chicano farmers as poachers. They called out the Sierra Club for purchasing land to preserve and destroying and ignoring the indigenous history and people who lived on the land therefore endangering the community further.³⁵

The end of the “Grassroots Letter to the Big Greens” was punctuated by calling out Group of Ten for knowingly accepting money and support from oil companies and chemical companies that endanger people of color. They raised the important point that the white environmental movement insisted that people of color had just recently “realized” that environmental impacts of humanity are a problem. Ignoring the idea that communities of color have been on the frontline for a long time experiencing firsthand the challenges of environmental degradation on their health and jobs. And finally they demanded that Group of Ten “cease operations in communities of color within 60 days, until you have hired leaders from those communities to the extent that they make up between 35-40 percent of your entire staff.” And “We are asking that Third World leaders be hired at all levels of your operations.”³⁶ This demand called upon the mainstream environmental organizations to cease funding any sort of projects in communities of color and working in communities of color until at least 35% of the staff in all levels of each chapter of each organization were people of color.

These demands demonstrated the official cry to action that many organizations received from people of color in the 1990s as the environmental movement was called upon to examine its whiteness. They asked specifically and pointedly that Group of Ten stop all types of investments

³⁵ SouthWest Organizing Project, 2.

³⁶ SouthWest Organizing Project, 3.

and projects in their communities until they changed their employment base. They ended with this note “It is our opinion that people of color in the United States and throughout the world are clearly endangered species. Issues of environmental destruction are issues of our immediate and long term survival.”³⁷

Why was the subject of race and class so far from the mainstream environmental movement? As made clear by the letter sent to Group of Ten, there was not a mention of race or class in the demands the movement brought to government or corporations. The Big Greens avoided the question of social justice in their work in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1970s, major environmental wins took place for all people, such as the Clean Air Act or the Clean Water Act. These benefited people of color, middle class white people and poor people positively.

Environmental action and policy brought about by the mainstream environmental community and the government can benefit all people, the danger is overlooking the needs of poor people or people of color. The preservation of the Redwood forest was benefiting the United States population, but so would banning lead paint from urban communities.³⁸ Both of these environmental actions have benefits to society, but the mainstream and predominantly white and middle class environmental movement was focused on the saving of “wild lands” over the saving of their oppressed neighbors.

This parallel between the work that these organizations center, saving animals and endangered species and the Endangered Species Act, versus the plight of frontline communities, communities of color and low income communities being in a state of emergency and at risk of extinction is a powerful one. This letter was not written in a vacuum and by the time 1991 came

³⁷ SouthWest Organizing Project, 4.

³⁸ Rhodes, *Environmental Justice in America a New Paradigm*, 32.

around, the call for inclusion of people of color in the environmental movement was loud and came from an expanding number of organizers.

Scholar and activist Dr. Dorceta Taylor outlined the idea of the environmental “Concern Gap” between white and black people on their perceived concerns for the environment.³⁹ This Gap has been studied through many lens by many scholars and Taylor’s 1989 paper came to the conclusion that there are many reasons for this perception of race being a large determinant of who is concerned and focused on the environmental movement. Taylor looked at the Concern Gap and her research took this idea a step further and looked at the difference between whites and blacks in concern vs action taken. This paper serves as an interesting addition to the “Grassroots letter to Big Greens” considering most of the signatures on that document were people of color and stated major concern for the environment and the future of the planet.

This perceived “Concern Gap” was made up of data from the majority white environmental movement. The Gap spoken about in Taylor’s 1989 article was made up of surveys and statistics coming from primarily white organizations and the history of these surveys and samples are unclear.⁴⁰ The data and ways of quantifying concern about the environment are not suited to understand the complex ways communities of color grapple with environmental challenges. She found that looking at an Action Gap was a better indicator of the privilege of time and resources which whites had to take action on environmental concern. Thus Taylor disputed the fact the black communities are not concerned, but that they do not often have the resources to take action.⁴¹

³⁹ Dorceta E. Taylor, “Blacks and the Environment: Toward an Explanation of the Concern and Action Gap between Blacks and Whites,” *Environment and Behavior* 21, no. 2 (1989): 175.

⁴⁰ Taylor, “Blacks and the Environment.”

⁴¹ Rhodes, *Environmental Justice in America a New Paradigm*, 34–35.

Rhodes notes that these surveys on environmental concern conducted by Roper in the 1990s, the framing of the questions lead the survey participants to not fully explain their feelings on the topics of environmental concerns. Surveying people of color on their involvement in environmental organizations was not an accurate assessment of concern. Beyond simply the facts that white dominated environmental movements had the potential to be not welcoming, highly uncomfortable spaces for people of color, the measure of what constituted an environmental concern was narrow and included national park land use and not crime rates and air pollution.⁴² The idea that white environmentalists are the only people who understand environmental problems and concerns in 1990 was about to be greatly disproven.

The movement and energy started by the Southwest Organizing project and their letter directed toward Group of Ten, continued into 1991. From October 24rd-27th of 1991, three hundred members of communities of color from Canada, Puerto Rico, various parts of Central and South America, and all over the United States formed a summit in Washington DC. The First National People of Color Environmental Justice Leadership Summit was a convening of people and organizations from all types of justice work coming together to join in the power of the collective.⁴³ The Summit worked through many different types of environmental problems and concerns with the general theme of the environment and justice. The concerns that drove most of the activists, religious leaders, teachers and others to the summit was the bleak condition of living on toxic waste.⁴⁴

The concerns of toxic waste came up in and throughout the opening address of the conference by Dana Alston, an activist leader and author working in racial and environmental

⁴² Rhodes, 75.

⁴³ Dana Alston, "The Summit: Transforming a Movement," *The Environment*, 2010, 14.

⁴⁴ Alston, 13.

justice, the keynote speaker. She noted that over all of the country and continent, people of color and poor people were subjected to living on and near hazardous waste from all types of chemical industry and land fill. The correlations between people living on hazardous waste and poor people were very clearly present. Environmental concerns, as Alston notes, are questions of health and illness survival rates, preservation of the natural or “wild” environment are secondary.⁴⁵

Environmental Justice was not only in the title of the event, but the culmination of work from the all the participants. Environmental Justice as a concept came out of the First National People of Color Environmental Justice Summit. The summit ended with a ratification of the *Principles of Environmental Justice*.⁴⁶ Seventeen principles outlined the concerns and avenues of awareness for white, mainstream environmental organizers to interact with. The preamble to the list of Principles introduced the reason behind the Principles of Environmental Justice and what the stakes were from all the different groups and people represented at the Summit.⁴⁷

The preamble stated multiple goals of the Principles, and some of them echo the demands made to Big Greens by the Southwest Organizing Collective,⁴⁸ demanding a place for people of color in the mainstream environmental movement.⁴⁹ The preamble states its goals are to re-establish spiritual connection with nature, to respect and celebrate cultures of indigenous and minority communities, to ensure environmental justice, promote economic alternatives to extractive and oppressive occupations and promote environmentally safe livelihoods. Towards

⁴⁵ Alston, 17.

⁴⁶ People of Color Environmental Justice Summit, “Principles of Environmental Justice,” October 24, 1991, <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>.

⁴⁷ People of Color Environmental Justice Summit.

⁴⁸ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Letter to Mr. Jay D. Hair, President of the National Wildlife Federation.”

⁴⁹ Harvey, Samantha, “A Movement Without Letters.”

the end the preamble mentions that they are here to ensure liberation from the past 500 years of colonization, and to bring about returning land sovereignty to indigenous people⁵⁰.

These goals take the demand of acceptance into the mainstream environmental movement a step farther. The demands are shifting toward the creation of a new movement, an environmental justice movement, that goes far beyond simply accepting people of color into a preexisting movement but organizing to create and build a movement where people of color, reparations and reconciliation are the central goals and motives for action. One where saving land and wild areas comes from the need to restore stolen land in partnership with indigenous communities and preserve sacred spaces and not from a conservationist perspective of human interaction as degradation.

Author Patricia Limerick notes that “Broadening the environmental movement in order to include the great diversity of the national population requires a full reckoning with its history.”⁵¹ The mainstream movement must do more than simply accept people of color into it, it must understand the history and past of colonizing the United States and the world and begin repairing the damage environmentalism has caused. Within the preamble to the Principles of Environmental Justice, it is made clear that the sacred and the spirituality of natural spaces and places must be restored. The relationships of people of color and nature, specifically African American people, as Finney notes, have been worn away through the enslavement of people and the outdoors no longer being a place of leisure to those with that traumatic history.⁵² The great forests and wilderness of the United States was not a place for relaxation but one where danger would follow. Additionally, land was promised to African Americans but never given and

⁵⁰ People of Color Environmental Justice Summit, “Principles of Environmental Justice.”

⁵¹ Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces*, 24.

⁵² Finney, 29.

therefore reparations have a long way to go until land is something that each American feels a similar amount of ownership or rights to use.⁵³ This colonized history has to be reckoned with by the greater mainstream environmental movement. This history is the very center of the Environmental Justice movement as written about by the 300 members of the First National People of Color Environmental Justice Movement in 1991.

The Principles of Environmental Justice outline the essence of the preamble in greater detail. Principle 6 demands that toxic waste dumps are cleaned by the companies who dump there and that corporations compensate the health problems of those most affected by living near or on these dumps. Principle 10 demands that the government approach environmental policy with awareness that they can promote genocide and harm human rights and therefore should be examined under a closer lens. Principle 13 requires the government to use truthful informed consent when experimenting on people of color or in and around their communities, so that the potential harm is understood by both entities before new experimental programs take place. Finally, Principle 17 calls for longevity of the movement for environmental justice and the commitment to future generations while changing the current economic model to do this.⁵⁴

Environmental justice, built from the work of many communities all over the United States and the world, began the call for deep, permanent change within the mainstream environmental movement. Environmental justice is defined by many principles above, but since 1991, the definition has changed from the one set by the Summit. Environmental justice comes from the tension between moving forward into a just future, building equity into the environmental movement and the world and centering the types of concerns that are central to people of color, low income people and frontline communities, and looking back.

⁵³ Taylor, "Blacks and the Environment," 186.

⁵⁴ People of Color Environmental Justice Summit, "Principles of Environmental Justice."

The past is an essential place to consider when looking for environmental justice. Past injustice needs to be understood before moving into a future trying to build a just movement. Rhodes notes that most people agree when defining environmental justice that it looks deeply into the government and their past. What can the government do to repair the types of injustices that occurred throughout the history of the environmental movement?⁵⁵

The EPA defines environmental justice using the term fair. The idea of fairness ties to the idea of equality, but not necessarily equity. “Fair treatment implies that no population of people should be forced to shoulder a disproportionate share of the negative environmental impacts.”⁵⁶ Fair is a good first step, but still is vague, who is measuring fairness? When equal treatment is not equitable, then what happens? Scholar David Schlosberg notes that equity is the key statement in any definition of environmental justice. Environmental justice was never only about maldistributions of toxic waste, poor air quality and lack of potable water, but stating communities of color and poor communities are more in danger of these environmental injustices than richer white communities.⁵⁷

The questions of class, immigration status, gender, education level arise and demonstrate the plurality of the environmental justice movement.⁵⁸ Schlosberg’s concept of plurality reflects the sentiment of intersectionality.⁵⁹ Intersectionality being the acknowledgement that social categories such as race, gender and class can belong to the same person and place them in a new and different social category of standing. Plurality looks at the different mechanisms of injustice that make up the need for environmental justice. Injustice exists in, in between, and around

⁵⁵ Rhodes, *Environmental Justice in America a New Paradigm*, 17.

⁵⁶ Rhodes, 19.

⁵⁷ David Schlosberg, “Theorising Environmental Justice: The Expanding Sphere of a Discourse,” *Environmental Politics* 22, no. 1 (February 2013): 38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2013.755387>.

⁵⁸ Schlosberg, 39.

⁵⁹ Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

different environmental and social justice issues. Plurality becomes an investigation into environmental justice and all of the complexities continue to define the term as a set of experiences⁶⁰.

Environmental racism is a term that comes from the investigation into environmental justice. Environmental racism indicates the intersection of race and environmental injustice.⁶¹ Environmental racism looks at the human rights such as clean air and water and notes the connection of who has excess to these necessary resources and how communities of color make up a large percent of people who are lacking these necessities.⁶² Environmental racism is a substantial finding and facet of environmental justice, noting the institution of racism in the United States is necessary to bring about environmental justice.⁶³

Finally, environmental justice includes the idea of participatory justice. Participatory justice meaning that without a seat at the table or a major voice in solving of toxic waste problems, poor air quality, poverty, and environmental concerns, there will never be environmental justice, people who experience the worst effects must be the ones making the decisions and choices of how to end them. The quest for environmental justice is not just an assessment of the negative impacts on a community by the community, but a closer look at the lack of positive infrastructure and plans to change that.

Are there parks and available green space for people to relax and play? Urban garden and farm locations or plans to put them in place? How are indigenous relationships with their land, are they being healed by sovereignty returned to the people, and how does that manifest in the

⁶⁰ Schlosberg, "Theorising Environmental Justice," 40.

⁶¹ Rhodes, *Environmental Justice in America a New Paradigm*, 14.

⁶² Vann R. Newkirk II, "Environmental Racism Is Real, According to Trump's EPA," *The Atlantic*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/the-trump-administration-finds-that-environmental-racism-is-real/554315/>.

⁶³ Rhodes, *Environmental Justice in America a New Paradigm*, 15.

community? These are some of the questions that the investigation into environmental justice considers and places in the forefront of the conversation.⁶⁴

One definition notes that the environment should be defined as “where we live work and play.”⁶⁵ Environmental impacts affect daily life and it is essential that these impacts are noted in such a way as to uplift everyone to a safer environmental standard, which is not defined by the conservation movement.

The movement toward environmental justice continued throughout the 1990s and grew through pressure from the communities who began it and blossomed through the spread of environmental justice groups in cities and rural areas all over the United States. In April of 1997, twenty-seven years after the first Earth Day, the Southwest Organizing collective gathered in Albuquerque, New Mexico to push the movement farther than it had gone before. The problem of inclusion in the environmental movement of communities of color since the letter written to Group of Ten, had grown. The letter had demanded inclusion of communities of color in the leadership level of their organizations in order to ensure that organizations were held accountable for their actions, projects and undertaking in these communities.⁶⁶

Over the past six or seven years, Group of Ten began to respond to the letter they all had received from the Southwest Organizing Collective. The responses to the letter demonstrated that change was being attempted by the mainstream environmental movement. In 1992, the Sierra Club hired its first official environmental justice organizer, and began to expand the department for the next decades hiring more organizers to build the Sierra Club Environmental Justice &

⁶⁴ Schlosberg, “Theorising Environmental Justice,” 41.

⁶⁵ David Schlosberg and Lisette B. Collins, “From Environmental to Climate Justice: Climate Change and the Discourse of Environmental Justice: Climate Change and the Discourse of Environmental Justice,” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 5, no. 3 (May 2014): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.275>.

⁶⁶ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Letter to Mr. Jay D. Hair, President of the National Wildlife Federation.”

Community Partnerships program.⁶⁷ Their programs states that it hires from the community they are in, which is a step in the right direction noting the Principles of Environmental Justice and the demands put forward by the Southwest Organizing Collective in 1990.

The National Parks Conservation Association was not as successful in their attempts to bring about the goals placed before them. They ran various programs with the goal of adding heritage based information about the Underground Railroad and other Black history elements to their parks. They succeeded somewhat in certain parks and monuments, but on the whole, they failed to increase racial and ethnic diversity in their organization through the staff, on the local and national level. Over the decade the increase was slim and only ever reached around 8%, far from the goal for 35% placed by the Southwest Organizing Collective.

The National Parks Conservation Association understood its failings in incorporating environmental justice into its programs and parks and continued to work to change that.⁶⁸ The rest of the collection of response letters contain similar sentiments. CEOs, presidents and directors of programming either stating or denying that despite the attempt to respond to the demands of the communities of color and their requests for centering and solidarity within the mainstream environmental movement, Group of Ten, for the most part, had come up short and continued to move to mainstream conservation and not toward environmental justice.

The convening in April 1997, produced one of the most influential documents on democratic organizing and inclusion of all people in social justice and environmental movements ever written.

⁶⁷ Durlin, Marty, "The Group of 10 Respond" (The High County News, n.d.), 1, <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/swopresponse.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Durlin, Marty, 3.

The Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing

The Southwest Organizing Collective convened to create a method to get to the goals they set for the “Big Greens” in 1990. They laid out the types of methods that mainstream environmental organizations must employ in order to make their work just and curbing oppression and other types of injustice. The Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing were the culmination of all these efforts and they are the main document used today to outline interactions, centering and inclusion of and with communities of color in the United States.⁶⁹

Rubén Solís, one of the main authors of the 1997 Jemez Principles, signed many letters sent to groups such as Greenpeace and the Sierra Club through the early 1990s.⁷⁰ Along with many other organizers from church groups, national and local unions, farmers, and the local Albuquerque community, Solís drafted the Jemez Principles. They contain six clear principles, each with a description of action so that they are not simply demands in a vacuum, but so that they could be applied to organizations, movements and communities. The Jemez Principles are as follows:

1. Be Inclusive
2. Emphasize bottom up organizing
3. Let people speak for themselves
4. Work together in solidarity and mutuality
5. Build Just Relationships among ourselves
6. Commitment to self-transformation⁷¹

Each demand is broken down to a palatable level and can now be used as community guidelines in the movement and not just stated to the management or administration, but

⁶⁹ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d., 1.

⁷⁰ “SouthWest Network for Environmental Justice & Economic Justice to Mr. David Chatman of Greenpeace,” accessed October 12, 2019, <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/SNEEJ1.pdf>.

⁷¹ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

practiced within the inner workings of the organization as a way to make changes at the operations level and as well as the hiring level.⁷²

Each principle ties to the history under which they were written, the following section looks into the principles and how they relate to one another. “Let the people speak for themselves” continues with the description outlined by participatory justice.⁷³ Communities facing the injustices must be members of the organization, and have space held for them to speak and guide the actions taken on the particular issue. Following that trend, Principle 4 speaks to the need for coalition building and working together in solidarity. The description notes that like movements, such as labor and environment, should be working together in mutuality, joining forces in order to strengthen their goals through collective action.

Principle 2 demands bottom up organizing. Organizing that takes many stakeholders from many communities and comes to power through mass mobilization. Building strength through the energy by reaching out to people beyond the typical base of the movement and working to bring everyone in. In total, the Jemez Principles display the necessary steps to take as an organization to ensure the beginnings of a just system. They exist to counter the problematic behavior of movements and organizations such as Group of Ten and beyond. They move from the ideas of inclusivity in Principle 1 to self-work and self-transformation in Principle 6.⁷⁴ “Be Inclusive” encompassing the definition of tokenization and oppressive behavior that come from it.

⁷² SouthWest Organizing Project.

⁷³ Schlosberg, “Theorising Environmental Justice,” 41.

⁷⁴ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

Tokenism, the placement of people of color, low income people, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people and beyond to enhance “diversity” in an organization.⁷⁵ The environmental movement struggles with tokenism when working to incorporate people of color or frontline communities into a preexisting organization or role. Is the individual or group being forced to represent an entire ethnicity? Do they have a role in management or decision making? Are they being treated like a figure head for diversity?

Inclusive behavior is challenging for the mainstream environmental movement as seen throughout the 20th century. Self-transformation requires that members of the existing organization or movement must take on internal work. Jemez principles, in 1997, became the basis for justice in organizing all over the United States.

Environmental Justice grew after the Jemez Principles and more organizations began bringing the concepts and core ideas of inclusive environmental action into their work. Many organizations had already begun this important work throughout the 1980s and 1990s such as WEACT in Harlem, New York. WEACT organized around the growing problem of clean air in the city. In the 1980s air quality was plummeting in Harlem and respiratory conditions, like asthma, began to affect children and elderly populations. WEACT is a community organization and they reached out to government workers and experts with their concerns about air quality, hotter summers and toxic waste and formed this very strong coalition.⁷⁶

WEACT is a community organization focusing on environmental justice from the start, not a mainstream environmental organization. In the public sector, President Bill Clinton issued

⁷⁵ Tonie Snell- JobMingler, “Tokenism: The Result of Diversity Without Inclusion,” Medium, May 30, 2017, <https://medium.com/@TonieSnell/tokenism-the-result-of-diversity-without-inclusion-460061db1eb6>.

⁷⁶ WEACT for Environmental Justice, “Who We Are,” WE ACT for Environmental Justice, accessed October 14, 2019, <https://www.weact.org/whoweare/>.

an executive order to consider environmental justice when looking at helping and restructuring low income areas where communities of color live.⁷⁷

This order, from February 11, 1994 laid out the plans for a government working group on environmental justice to tackle the major environmental justice concerns the government acknowledged in the United States. The working group on environmental justice by order of the president, was to be built from many different members from many different departments. The document notes that Indigenous people will be involved in decisions affecting them and their land, and they will guide the working group as it pertains to them.⁷⁸ Beyond this, there is no clear language on the inclusion of communities facing environmental injustices as members of the working group. The president's executive order clearly does not fully take on the major systemic inequities noted by the Principles of Environmental Justice, because they do not center the ideas and voices of those on the frontline.

After 1997, the environmental justice movement began to gain awareness and concern for the global climate crisis. Climate change became a prioritized topic from media resources, the national consciousness for the climate change began to grow from the science community out to the whole country.

In the 1990s, NGOs, grassroots organizations and organizers began to note the dangerous role that fossil fuel companies were playing in the destructions of natural places. In a paper put out by TRAC, Transnational Action and Resource Center, the authors wrote out one of the first explanations of climate justice, noting that climate change “may very well be the largest

⁷⁷ The White House, “Executive Order 12898 of February 11, 1994: Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” *Federal Register*, Presidential Documents, 59, no. 32 (February 16, 1994): 1–5.

⁷⁸ The White House, 4.

environmental justice issue of our time.”⁷⁹ They are one of the first documents to note the concept of climate justice as a new form of environmental justice. Climate justice, in this article is defined as climate action taken by those who are the worst polluters to ensure a just transition to cleaner jobs, better living condition and a safer future without the fossil fuel industry. This definition contains a number of elements to the explanation of climate justice. Climate justice will occur when the world’s largest polluters look to end and adapt the frontline of climate change and the communities on the frontline are the ones who are looked toward for leading the solution narrative. The 1999, definition of climate justice noted corporate responsibility, but it took until the next decade to build out the complex definition of climate justice.

One place which brought about the rise of the climate justice movement was Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath devastation in New Orleans. Right at the start of the new millennia, in 2005, Hurricane Katrina exemplified environmental racism. The natural landscape in low income communities and communities of color was destroyed by various types of industry, leaving the land unable to absorb water through natural means. With land degradation as a fundamental act of inequity in the city, those who felt the worst effects of the hurricane and natural disaster were in urban centers and areas within flood zones that had the least protections.⁸⁰

The concept of climate justice had begun in the United States around Hurricane Katrina. The concerns that came from New Orleans were about the quality of life of people on the frontline but also for the natural wildlife and habitats that surrounded the area in places such as Turkey Creek and others that were hit the hardest. United Nations Environmental Program released a statement noting that “poorer communities are most vulnerable to the effects of

⁷⁹ “Greenhouse Gangsters vs. Climate Justice,” n.d., 32.

⁸⁰ “After the Deluge: Building Climate Justice From Wreckage of Katrina | The New Republic,” accessed January 19, 2020, <https://newrepublic.com/article/122131/after-deluge-building-climate-justice-wreckage-katrina>.

climate change.”⁸¹ New Orleans stood as an example of types of tragedies which mainstreamed the fight for climate justice, from community organizing to a national consciousness.

Climate justice grew from the environmental justice movement. Climate justice has three broad theories, one from academic literature, one from an NGO understanding and one coming from grassroots movements fighting at the frontline.⁸² The theoretical approach of climate justice as a historical responsibility worked in a pragmatic way to justify the way to go about the pursuit of climate justice. All entities, either corporations or governments, should pay for the damage they have made and not the people most affected by it.⁸³

Schlosberg and Collins note in this analysis of theorists and organizers that there is a disconnect between the two positions, being theorists and academics rarely look to actual movements to learn about the reality of organizing and grassroots movements rarely look to academics to understand their work, or “clarify their positions.”⁸⁴ Non-governmental organizations or NGOs similarly conduct themselves around the topic of climate justice. The Mary Robinson foundation, named after the former president of Ireland, climate activist, and author of *Climate Justice*⁸⁵ Mary Robinson, worked within the confines of the market to spread change and promote climate justice. Although NGOs such as the Mary Robinson Foundation are working to bring about climate justice, they are an ‘elite’ organization and cannot fully understand or correctly address the true realities of climate injustice, because they are not lead by the communities facing the greatest climate injustices. Elite NGOs have the power to consult or fund large projects and organizations and potentially uplift important movements.⁸⁶

⁸¹ “After the Deluge: Building Climate Justice From Wreckage of Katrina | The New Republic.”

⁸² Schlosberg and Collins, “From Environmental to Climate Justice,” 6.

⁸³ Schlosberg and Collins, 7.

⁸⁴ Schlosberg and Collins, 7.

⁸⁵ Mary Robinson, *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

⁸⁶ Schlosberg and Collins, “From Environmental to Climate Justice,” 9.

Grassroots climate justice movements seek far more than the seemingly clear maldistributions of wealth, clean air and clean water, but more deeply a structural shift to repair and reconcile the deep racism and inequality which exists in societal and governmental systems. The attributes of the grassroots climate justice fight are to build a trans local movement, one which spreads all over the country, but comes from individual needs of each and every community. A just transition, engaging with employers and governments to make sure that there is job training and employment opportunities for people whose jobs will become obsolete in the future. Job transitions are an element of the just transition framework, just transitions will need to happen to build a safe future in all elements of human life.⁸⁷

In 2000, the world's first climate justice summit was held in the Hague. The end product of the summit was that the fossil fuel industry was at fault for the health and air quality problems felt most severely by indigenous communities, communities on the frontline of fracking operations, and communities of color in the United States. This first summit noted that it was the job of the fossil fuel industry to take responsibility for these injustices and work to pay, rebuild and heal these frontline areas. The demand was for climate justice, justice to those most effected by climate deterioration and for those causing the most climate change to respond to these stated needs.⁸⁸

The second Climate Justice Summit met in 2002 in Bali. The group called themselves the International Climate Justice Network, and they grew out of a coalition of many collective action organizations worldwide. Together, they crafted the Bali Principles for Climate Justice. This

⁸⁷ "About," *Climate Justice Alliance* (blog), accessed January 27, 2020, <https://climatejusticealliance.org/about/>.

⁸⁸ Schlosberg and Collins, "From Environmental to Climate Justice," 8.

document was ratified on August 29th 2002 and it contained endorsements from indigenous and justice organizations and coalitions worldwide.⁸⁹

The Bali Principles for Climate Justice's preamble statement contains many clear and distinct notes about the nature of global climate change and injustice. It states that climate change is driven by capitalism, globalism and mass consumption. Corporate powers are responsible but they rarely pay the price, instead the deep challenges of climate change are felt by indigenous, island and coastal working people. The preamble ends by noting that there will be no true solutions until society undergoes major systemic changes, moving away from capitalism and mass consumerism.⁹⁰ "There is no such thing as sustainable growth on a finite planet," as economist Herman Daly notes.⁹¹

The Principles of Climate Justice outline the types of challenges faced and solutions and areas of awareness to look at when working to find solutions. There are 27 principles and they are based on the Principles of Environmental Justice, but they include far more themes and cover more concerns than the former. Two principles focus on youth involvement and demand that young people are heard as equals throughout the process of creating new policies. A number of the principles outline fair housing and land rights as well as women's education. Education comes up a few times as being culturally appropriate and looking to open the minds of young people to the types of environmental concerns they will be solving as they grow older. The Principles of Climate Justice outline the need for a reevaluation of the direction western societies are going and a taking stock of the people who should be valued and placed in the middle of the conversation.

⁸⁹ International Climate Justice Network, "Bali Principles of Climate Justice," August 29, 2002, 2.

⁹⁰ International Climate Justice Network, 1.

⁹¹ "Sustainable Growth: An Impossibility Theorem by Herman E. Daly," accessed January 27, 2020, <http://dieoff.com/page37.htm>.

The final principle notes the rights of future generations of people to the benefits of a clean and safe planet. The rights of future humans are so clearly not valued by corporations and the final principle notes that this planet will always need to be protected for current and future generations.⁹² Climate Justice is the holistic way to look at climate change and see as many solutions coming from humanity as there are problems.

⁹² International Climate Justice Network, “Bali Principles of Climate Justice.”

Chapter 2: The Sunrise Movement and Guiding Frameworks

The Story of Sunrise

“We are seeing a lot of hope from our generation in a way that makes me feel like we can actually do something really big.”⁹³ In 2017, a new climate movement began from university and college students angry with the Trump presidency and climate denial in the United States. The Sunrise Movement grew from the lack of concern of the future generation’s safety and prosperity as the first generation to take on the largest impacts of climate change. The opening quote came from Evan Weber, a cofounder of the Sunrise movement who was speaking about the incredible power of young people in the climate movement.

The Sunrise Movement, or Sunrise, identifies as a force of youth power. The opening statement on their website proclaims that, “We’re building an army of young people to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process.”⁹⁴ Sunrise’s power grew from a group of college students attending University of Massachusetts in Amherst (UMass Amherst) and Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. Varshini Prakash, Stephen O’Halon and Sara Blazevic along with others came from the fossil fuel divestment movement at UMass while others, including Dyanna Jaye came from the divestment movement at Swarthmore.⁹⁵

The fossil fuel divestment movement stretched over many college and university campuses worldwide and pressured these institutions to take their endowment out of the fossil fuel industry, therefore taking the power away from fossil fuel companies and working to end

⁹³ Mark K. Matthews et al., “ACTIVISM: Inside the Sunrise Movement (It Didn’t Happen by Accident),” accessed January 29, 2020, <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060108439>.

⁹⁴ Sunrise Movement, “About,” Sunrise Movement, accessed September 29, 2019, <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/about>.

⁹⁵ Ella Nilsen, “The New Face of Climate Activism Is Young, Angry — and Effective,” Vox, September 10, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/9/10/20847401/sunrise-movement-climate-change-activist-millennials-global-warming>.

their reign as the major source of energy for the United States.⁹⁶ Both UMass Amherst and Swarthmore student groups ran campaigns for fossil fuel divestment which were long and challenging and ended only in partial victory.

Miffed by apathy to the climate crisis, both by university administration and the United States Government, this small group of students got together after the 2014 People's Climate March in DC and worked hard to plan climate demands under a potential Clinton presidency, but when Trump was elected plans changed.⁹⁷

In an Medium article, Prakash and Jaye speak about the shock and call to action of the election of Donald Trump. "Our old plan exploded and when the dust settled, one thing was crystal clear: We've gotta figure out how to win some elections."⁹⁸ Sunrise began in April of 2017, through a training in Philadelphia and gathered an initial group of young people, taking time off from college, during gap years, and also those simply ready to take serious action on climate change and the fear of what was happening. They began with a \$30,000 grant from the Sierra Club and access to the Sierra Club's Washington DC office, Sunrise also received initial funding from 350.org.⁹⁹

The movement grew from the founders and their inner circle of friends and activists to a 75 person fellowship living in 8 movement houses all over the United States. The movement house model comes from the 1960s Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which organized for civil rights in the mid 20th century.¹⁰⁰ They created spaces for young people to live,

⁹⁶ "What Is Fossil Fuel Divestment?," Fossil Free: Divestment, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://gofossilfree.org/divestment/what-is-fossil-fuel-divestment/>.

⁹⁷ Nilsen, "The New Face of Climate Activism Is Young, Angry — and Effective."

⁹⁸ Sunrise Movement, "How We Got Here," Medium, August 25, 2017, <https://medium.com/sunrisemvmt/welcome-sunrise-c63943c00f37>.

⁹⁹ Nilsen, "The New Face of Climate Activism Is Young, Angry — and Effective."

¹⁰⁰ Ruairí Arrieta-Kenna, "The Sunrise Movement Actually Changed the Democratic Conversation. So What Do You Do For a Sequel?," POLITICO Magazine, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://politi.co/2WJnIa2>.

work, cook and socialize together and movement houses are where ideas grew and shaped their movements as a whole.

The Sunrise Movement grew nationally for the whole year, offering yearlong fellowship programs for youth organizers. They trained members in their movement goals and principles.¹⁰¹ They grew in notoriety throughout the climate movement and greater activist community, and they made the national news when they went viral in November of 2018.

After the Democrats in Washington stated that, with their new House majority they were not going to be prioritizing climate change, members of Sunrise and the greater climate action community were infuriated.¹⁰² This was an upsetting turn of events, but it left them the perfect gap to fill in the movement, one made of young people who have the moral high ground because they will be facing the most devastating effects of global climate change for longer and more severely than older generations.¹⁰³

The viral moment happened when Sunrise arrived in Washington DC, one thousand strong, and sat in Speaker Pelosi's office demanding action on climate change. They were responding to the democratic party's failing to act on the climate crisis. The first action, before Thanksgiving, consisted of 1000 young people sitting in, in DC demanding to be listened to. At this first action, national news covered the disruption and the Sunrise Movement gained notoriety overnight.¹⁰⁴ The news hailed the November sit in, as not only a flex of youth power, but also of optimism, hope and conviction. The action ended with 51 arrests and many empowered young

¹⁰¹ "Our Principles," Sunrise Movement, accessed February 13, 2020, <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/principles>.

¹⁰² Nilsen, "The New Face of Climate Activism Is Young, Angry — and Effective."

¹⁰³ Momentum Community, *Webinar: Sunrise Movement, Momentum, and Political Alignments*, 2018, <https://www.momentumcommunity.org/sunrise-webinar>.

¹⁰⁴ Witt, Emily, "The Optimistic Activists for a Green New Deal: Inside the Youth-Led Singing Sunrise Movement | The New Yorker."

people all over the country. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio- Cortez spoke at the sit in, encouraging Speaker Nancy Pelosi to lead on solutions to the climate crisis.¹⁰⁵

This was a turning point for the Sunrise Movement, they were demanding the democratic party untangle itself from fossil fuel money as well as beginning to promote and pressure Speaker Pelosi and other party leadership to pursue a Green New Deal.¹⁰⁶ This marked the moment when Sunrise began to take the leadership of the climate movement and lead as youth with the moral high ground.

The Sunrise Movement operates on the concept of youth power. Young people in the United States have the numbers, strength and moral compass to face authority figures such as the United States government and be taken seriously.¹⁰⁷ As Will Lawrence, a founding member of Sunrise noted, there is a gap in the climate movement for young people to fill and Sunrise grew from the need for action and fill the gap.¹⁰⁸

On their website, Sunrise states their story in five sections. Natural resource concern and conservation comes first, noting that climate change is challenging all of life on earth and that people of color and low income people in the United States are already feeling the worst effects of the crisis. The second point states that the solutions to these problems are clear and exist already in the United States; cheap solar, wind power and other types of renewable energy are not concepts they are realities that are suppressed by oil lobbies and the companies themselves. The third section notes that greedy fossil fuel executives and the top 1% of the world is creating the largest portion of climate change, while everyone else will suffer from it.

¹⁰⁵ Witt, Emily.

¹⁰⁶ Nilsen, "The New Face of Climate Activism Is Young, Angry — and Effective."

¹⁰⁷ Sunrise Movement, "About."

¹⁰⁸ Momentum Community, *Webinar: Sunrise Movement, Momentum, and Political Alignments*.

The last two pieces of the story share the community and optimistic side of the story, the one which tells about the community that Sunrise brings and the power that comes from collective action. They title these sections “We will not be divided” and “We are the majority. We will win.”¹⁰⁹ Each section talks through the divides that exist in society, race, political party etcetera and notes that they are existing in order to divide us so that the ruling class or the government can control the narrative.

Finally they state that the “Public Opinion is already with us,” Sunrise simply needs the active support of as many people as possible for them to grow and change the political landscape in the United States. An example being the November 2018 sit in, the public were on the side of the youth.¹¹⁰ These five sections tell a story about the Sunrise movement and the rise of youth power. The story Sunrise tells, outlines the structure and values of the People’s Alignment.¹¹¹

The People’s Alignment is a set of rights and beliefs which Sunrise is working to promote and bring to the American public. The People’s Alignment, Sunrise notes, is a uniting vision of many groups and movements all fighting for dignity and justice. This alignment will bring together climate, jobs and justice.¹¹² The concept of an alignment is found throughout the recent United States history under different governments and presidents, such as the New Deal alignment under president Roosevelt.¹¹³

The People’s Alignment is the final stop of the Sunrise Movement’s plan for the future. They outline their strategy with three avenues of action and change: people power, engaging with all people and escalating through moral protest; political power, voting out corrupt

¹⁰⁹ Sunrise Movement, “About.”

¹¹⁰ Witt, Emily, “The Optimistic Activists for a Green New Deal: Inside the Youth-Led Singing Sunrise Movement | The New Yorker.”

¹¹¹ Momentum Community, *Webinar: Sunrise Movement, Momentum, and Political Alignments*.

¹¹² Sunrise Movement, “About.”

¹¹³ Momentum Community, *Webinar: Sunrise Movement, Momentum, and Political Alignments*.

politicians and voting in leaders of the youth generation; and the People's Alignment.¹¹⁴ During any Sunrise Onboarding training, new members, are taught the idea behind the People's Alignment.

This explanation and a brief history of alignments is given, and starts with the New Deal Alignment from the 1930s. The New Deal came from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and consisted of a number of tenets, demonstrating the importance of the government in the wellbeing of the United States citizens. The New Deal included a list of rights, to a good education, healthcare, a job and social security.¹¹⁵ The New Deal Alignment brought power to the public through the rebuilding and funding of the public good and welfare. This alignment was by no means a perfect solution or a promotion of racial justice and equity, but shifted the country's mindset to accept the creation of public services, public spaces and community programs.

In Sunrise's explanation of alignments, the Reagan Alignment follows, one which is based on fear of the other along with capitalism and nationalism. The Reagan Alignment changed the national view of the government to bring power to the private sector and to push capitalism as the answer to all of the wealth, health and social problems in America. The Reagan Alignment gave voice to the power of the military and the rights of corporations to be taxed less and for the theory of trickle-down economics to stimulate the United States market. The Reagan alignment promoted and continues to promote white supremacy, Cold War ideology, free market capitalism, and "Christian values."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Sunrise Movement, "About."

¹¹⁵ "The New Deal Realignment," accessed February 8, 2020, <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/instructors/setups/notes/new-deal.jsp>.

¹¹⁶ "Reagan's Lasting Realignment," *National Review* (blog), July 13, 2011, <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2011/08/01/reagans-lasting-realignment/>.

These two alignments underscore the past century in the United States and Sunrise brings alternative alignment to the table, the People's Alignment. The People's Alignment is made from the rebirth of society during the first challenges of climate change, the groups that will gain power are climate advocates, movements for racial justice, workers and unions, sustainable business and the new economy.¹¹⁷ This People's Alignment encourages the goals laid out by the Sunrise Movement to create green jobs and transition workers out of extractive industries, to fight for climate justice while bringing power back to the people and away from corrupted politicians and corporations. The main push and campaign for this radical shift in American politics comes from the drafting of House Resolution 109, known as the Green New Deal.¹¹⁸

The Green New Deal is a political expression of the means to the People's Alignment. The Green New Deal is an idea that was put forth into Congress by Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York City and Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts in 2019.¹¹⁹ The Green New Deal was presented to the United States Congress as one of the boldest and most powerful climate action proposals in the federal government. Introduced to the Senate, as a resolution on February 7th 2019, the Green New Deal has swept the nation and made waves amongst politicians depending on if they stand for or opposed it.

The main concept of the Green New Deal is that America will have zero emissions by 2030, creating green jobs and job retraining for extractive industries.¹²⁰ Sunrise Movement adds the slogan that the Green New Deal will make America net zero emissions and create millions of jobs in the process. They describe it as a ten year plan to build 100% renewable energy and

¹¹⁷ New Hampshire Youth Movement, "General Onboarding Training," <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1QFznHyKeyz4y50FYa6x8kyQkUB-filxAAesTOxpbg9s>.

¹¹⁸ Ocasio- Cortez ,Congresswomen Alexandra and Senator Ed Markey, "Recognizing the Duty of the Federal Government to Create a Green New Deal." (Washington, D.C: US. Congress, February 7, 2019), <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Ocasio- Cortez ,Congresswomen Alexandra and Senator Ed Markey.

¹²⁰ Ocasio- Cortez ,Congresswomen Alexandra and Senator Ed Markey.

create a just transition for all, including workers in coal and oil companies and others in occupations who have been in the grip of unsustainable employment and will require new jobs and need a just employment transition.¹²¹

The Green New Deal does not outline a specific plan for action, but it notes the radical change needed to combat climate change in the United States. Throughout 2019 and into 2020, the Green New Deal gained popularity through advocacy by the signatories in the United States Congress and the Sunrise Movement. The Green New Deal is now supported by a large number of politicians on the national, state and local level and many states and municipalities have crafted Green New Deal resolutions for themselves. Sunrise is fighting for political change through promoting pushing 2020 presidential, state and local campaigns to demand a Green New Deal and to build and endorse policy which supports it.

Organizational structures and framework

The Sunrise Movement was born from a history of organizing, from the Occupy Wall Street movement of the 2010s and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s to name a few. The founders of Sunrise studied the history of successful activism in the United States and worked to use the tactics they saw within the Sunrise Movement.

Sunrise has eleven principles which constitute their main attributes as a movement. These eleven principles are the foundation of their identity and the way they organize. In this section, the foundational frame from the Momentum community will be outlined along with the eleven principles of the Sunrise Movement.¹²² The three-prong model they built, People power, Political

¹²¹ Sunrise Movement, “Green New Deal,” Sunrise Movement, accessed September 29, 2019, <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/green-new-deal.5/4/20 2:40:00 PM>

¹²² “Our Principles.”

power and the People's Alignment¹²³ was crafted with the Sunrise founders and team along with the Momentum community.¹²⁴

Momentum describes themselves as a “movement incubator,” they are a training resource for social movements, building them, growing them and gaining power. Momentum states that they use two different organizing models for coaching others successfully. They use structure-based organizing along with mass protest as two avenues which are historically successful. They cite Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi as examples of mass protest along with the Arab Spring and other more recent movements.¹²⁵

Momentum Organizing advised the Sunrise Movement's founding members in how to build a strong and successful movement. Momentum calls for youth leadership, leaders of color and leaders marginalized in other ways to take down the 1% in the United States, to use their political power to elect candidates who are not bought out by corporations, and take power back to the middle and working class majority through transformational change in the system. Momentum Community notes that they hold the skills, knowledge and experience to guide and mentor young people into the process of building radical change.

Momentum cites Mark Engler and Paul Engler's 2016 book *This is an Uprising* as a piece of their foundation of social change frameworks.¹²⁶ Engler and Engler crafted a manual for activists based on experiences and past social movements which have been met with successful. Saul Alinsky, community organizer and social theorist, is one of the two major visionaries they

¹²³ Sunrise Movement, “About.”

¹²⁴ “About Momentum,” Momentum, accessed February 8, 2020, <https://www.momentumcommunity.org/about-momentum>.

¹²⁵ “About Momentum.”

¹²⁶ Mark Engler, *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Nation Books, 2016).

build from. Alinsky, a theorist of community engagement and action from the middle of the 20th century, speaks to the merits of slow burning, slowly developing social movements.¹²⁷

Successful social movements, he states, come from the sustained power of a committed and well-built base of organizers at the community level. Alinsky argues that without a strong base of sustained power social changes will not happen; flash-in-the-pan action will not amount to tangible change.¹²⁸ Alinsky states, in his 1971 book *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals*,¹²⁹ the merits of the slow campaign method, “Effective organization is thwarted by the desire for instant and dramatic change...to build a powerful organization it takes time.”¹³⁰

Barack Obama credits Alinsky in his campaign, using the model of the pragmatic and realistic radical as a base for growing his campaign. Hillary Rodham Clinton wrote her undergraduate thesis at Wellesley college on Alinsky’s ideologies as well. He was critical of all mass movements throughout the United States and looks to the ways they failed as an example of how a stronger base and deeper foundational mindset would have helped mass protest in the past and into the future.¹³¹

Engler and Engler use Alinsky’s theory for slow change as one side of their book’s ideology. Frances Fox Piven, born in 1931, was a radical organizer at the same time as Alinsky. Piven, along with social theorist Richard Cloward, wrote extensively about the importance of mass action as the most accessible and successful form of community organizing. Piven advocated for the potential of ordinary people when they rose up and rejected the power and

¹²⁷ Engler, 32.

¹²⁸ Engler, 35.

¹²⁹ Saul David Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals*, Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

¹³⁰ Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 37.

¹³¹ Engler, 36.

systems they were living under. Together, Piven and Cloward wrote *Poor People's Movements*, a book which spoke to the power of the working class and mass protests.¹³²

Piven and Cloward note that it is not accessible for working class people to be in slow moving, base building movements, as they may not have the resources, such as time and money, to be deeply involved. Mass protest, alternatively, is available to all and includes diverse perspectives and people from many different types of backgrounds and communities, it is inclusive, with varying time commitments for all involved.¹³³

Momentum Community training for organizers, pulls from both sides of the argument for structure and mass protest and disruption. Momentum speaks about this fusion through campaigns that have grown successfully from both structure and protest. Through structure, they are able to build a base by talking one on one with new members, leading trainings, and building the movement to be stronger and better than ever before. Through protest, they can radicalize the public, make bold statements and demonstrate what collective power and collective action can make happen.

Momentum directly notes movements with successful outcomes of both ends; they are based on the teachings and learnings from the civil rights movement, Gandhi, and the Arab Spring along with many more. Momentum states that it is bringing a deep understanding of foundational and radical mass protesting and actions to changemakers like the Sunrise Movement.¹³⁴

While they are building movements, they are strengthening connections between people and the history of organizing, through the methods and tactics they are continuing a legacy of

¹³² Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, 1st ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

¹³³ Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 46.

¹³⁴ "About Momentum."

organizing and passing along that knowledge to organizers at the Sunrise Movement and other movement such as the migrant dignity movement, Movimiento Cosecha and the American Jewish movement against the occupation of Palestine, IfNotNow.¹³⁵

The Sunrise Movement operates using eleven principles. These are the core “DNA” as they describe it, or core ideologies of the movement.¹³⁶ Each principle reflects either directly or indirectly on a piece of the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, a tenet of the Momentum model or another piece or framework for radical change. The Sunrise Movement has, impart, built its principles from the basis set out by the Southwest Organizing Project. Sunrise notes that if there is an action, statement or meeting which does not uphold these principles then it does not belong to the Sunrise Movement. The Sunrise Principles are as follows;

1. We are a movement to stop climate change and create millions of good-paying jobs in the process.
- 2. We grow our power through talking to our communities.**
- 3. We are Americans from all walks of life.**
4. We are nonviolent in word and deed.
- 5. We tell our stories and we honor each other's stories.**
6. We ask for help and we give what we can.
7. We take initiative.
8. We embrace experimentation and we learn together.
9. We take care of ourselves, each other, and our shared home.
- 10. We stand with other movements for change.**
11. We shine bright.¹³⁷

In the next section, four of the Sunrise Principles are broken down and worked through, paying attention to the different elements and historical frameworks Sunrise pulls from to build their movement.

¹³⁵ “About Momentum.”

¹³⁶ “Our Principles.”

¹³⁷ “Our Principles.”

Sunrise Movement Principles

In Principle 2, “We grow our power through talking to our communities,” Sunrise connects the power that it has with the community that it comes from. Sunrise defines this principle as the strength which comes from talking with teachers, religious leaders, unions and young people to spread the word about the Sunrise Movement and find their reason for fighting for climate action.¹³⁸ The idea of big organizing, from Becky Bond and Zack Exley’s book *Rules for Revolutionaries*, dictates that successful mass movement must be decentralized and able to be led by many different types of leaders and communities in many places all at once.¹³⁹

Building community power is essential to the Sunrise model and their organizing strategy. The fifth Jemez principle, “Build just relationships among ourselves”, demands that within organizations and communities interpersonal relationship are built justly. These just relationships will not be built over night, but are a culmination over time of group decision making and leadership from all parties involved. The Jemez principles note that it goes beyond simply sharing leadership and knowledge but the allocation of resources, such as money and space, must be shared as well.¹⁴⁰

The second Jemez Principle continues to outline this Sunrise principle of growing power through talking to community. Principle two, “Emphasis bottom up organizing,” notes the importance of focusing on coalition building between many community members and not simply on the dominant ideology of society. The Principle notes the importance of not only reaching out

¹³⁸ “Our Principles.”

¹³⁹ Becky Bond and Zack Exley, *Rules for Revolutionaries: How Big Organizing Can Change Everything* (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2016), 1.

¹⁴⁰ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

to community, but continuing to reach out over and over to new communities and community members and constituencies as often as possible.¹⁴¹

Bond and Exley note that Peer to Peer sharing is necessary for the grassroots movement as a whole. Without the directed sharing of resources, ideas and social change ideology, the grassroots or bottom up method of organizing falters and fails.¹⁴² Sunrise's Principle 2 dictates that they work to grow their movement through community outreach.

The Sunrise Movement's Principle three, "We are Americans from all walks of life", begins to touch on the potential for diverse backgrounds and opinions in the movement. By bringing in "Americans from all walks of life," Sunrise is outlining the basic form of inclusion in the movement.¹⁴³ Inclusion within movements like Sunrise is challenging due to the potential for relationships to form which transcend a built structure and come from friendships or other prior interpersonal relationships.¹⁴⁴

Within movements, such as Sunrise, which have many locations and hubs, it is easy for informal structure to rule an organization. Within the Sunrise movement, there are many hubs in cities and towns all over North America, each with their own structure of leadership designed with direction from Sunrise and the movement principles and goals.¹⁴⁵ Each hub has a formal structure, but to be fully inclusive and invite and accept "Americans from all walks of life" they must be open to all. Informal structure can push back at the formal structure and cause all types of plans for clear and distinct inclusion tactics to falter and fail.

¹⁴¹ SouthWest Organizing Project.

¹⁴² Bond and Exley, *Rules for Revolutionaries*, 146.

¹⁴³ "Our Principles."

¹⁴⁴ Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 3/4 (2013): 231–246, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wsqa.2013.0072>.

¹⁴⁵ Sunrise Movement, "About."

When informal groupings, such as friends or people with similar knowledge or backgrounds take control of a group or a conversation then potential for exclusive behavior increases with the creation of ingroups and outgroups.¹⁴⁶ These ingroups tend to be ones which are dominant in society and therefore are recreating the very types of oppressive behavior the movement sought to go up against. Tactics organizers in Sunrise use to defuse dominant powers in organizing spaces, can perpetuate the way white, educated society is structured and therefore also are problematic when inclusion is the goal.¹⁴⁷

For an example, meeting facilitation techniques such as hand gestures, certain words, or consensus methods and other types of moderating rules are not always inclusive for members new to organizing and organizing with Sunrise. Meeting spaces must be mindful that they are making room for new perspectives and new people to join in and not pushing people out because they do not understand the lingo tied to the space. For Principle three, Sunrise notes that there is a value and importance to their movement and the different types of members they have. This Sunrise principle reflects the first Jemez Principle, “Be Inclusive.” The first Jemez principle opens the concept of inclusivity to carry over all work, from facilitation of meetings to the identity of the movement. If not all community members are not invited to the table, allocated resources and given the option to participate, lead and collaborate then the movement than it is not inclusive. The Jemez principles note the base idea of inclusivity is paramount to the success to any movement of any type.¹⁴⁸

If the goal of movements like the Sunrise Movement is to take back the power from the corporations and other stakeholders in extractive industries and to fight the dangerous status quo,

¹⁴⁶ Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness,” 234.

¹⁴⁷ Darcy K. Leach, “Culture and the Structure of Tyrannylessness,” *Sociological Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (March 2013): 184, <https://doi.org/10.1111/tsq.12014>.

¹⁴⁸ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

then the movement must make a space for all people and communities to model and build the type of future they want to create.

Social movements and climate movements grow, in a microcosm, the future that the members and followers want to live in. Social movements, like Sunrise, build these new structures at the movement level to outline the future.¹⁴⁹ The Jemez Principles dictate that these structures must center inclusivity. By doing this, other pieces of the movement may lose importance and the focus might shift to the structure and resource allocations to other members of the group or community and away from the pressure of the former, central or original goal. To truly be an inclusive space, the Jemez principles state, there will be conflict, delays and struggle, but that is the only way to build alternative paradigms.¹⁵⁰

Sunrise's Principle Three, displays this wish stating, "we are united in a shared fight to make real the promise of a society that works for all of us."¹⁵¹ They are building directly from the Jemez principles here, noting the requirement for internal work and struggle to build a new framework that works for "Americans from all walks of life."¹⁵²

Principle five highlights the Sunrise members who come from all over the country to be part of the movement and fight for climate justice. Storytelling is a necessary piece of the Sunrise movement and principle five states that at Sunrise, "We tell our stories and we honor each other's stories." Storytelling comes through as a necessity to success in the Sunrise movement. Sunrise says that everyone has something to lose to global climate change and it is important to honor and give space to all stories. They note that stories connect people to one

¹⁴⁹ John Foran, Summer Gray, and Corrie Grosse, "'Not yet the End of the World': Political Cultures of Opposition and Creation in the Global Youth Climate Justice Movement," *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 9 (2017): 357.

¹⁵⁰ SouthWest Organizing Project, "Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing," n.d.

¹⁵¹ "Our Principles."

¹⁵² "Our Principles."

another and sharing narratives about the importance of fighting climate change and standing for climate justice expands the movement through connecting to others with stories.¹⁵³

The storytelling model Sunrise bases this principle on comes from Marshall Ganz. Marshall Ganz is a professor at Harvard University, he created a model to explain the power of storytelling and public narratives.¹⁵⁴ Ganz worked on President Obama's campaign and guided the public narratives which Obama used throughout. Ganz model of the Public narrative contains three types of stories, the story of self, the story of us, the story of now.¹⁵⁵

The story of self is the story of the teller, why does the fight for climate justice matter to me? Why am I fighting? These stories connect the teller to the audience, whether it is a crowd of people or a single person. The story of the self includes choices the teller made to join with the movement and the fight against climate change in the case of Sunrise.¹⁵⁶ The story of self is a call to leadership, it gives an example of why the teller cares and is called to join the movement in hopes of inspiring others to join in as well.

The story of us expands upon the story of self. This story explains what the goals and demands are of the movement.¹⁵⁷ Sunrise would tell the story of the Green New Deal, a just transition and taking back political power as young people from the hands of a government which does not represent the best interests of the youth, communities of color and low income communities. The statement, "we are an army of young people" outlines Sunrise's story of us.¹⁵⁸ For the story of us to be successful, Ganz states that it must appeal to the people and communities expected to join in the movement. Youth power, climate justice, green jobs and all

¹⁵³ "Our Principles."

¹⁵⁴ Marshall Ganz, "What Is Public Narrative: Self, Us & Now," 2013, <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/30760283>.

¹⁵⁵ Marshall Ganz, 2.

¹⁵⁶ Sunrise Movement, "About."

¹⁵⁷ Marshall Ganz, "What Is Public Narrative: Self, Us & Now," 2.

¹⁵⁸ "Our Principles."

the other platforms Sunrise is fighting are there to appeal to the youth population. The story of us narrative works when people connect their own stories of self to the larger picture, noting the shared values and shared experience which make the movement work for all.¹⁵⁹

The third and final piece of Marshall Ganz's model of the public narrative is the story of now. The story of now is powerful because it speaks to why members decided to take action and make social change now. The moment in America or in politics is a moment for action now. These types of stories bring hope and power, anger and motivation. The story of now calls people to action now, presses people to drop everything and join in the most important campaign or movement which must occur now. Climate change, social injustice, crippling student debt, medical bills and other large social and environmental problems power the narrative of now.¹⁶⁰ Sunrise uses the climate crisis to ignite members to join and reflect on what they lose from climate change and what they have to gain fighting for climate justice.

Sunrise is not the only place where public narratives drive the movement, but in Momentum public narratives are the base for their work towards justice in all of the campaigns they mentor.¹⁶¹ The Jemez principles also highlight the importance of hearing individuals and their needs, they outline this in Principle three, "Let the People Speak for Themselves."¹⁶² This Jemez principle does not come from the public narrative realm, but looks at the importance of presentation and representation.

Voices of all members and communities should be heard and listened to at each level and not simply boiled down for the meaning but uplifted by the teller. The Jemez principles state that relevant voices must be heard, and they must be the forefront of action. If this is not the case,

¹⁵⁹ Marshall Ganz, "What Is Public Narrative: Self, Us & Now," 2.

¹⁶⁰ Marshall Ganz, 2.

¹⁶¹ "About Momentum."

¹⁶² SouthWest Organizing Project, "Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing," n.d.

there could be misunderstanding or misrepresentation of certain communities which will be counterproductive to the goals of the movement.¹⁶³ Storytelling, sharing and public narratives are at the core of the Sunrise Movement and are reflected throughout the history as a meaningful, powerful and necessary tool for justice.

Principle 6 offers an avenue for true inclusion by stating that “We ask for help and give what we can.” Sunrise notes here that they are not asking for each member to give the same amount of time and energy to the movement, because they understand that different people and communities have different amounts of time to contribute to the movement based on their lives. By instituting the core principle of asking for help, Sunrise highlights that it only exists with the help and support for the communities it comes from.¹⁶⁴ Giving to a movement, where the vast majority of members are volunteers and donating their time to beat the climate crisis and win elections, Sunrise recognizes that some people may be able to show up for a meeting, event or action once a month while others take on more.

Movements where all amounts of labor and time are treated as equal are almost impossible to build, but they are necessary if the movement wants to be available for all. In creating the type of work where people want to live, modeling inclusivity by who shows up at all instead of only honoring volunteers who commit forty hours a week to the movement.

Asking for help from the community, leads to greater community involvement and growth. Sunrise states in this principle that they are aware that not everyone can commit the same amount of time, but they are also aware that without a committed base they will not be able to grow the movement. So as they support people to join and not to worry about their commitment level, they also have to work to bring people on to fill out the main base of the movement.

¹⁶³ SouthWest Organizing Project.

¹⁶⁴ “Our Principles.”

The longer and more time people commit, the more likely they will fall into the “in crowd” and learn the norms and standards of the movement, even if they are simply the informal ones. This will build a gap between people who are seen as more “bought in” or larger supporters of the movement simply because they have more time, money, or ability to give to the movement.¹⁶⁵

Recruiting people to the movement includes and grows the potential for the base to belong to a diverse group of members.¹⁶⁶ By asking for help and giving what people can as a core principle, Sunrise demonstrates the importance of inclusion and diverse growth of their movement. Upholding all the needs and acknowledging the energy each member brings will be required for their growth to be inclusive and to matter on a large scale.

The final principle covered in this section is Principle 10, “We stand with other movements for change.”¹⁶⁷ Sunrise notes in this principle that stopping climate change takes many different movements working together to make change. The climate crisis requires Sunrise to listen and uplift other movements. They state in the definition that: “When it makes sense, we work with other movements who share our values and are also working to win political power.”¹⁶⁸

This outlines the emphasis placed on sharing the stage and uplifting the movement through uplifting all organizations working towards justice. In the Momentum communities guidelines and principles they speak about the importance of each of their movements, Sunrise, IfNotNow and Movimiento Cosecha. They call them sister movements, they are all building

¹⁶⁵ Leach, “Culture and the Structure of Tyrannylessness,” 184.

¹⁶⁶ Bond and Exley, *Rules for Revolutionaries*, 26.

¹⁶⁷ “Our Principles.”

¹⁶⁸ “Our Principles.”

political power to have their movements make structural change to society.¹⁶⁹ The idea of sister movements fighting alongside one and other comes with Sunrise’s training model.

The idea of fighting alongside or for other movements is a common way to fight whiteness, classism and other oppressive social dynamics in the climate movement. Sunrise reflects the Jemez principles again by stating in Principle four that we must “Work together in solidarity and mutuality.”¹⁷⁰ They go on to outline that is it not enough to invite community members to your table, but also to make sure that resources, both time and money, are given toward other movements doing important work. Building partnerships is important, because while Sunrise might know a lot about ending climate change, they can support the labor movement when they are on strike or the Black Lives Matter movement when they march because that type of solidarity pushes all people and their movements forward.

To stand in solidarity with another movement is not only to take action for a cause that the movement believes in, but it is to speak out and bring forward another organizations for the purpose of collective liberation. Collective liberation is a term used often in the labor movement as well as other social movements, it says that all our struggles are deeply connected and by fighting alongside one another we are able to lift systems of oppression which hurt all of us.¹⁷¹

Therefore, as a movement focusing on climate justice and climate action, it is essential that Sunrise uplifts other campaigns through partnerships as well as resource sharing. The Jemez Principle four takes this even further saying the goal is not to make partnerships and stand with other groups’ concerns, but it is to incorporate what other groups demand into the DNA of the movement.

¹⁶⁹ Momentum Community, *Webinar: Sunrise Movement, Momentum, and Political Alignments*.

¹⁷⁰ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

¹⁷¹ People & Planet, “Introduction to Collective Liberation,” accessed February 17, 2020, 1
<https://peopleandplanet.org/system/files/resources/Collective%20Liberation%20Guide%20for%20upload.pdf>.

The five Sunrise principles reviewed alongside the Jemez principles make clear the connections and history the Sunrise Movement draws from to create their identity, their base and their power.¹⁷² They make strong claims for inclusive, peer to peer, and horizontal organizing and they have set out to end the climate crisis through bringing people together to power and not to fear. The eleven Sunrise Principles in total are made up from a lot of visioning and building from the founders of the movement and these principles carry on those original ideas and vision.

Anti-oppression in the Sunrise Movement

The Jemez principles came from the Southwest Organizing Project in an attempt to change the direction of future organizing by looking into the past and working to change what the future would hold. The existence of whiteness in the climate movement and environmental movement historically makes it necessary to center the conversation around race as a core and essential piece to the new climate movement. Sunrise and new climate movements make note of the history of oppression and exclusion communities of color have faced within the environmental and climate movements over the past centuries.

Sunrise looks to the book *Rules for Revolutionaries* by Bond and Exley as a guide for tips and pointers in building a successful movement.¹⁷³ One of the early chapters in *Rules* outlines the importance of centering racial justice as a core of any revolution, “Fighting Racism must be at the Core of the Message to Everyone.” They note that without centering antiracism, xenophobia and racial justice in the revolution, then it is not a revolution.¹⁷⁴

Many movements, including the Sunrise Movement engage with trainings on anti-oppression, on whiteness and anti-blackness and on strategically building toward a future that

¹⁷² SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

¹⁷³ Witt, Emily, “The Optimistic Activists for a Green New Deal: Inside the Youth-Led Singing Sunrise Movement | The New Yorker.”

¹⁷⁴ Bond and Exley, *Rules for Revolutionaries*, 36.

has a climate movement that is accessible to all and does not simply stay as a white dominated movement perpetuating a colonizing history.

Anti-oppression trainings are an important piece of movements such as Sunrise, they help people have frank discussions about race and racial dynamics within their specific group or more broadly in their organizing. Anti-oppression trainings in general can seem at times like they are taking away from the important mechanics of the movement and wasting valuable meeting and planning time for future actions. Often Anti-oppression trainings are taught during retreats, weekends or after regular meetings, they are not usually part of the regular meeting time. These trainings are common throughout the climate movement in 2020 and they have come from the absolute need for a change in who movements recruit and how they run in general.¹⁷⁵

These trainings and conversations are based around the changes that white and privileged individuals need to work out their own internalized white supremacy and to begin to look at the ways in which they have benefited in a society which was built in their favor. White people are the ones who must take on the work to end racism in themselves and their communities.¹⁷⁶

United to End Racism talks about the work that is necessary to bring about racial justice within individuals but also organizing spaces.¹⁷⁷

This is a very small portion of the types of work being done to begin repairing oppressive behaviors in society and movements for change, but it is the type of work that Sunrise must engage in to be part of the revolution and not simply repeating old racist societal patterns.

¹⁷⁵ “Make Anti-Oppression a Strategy Issue | Training For Change,” accessed February 18, 2020, https://www.trainingforchange.org/training_tools/make-anti-oppression-a-strategy-issue/.

¹⁷⁶ United to End Racism, “The Role of White People in Ending Racism,” Google Docs, accessed February 18, 2020, https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/1ky_yma9PjHYlPKb7BNhzM77xA5w0PvM4xbFqYrtiCf8/edit?usp=embed_facebook.

¹⁷⁷ United to End Racism, 1.

The Sunrise Movement comes from a number of teachings, frameworks and organizational schools of thought. They are built by innovative trainings and teaching from activists, students and organizers all over the country and they are rapidly growing throughout the United States as the political climate action movement to end the climate crisis and take back power. Sunrise has a short history and they have the potential for such great and formational action in the United States. They have written principles which reflect the sentiments put forward by the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing in 1991, they have included language in their mission about inclusion, and they are run by young people who will be facing the worst of the climate crisis over the next decades.

In what ways does the Sunrise Movement work to create a diverse base of activists that includes, uplifts and centers frontline communities while fighting for climate justice? what are their tactics and is it working? After reviewing what they have stated as their greater ideology on the topic of inclusion, partnerships, standing in solidarity with other movements, how is Sunrise doing today as they continue to take action against the climate crisis? How are they centering and uplifting frontline communities and taking on climate justice?

Chapter 3: Research Methods, Defining the Frontline and Themes

Methods

My primary research for this paper is based on interview data. I began the collection of data in early November, through drafting interview questions and reaching out to potential participants. The questions for the interviews came directly from my research questions: how does the Sunrise Movement center and uplift frontline communities in their organization, both leadership and membership, where are they succeeding, where are they challenged, and where can they grow as a movement?

After I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for my research on November 7th 2019 and I began by reaching out to members of Sunrise whom I knew from organizing in the Boston Area and southern New Hampshire. I communicated with potential participants over email and text as well as social media. My requirements for participants were that they were at least 18 years old, and a member of the leadership of their Sunrise hub or the National Leadership team. This age limitation came from the IRB, because I submitted my research as not involving minors.

I networked from the initial people I spoke with in the early autumn and began to build a group of potential interview participants and people interested in being part of my research on the Sunrise Movement. I connected with a Sunrise fellow who lived in a movement house on the East Coast, she put me in touch with members in the house and within the leadership of the Sunrise Movement. I began recruiting participants by snowball sampling and grew my network, distributing my request for interview through email, over text and social media platforms such as Facebook.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Neveah, Personal Interview.

I wrote interview questions that asked about the successes, failures and ways to improve the Sunrise Movement's centering of frontline communities in their organization. I used semi structured interviewing, by asking open-ended questions and offering space for the participant to share their own thoughts, concerns, critiques and ideas about the movement. I created an interview guide, a list of questions to ask the participants, they varied depending on the interview, but included the sample questions below.¹⁷⁹ Not every participant was asked each question in the interview guide, but each interview started with the same question.

- What is your history with the Sunrise Movement?
- How do you define a frontline community?
- In what ways does Sunrise work to incorporate, not only the needs of people from frontline communities, but center and uplift them as leadership and members in the movement.
- What are your recommendations for the Sunrise Movement, where can they change and grow to better center and incorporate frontline communities in their movement?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that I have not asked about or you believe is important for me to know on the topic of Sunrise and Frontline communities?

These five questions were the starting points for discussion throughout my interviews and they led to further storytelling and opinion-sharing by the participant. As I interviewed more and more Sunrise leaders, I fine-tuned my questions to receive clearer answers.

My first three interviews were with people whom I had direct connections to through members of Sunrise I previously knew. I chose to begin with people who were in leadership of their hubs or nationally, and I was connected to them through members I organized with before. This pool of contacts from these Sunrise members was not large enough to gain different

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix ii

perspectives on the movement so I asked to be placed on the Sunrise Slack messaging platform so that I would have access to more members and I would be able to connect with more people from all over the country.

This additional method of gaining connections worked very well for me and I was able to reach out to anyone who posted on the platform. I searched for people who were posting about frontline communities and their concerns about who the movement was amplifying. This led me to the Sunrise organizers and leadership who were involved deeply in the movement and who might be interested in being interviewed. My experience as an organizer with Sunrise made the process of finding participants and connecting with them over the interview process easier because I understood firsthand the campaigns, language and culture of the movement.

I scheduled interviews with members from across the United States. Once the time was scheduled, I sent each of my participants an informed consent form.¹⁸⁰ This form contained a very brief outline and description of my research and why they were asked to participate, a description of their rights as a participant and contact information should they need assistance from a third party at any point, and an acknowledgement of any distress caused by the interview process. Before the interview began, I received verbal consent to conduct the interview as it had been previously laid out. At the end of each interview I surveyed my participants with 4 voluntary demographic questions.

I conducted my interviews over a variety of media. I spoke with participants over the phone, over Zoom and in person. I did not experience any major differences in conducting interviews over the Zoom platform or over the phone. Each interview lasted no longer than 30 minutes and the participant was given the choice of platform which their interview was conducted over. With

¹⁸⁰ See Appendix iiiii

the consent of the participant, each interview was recorded. The audio recordings were recorded using a software called Otter, which transcribed the interviews as they were recorded. I followed the procedures of data management as approved by the Brandeis Institutional Review Board. I used a technique to find pseudonyms through name searching with in the reported ethnicity of the participant and the decade they were born. Then I assigned each participant a pseudonym and took their name off all of my notes and records.

Each interview, I reviewed once for clarity, while I listened to the recording to be sure that the wording on the page was correct. Then, I coded each interview and highlighted themes that rose and I summarized each set of interview questions to build a short profile of each participant for reference. I completed one final review of all of the interview data, looking over the themes from the second read through and reviewing the new patterns which came from the final review.

I bolded and highlighted phrases and notes throughout the interviews which brought forth a point that I felt was important to the overall topic and project in general. This allowed me to see themes rise from the background of recommendations and concerns that participants were sharing.

Demographic Data Quantitative Findings

I interviewed 11 Sunrise organizers, some national paid staff, others hub leaders or working group organizers. I interviewed the executive of the Sunrise Movement, Varshini Prakash. She is the only identified participant, and she gave consent for her identity to be part of my research. The four survey questions revealed the wide range of ages, gender, ethnic and racial backgrounds, and education levels of the participants. The data gathered from the survey was as follows: Age, gender, race/ethnicity, education level (such as high school, some college, bachelors, etc.).

Table 1, below, indicates the reported demographic data from the survey I administered at the end of each of the interviews. They are organized in alphabetical order by pseudonym.

Pseudonym	Location	Age	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Education level
Aisha	Midwest US	19	African American/ Latinx	non binary	some college
Eric	East Coast	32	White	man	bachelors
Henry	East Coast	26	Mixed: Black and White	man	master's degree
Mani	Eastern US	21	South Asian	woman	some college
Nevaeh	West Coast	23	African American	woman	bachelor's degree
Rebecca	East Coast	34	White	woman	bachelor's degree
Rhys	East Coast	23	White	man	associate's degree
Sehrish	Midwest US	19	Asian/Middle Eastern	woman	some college
Skyler	Midwest US	20	White	non binary	high school
Tori	West Coast	30	Black/Hispanic	woman	bachelor's degree
Varshini Prakash	East Coast	26	Indian American	woman	bachelor's degree

Table 1

I interviewed six women, two nonbinary people and three men. Seven of the participants identified as people of color, four as white. Six of the participants came from the East Coast region, three from the Midwest and two from the West Coast and around half of the participants had a Bachelor’s degree or more.

The table of demographic data came from the self-reporting survey and data points that I added such as location. I chose my demographic data questions based on the topics that would be discussed in the interviews themselves. With topics around frontline communities, tokenism and race, and youth organizing, each demographic data question simply gives the response a small amount of background which may or may not be helpful when answering the question.

Challenges within the process and methods

I interviewed this set of participants because they were the people who responded to my requests for interviews, but I did reach out to more women than men and more people of color than white people. These biases in my outreach came from the need I found to make sure that I was hearing from people with different types of perspectives and not Sunrise members from one hub in one location all with similar narratives.

This requirement to my research led me to find people in the middle of the country as well as both coasts to interview. I was able to connect with Sunrise hubs and members in places such as Missouri and Illinois by using the Sunrise Slack messaging platform. There are a few notable limitations to my research, sample size, time and representation. My research goal was to conduct around 10-12 interviews. This number was based on my timeline and the number of people I could feasibly contact and connect with over the three months I had to interview participants. It is important to note that the larger the group of participants, the more the variety in stories, ideas and experiences around Sunrise and frontline communities. When administering the interviews themselves, I asked semi structured questions at times and included room for follow up questions as well.

It is also important to note that my identity as a white, cisgender, college educated, woman researcher interacts with the participants identities, no matter the way the questions are framed or the research is conducted. By the participants seeing my face and hearing my voice they are interacting with my own identities and that has the potential for them to share or omit certain experiences, emotions or other elements from their storytelling. Twice participants asked why I, a white cisgender woman, was conducting research into the challenges Sunrise has with

centering and uplifting frontline communities. Another time, I was called out as being a person who Sunrise prioritized and should be considering my own position in the movement.

Participants talked about their identities during the interview before I asked for specific demographic data, more often among the participants of color than white participants. These moments in my interviews were clear, spoken interactions between my identities and those of my participants, but it is safe to assume that many unspoken interactions occurred as well. The research was conducted in an open space where the participant and researcher were both voluntarily present, but with a conversation about frontline communities, race, class and gender, my identities may have changed the outcomes and it is important to put this forward.

Finally, it is important to note before the beginning of the analysis process that each interview and opinion expressed by the individuals who chose to participate is their own. Each participant is speaking from their own experiences and ideas and not on the behalf of a specific community or identity such as a race, a class or a gender. Throughout the analysis, I have worked to make sure that I am not equating one participant's story to an entire identity or community or position in society. There is always the potential for tokenism to occur when applying personal stories to the experience of group. Tokenism occurs in places of work and organizing when people from underrepresented communities are under employed and forced into speaking on behalf of their group.¹⁸¹

Throughout the discussion and analysis of the interview data from the research conducted on behalf of this paper, I will be working hard to limit the amount of tokenizing of stories and experiences. I will be working to let the data speak for itself throughout and from those responses draw out examples that furnish the angles and argument heard here.

¹⁸¹ JobMingler, "Tokenism."

Results and Analysis

From the eleven interviews I gave, four themes emerged repeatedly while I was coding each interview. These four themes were, *Defining the Frontline*, *Storytelling*, *Urgency and Intentionality*, and *Planning for Inclusion*. The next section will examine these themes and dive into how they demonstrate how Sunrise is uplifting frontline communities, and how they are challenged.

Defining the Frontline

After asking each participant to share their “Sunrise Story,” the next question was “how would you define the term ‘frontline community’”? The term frontline community is not specific to the climate movement or environmental justice. In the context of the environmental movement it refers to people living near or on dangerous land and communities experiencing environmental racism. These types of oppressions occur at the nexus of industry, oil refining and sea level rise with the history of racism and classism within the United States.

Communities of color and poor people tend to live near chemical dumps, landfills, coal mines, and fracking. These lead to dangerous living conditions and seriously impact the health and wellness of people on the frontline.¹⁸²

When the question of how to define the term frontline community was posed to the participants, they responded in many ways. Chart 1 below notes the responses grouped into two racial categories from the demographic data taken during the survey. The next section will break down each theme from the definitions of a frontline community the participants shared.

¹⁸² Newkirk II, “Environmental Racism Is Real, According to Trump’s EPA.”

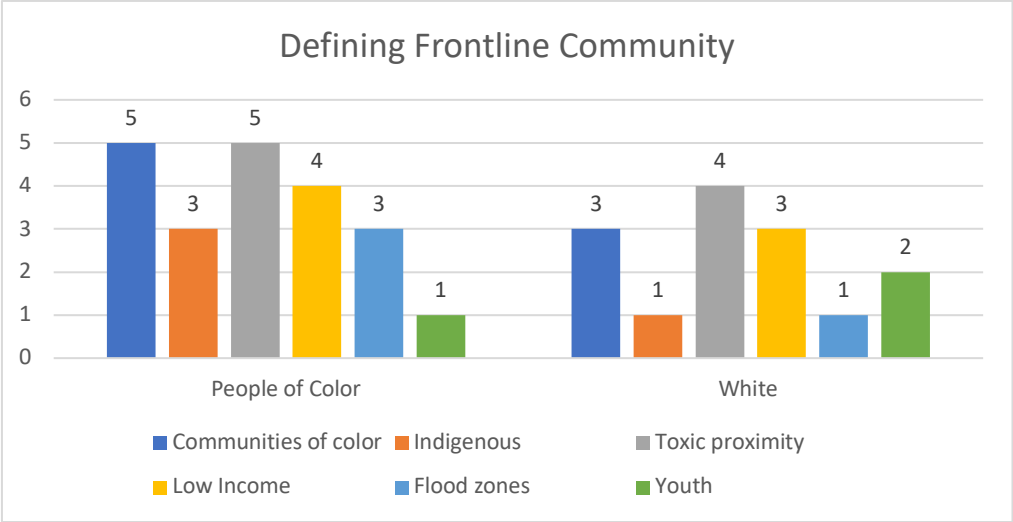


Chart 1

Chart 1 displays the groups and communities mentioned as the participants responded to the questions. Some participants chose to answer in long lists, naming all types of people on the frontline and all the different ways they were impacted. In my interview with Rhys, a 23 year old white man from the East Coast, he listed many different types of people who appear in frontline communities such as Kentuckians losing their land and mountains to coal mining in low income areas.¹⁸³

This is a place-based definition of a frontline community relating to the inequalities faced by certain people because of where they live. Eric, a 32 year white man from the East Coast, defined a frontline community as people affected by point source pollution and feeling the effects of the climate crisis “the first and the worst.”¹⁸⁴

The language to describe frontline communities as feeling the effects of climate change “the first and the worst” was not unique to Eric’s interview and appeared in two other responses. The frontline community definitions also stated the people who were the least responsible for the

¹⁸³ Rhys, Personal interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, January 30, 2020.
¹⁸⁴ Eric, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, December 20, 2019.

emissions, poor air quality, and environmental degradation were the ones feeling the worst repercussions of it.

Henry, a 26 year old mixed race man from the East Coast, noted that to be a frontline community required multiple types of overlapping oppressions.

“a frontline community is a community that is actively being impacted by some form of injustice I would say like several forms of injustice, because everyone has some forms, but [frontline communities] are actively being impacted by several forms of injustice.”¹⁸⁵

Other definitions of frontline communities brought in the idea of people and communities on the margins of society. These margins were not always physical, sometimes structural such as poor communities which are not included in restoration or renewal. Margins included people who are not always recognized by society such as transgender people, women, and specifically trans people and women of color.

Skyler, a 20 year old, white, nonbinary participant from the Midwest, stated that frontline communities include “people that have been historically marginalized and ignored by many movements in the past. Definitely low income BIPOC communities.”¹⁸⁶ BIPOC is the acronym for Black and Indigenous People of Color.¹⁸⁷ Skyler noted that people ignored by movements in the past are frontline communities and they were the only interview to do so. Their inclusion of ignored communities points out the nature of the frontline, a place or group that is looked over and whose existence is noted, but without dominant movements for change and justice centering them or letting them lead.

The concerns for the climate crisis tend to be led by white, middle class people, and movements which do not concern this demographic rarely become mainstreamed. Skyler notes

¹⁸⁵ Henry, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, January 9, 2020.

¹⁸⁶ Skyler, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, January 20, 2020.

¹⁸⁷ “The BIPOC Project,” The BIPOC Project, accessed March 11, 2020, <https://www.thebipocproject.org>.

that communities ignored by the status quo fall into frontline status because of this. Skyler also commented that in their rural town, people are not considered to be part of the environment by the EPA. This fact became clear during an EPA meeting in their town, brought about by coal mine cancer rates sky-rocketing, the agency stated that “people are not part of the environment.”¹⁸⁸

Another theme that appeared a number of times was toxic proximity. Toxic proximity, defined as the physical relationship between mines, oil refineries, superfund sites, poor air quality and communities. The term environmental racism creates that connection between these toxic settings and the fact that these communities are majority people of color and low income.¹⁸⁹ Vann R. Newkirk II from *the Atlantic*, states that the environment is not racist, “the air we breathe and the water we drink are controlled and designed by people, and people are racist.”¹⁹⁰

Environmental racism accounts for the experiences that frontline communities near toxic waste are subject to. The poor air and water quality contributes to health complications and cancer as Skyler spoke about in their definition. Flood risk areas are what came to mind for some participants when thinking about frontline communities, because they are on a physical frontline to climate change and sea level rise. But flooding and drought are also large problems for indigenous communities and specifically island communities. Margins of society can also indicate where the frontline may be. Varshini Prakash, the executive director and a cofounder of the Sunrise Movement, noted in her interview that a frontline community is on the margins,

¹⁸⁸ Skyler, Personal Interview.

¹⁸⁹ The Atlantic, *Environmental Racism Is the New Jim Crow*, accessed October 17, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnF5I7lt6nQ&feature=youtu.be>.

¹⁹⁰ The Atlantic.

unrepresented in government and the mainstream media such as indigenous communities and island communities.¹⁹¹

Finally, youth as a frontline community. Youth appear fewer times in the 11 interviews, only three people noted youth as a frontline population. Youth as a frontline community is realized through the climate crisis and the unsure future that humans feel on this planet. Young people will inherit the earth and the massive environmental problems which exist today. Sunrise talks about young people having the moral high ground.¹⁹² This moral high ground comes from acknowledgement that young people will be taking the brunt of climate change and be on the frontline of massive climate events, destruction and beyond.

There were two other interviews which noted the intersectionality of the definition of a frontline community. Youth, for example is a frontline, but as Rhys put it, “frontline communities are on a spectrum.” Rhys describes the spectrum from white youth, to coal mining communities, to indigenous coastal communities. There are a lot of different ways that the frontline exists. Rhys, as a white man noted youth as the frontline which he identifies with, placing himself in his definition. Rebecca, a 34 year old white woman, after a long definition of a frontline community noted that “I’m very much not from a frontline community and I recognize that.”¹⁹³ Rebecca did not include herself in her definition of a frontline community, which demonstrates the disconnect some white young people when talking about who constitutes the frontline.

Youth is an example of the intersection of many frontline identities, Henry notes in his definition that frontline communities are impacted by several forms of injustice. White youth,

¹⁹¹ Varshini Prakash, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, February 14, 2020.

¹⁹² Sunrise Movement, “About.”

¹⁹³ Rebecca, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, December 11, 2019.

youth of color and low income young people are frontline communities, not only because they will be living on the planet for longer, but also because of the intersectionality of youth with other frontline identities. The participant base in Chart 1 is split into participants of color and white participants. I chose this division knowing that people of color are on the frontline of the climate crisis and might add different elements to their definitions. The data shows that the white participants noted that youth as a frontline community more than the participants of color on the whole. Each of the other themes of toxic proximity, race, income level, flood zone proximity and indigeneity appeared in the definitions from a number of participants, demonstrating the breadth of identities which make up the frontline.

Storytelling: Uplifting Frontline Narratives, Tokenizing Oppressed Voices

The majority of the interviews touched upon the idea of storytelling and the Sunrise Movement. The first interview question, “What is your Sunrise Story” opened the interview asking for a story. Sunrise movement, coming from my own personal experience, encourages and trains its members to be able to tell excellent personal stories about why they are involved in the movement. I know that I always had mine prepared whenever I was going to be talking with people about Sunrise or the Green New Deal or any other climate related issue.

Each participant began by sharing their personal story about why they joined the movement and why pushing for a Green New Deal and climate action moved them as activists. Sunrise states as one of their principles that “We tell our stories and we honor each other's stories.”¹⁹⁴ We tell our stories is an important element of the Sunrise Movement and it is one of the ways in which they center frontline voices. Sunrise uses Marshall Ganz’s public narrative model of Self, Us and Now and they are prepared to speak through this framing.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ “Our Principles.”

¹⁹⁵ Marshall Ganz, “What Is Public Narrative: Self, Us & Now.”

Participants spoke passionately about the reasons they found Sunrise and how they felt about being in the spaces that Sunrise created. Mani, a 21 year old southeast Asian woman, spoke about going to Delhi, India for an internship during the summer after her first year in college and how it shocked her. She spoke about how her time in Delhi heightened her awareness around the climate crisis. She realized the climate movement mattered and repercussions it had for people living in polluted areas such as Delhi. “I was going to work every day, and I just remember feeling like ‘this is what a climate apocalypse would feel like.’”¹⁹⁶

This example displays the direct fear that comes from seeing a city overtaken by pollution and being shocked into action. Mani shared two of the storytelling angles with me in this one story, it was both a story of self and now. Mani spoke further about her time working hard and becoming the national leadership team member with Sunrise when the movement started. The “us” portion of the public narrative came with the Mani’s inclusion of Sunrise’s fight for a Green New Deal with the moral authority of young people.

Varshini Prakash, the executive director of the Sunrise Movement, spoke about the way to encourage and uplift frontline voices through storytelling comes when Sunrise members are heard and supported. Supported meaning that people are not simply just told to tell a story or go share on their own, but that they are given time and resources to prepare. Varshini says,

“I think the biggest thing is ensuring that the person is receiving some level of support to do whatever is being asked of them and then they’re being followed up with and given a support and the afterthought to debrief. Give them some space to offer feedback and reflect for themselves.”¹⁹⁷

Varshini noted that it is important to offer and encourage others to share stories in the movement. She spoke about a debrief process and how it is helpful to make sure that storytellers

¹⁹⁶ Mani, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, December 8, 2019.

¹⁹⁷ Prakash, Personal Interview.

feel supported. Varshini spoke about how putting voices which are usually silenced forward enriches the Sunrise leadership and gives voice to “brilliant leaders of color”¹⁹⁸ This notes the expressed importance which Sunrise holds in putting forward voices of color. Principle five, “We tell our stories and we honor each other's stories,” definition states “We tell our individual stories to connect with each other and understand the many different ways this crisis impacts us.”¹⁹⁹ Varshini speaks to this idea here, everyone, most importantly frontline communities, are welcome to tell their stories so that the world can see the ways the climate crisis impacts everyone differently, such as the city of Delhi, India.

Prakash saw the public narrative and Sunrise’s focus on frontline community storytelling as a positive and important part of the movement. However, a number of participants noted during their interviews that storytelling and story sharing on behalf of the Sunrise Movement often leads to a large amount of tokenism of frontline voices.

Sehrish, a 19 year old Asian and Middle Eastern woman from the Midwest, explained in her interview the ways that Sunrise tokenizes her voice as a woman of color coming from the “bad area” as she described it, of her city.²⁰⁰ Sehrish speaks about how she is constantly pushing her mostly white Sunrise hub to make hearing from people of color a priority and usually that leads to tokenizing her voice as the voice of color.

Tokenizing is defined as the pressure placed on people of color to speak on behalf of a larger group, such as a whole race or on behalf of people of color in general. People are tokenized when they are seen and used as a member of a particular demographic but given no leadership or tasks other than ones related to their race or identity such as recruit or outreach to

¹⁹⁸ Prakash.

¹⁹⁹ “Our Principles.”

²⁰⁰ Sehrish, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, n.d.

minority organizers.²⁰¹ This is a major challenge in organizing spaces, because when they begin with white, college educated young people, it is a major challenge to recruit a base which represent the stakeholders of climate justice, or frontline communities. Tokenism occurs frequently when a movement begins with no leadership of color or with frontline identities.

Tokenism during the promotion of Sunrise’s public narrative happens often for Sehrish. She notes that Sunrise does well talking about and making content on Instagram, Facebook and other social media platforms using images of people of color at rallies and beyond. Sunrise made a promotional video speaking about why people are fighting for climate action, Sehrish noted that this video had a lot of people she knew in it. The video depicted mostly people of color, this is one way that Sehrish noted tokenism in Sunrise.²⁰² Sunrise demonstrates a visual commitment to people of color, but do they include and uplift them in their main movement goals and take action in solidarity with them?

Tokenism goes beyond simply storytelling and whose stories get the priority of being shared. Tokenizing certain people, includes overlooking the issues and the stories that already exist and have existed for a while for certain frontline communities. The narrative of the Sunrise Movement was built by a certain group of people to be carried out by the members of the movement. Though the message resonates with many people, not every Sunrise hub has the same needs and priorities as another. This is problematic in the success of certain Sunrise hubs because they receive resources to prioritize campaigns Sunrise is interested in running, but do not receive resources for the specific to the needs of the community they are in.

Aisha, a 20-year old nonbinary Latinx/African American person from a rural mining town, spoke about the types of stories and narratives Sunrise is willing to share and promote.

²⁰¹ JobMingler, “Tokenism.”

²⁰² Sehrish, Personal Interview.

“Sunrise is hugely and largely guilty of tokenizing, and they know that because I have voiced it to national, it's a huge issue... I'm like, so it's a huge issue that comes up and it's been coming up for, I think, the past year now, why hasn't anything been done for it?”²⁰³

Aisha spoke further about this concern of the priorities of Sunrise when it comes to who they choose to support, organizers from which parts of the country and why. Aisha commented that Sunrise works hard to show up as being a community, but when they asks for resources such as funding, trainings, meeting with national leadership to address the tokenism occurring with their hub interacting with the national Sunrise Movement, they were rarely listened to.

Skyler, a hub coordinator along with Aisha spoke about how they were also uncomfortable at times with how Sunrise conducted storytelling and their public narrative. Skyler acknowledged that Sunrise used Civil Rights movement music and chanting during their protests. They did not understand why there was such an emphasis on using specific songs and stories from the civil rights movement when the Sunrise movement is very different and fighting for different outcomes. The use of songs from the Civil Rights movement felt like co-opting the story of people of color and poor people when middle class white people take the songs.²⁰⁴

Henry also mentioned concern about the co-opting of other marginalized stories and culture through singing and chanting about the types of struggles of past movements and comparing them to the challenges of the Sunrise movement. “Sunrise singing civil rights songs and not recognizing their colonizing history is keeping people of color out and frontline communities out. It's just appropriation.”²⁰⁵ Henry calls into question the validity of Sunrise’s choice to bring back the stories of racial justice organizing to a movement which is struggling with its own whiteness. There is a tension in Sunrise’s work between wanting to connect with the

²⁰³ Aisha, Personal Interview, interview by Phoebe Dolan, Voice Recording, January 20, 2020.

²⁰⁴ Skyler, Personal Interview.

²⁰⁵ Henry, Personal Interview.

powerful history of organizing, but at the same time, they doing so in ways which are offending and tokenizing the communities where the music comes from.

Sunrise’s goal to uplift frontline communities through storytelling through Sunrise members and organizers including people of color sharing their experiences also leads to tensions. The experiences people of color spoke about in their interviews demonstrated that Sunrise can tokenize them in the storytelling process by using their voices, perspectives and stories only for the media and by co-opting the Civil Rights movement and appropriating the struggle for racial justice as a parallel struggle with climate action. When a movement starts as a group of majority privileged people, how are they going to fight the potential for tokenization and build off of older movement ideology?

Urgency and Intentionality: Move quickly, without repeating the status quo

The climate movement often cites urgency as a rallying cry for action and taking action to promote bold climate policy such as a Green New Deal, slashes in carbon emissions and other types of fast-paced mitigation tactics for slowing and stopping global climate change. One example is relating actions to the October 8th, 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report stating that we have only 12 years to get carbon emission under control before the climate crisis becomes irreversible.²⁰⁶

Urgency is a core piece of what makes the climate movement so powerful and for youth activists to have moral authority over the movement as a whole. Youth climate strikers over 2019 held signs and chanted about the lack of time left to make decisions on climate policy or

²⁰⁶ “Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C Approved by Governments — IPCC,” accessed March 17, 2020, <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>.

action.²⁰⁷ Urgency and speed are necessary for the climate movement to be take on the world as a pressing matter of necessity, at the same time, urgency is a dangerous tactic when building and creating a movement for change.

During the interview process, I asked the participants about the ways that Sunrise was challenged or failing frontline communities, and some of the participants spoke about this urgency that follows the movement around. Eric spoke about urgency frequently when answering a question about the ways that Sunrise is challenged when they are working to uplift and center frontline communities in the movement as a whole.

“I think is a real challenge that a lot of organizations face is that there's, there's a tension between urgency and speed.” He said, and continued, “if you kind of act out of urgency and without a lot of attention to equity as you're proceeding with anything, you kind of land with the status quo”²⁰⁸

Urgency versus speed seemed to Eric to be a challenging line to walk, because when Sunrise or his specific Sunrise hub acted out of urgency, a lot of thought, planning and effort to include, center and uplift voices of color got left out as well. When there is urgency, a tactful movement still has the potential of existing and being built, but when speed is the goal, producing actions and other types of organizing goals, the outcome can lead to an exclusive movement.

“We have to move fast so, here we go we're going to throw it out there. We don't have time to engage in a really thoughtful slow intentional process to make sure we're actually doing this. [We] just wait and land where we want to. And I think our hubs struggle with that tension on the ground. I think we really struggle with that nationally.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Alex Kalman, “Children Lead the Way: A Gallery of Youth-Made Climate-Strike Signs,” *The New Yorker*, accessed March 17, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/children-lead-the-way-a-gallery-of-youth-made-climate-strike-signs>.

²⁰⁸ Eric, Personal Interview.

²⁰⁹ Eric.

Eric speaks to the urgency that comes from not having enough time to reach out when planning events or facilitating conversations about certain issues of concerns at Sunrise. Without a slow and intentional event, only white, middle class, college students will come to partake and feel at home in the space which is maintaining the status quo, while people of color will continue to be excluded from the space. When Sunrise members take urgency of the climate crisis and build thoughtful, inclusive action, they are able to keep the urgent and necessary timing but work to end the speed which leads to forgetting to include frontline communities.

Neveah spoke about space as a concern that she has often with her Sunrise hub when she is working to organize events quickly. Neveah is uncomfortable when an event is located in a place where low income people of people of color cannot access easily because it was the only space available, "it would do more harm than good to not have an event at all," she said, but even then the urgency at which the hub is operating brings them back to the mainstream status quo.²¹⁰

Urgency also leads to lack of training and development in hubs and hub culture which is detrimental to an organization. Rhys noted the major dissonance which occurs when Sunrise national does not train members of his hub in certain skills or movement understandings, because of these trends when Sunrise grows quickly, his hub struggled to organize the way Sunrise intended.²¹¹ Rhys noted this concern with the type of resources that he and his hub was offered. They were given the basic Sunrise goals, DNA and frameworks to pull from, but not offered the types of training from Momentum Community and other deeper trainings that Sunrise gave to their core team.²¹²

²¹⁰ Neveah, Personal Interview.

²¹¹ Rhys, Personal interview.

²¹² Momentum Community, *Webinar: Sunrise Movement, Momentum, and Political Alignments*.

Finally, Henry echoed the need for Sunrise to educate. "The Sunrise Movement just needs to like slow down, and make educational priority, there's such an urgency to come up with actions." He follows up by saying that there is such a serious need for thoughtful process at Sunrise and to get to a place where all people can be heard they need to become and intentional with how they use time and resources and end the culture of urgency.²¹³

The eight attributes of white supremacy as compiled by Tema Okun, in *White Supremacy Culture*,²¹⁴ lists "Sense of Urgency" as the second attribute of the eight. The document lists eight different ways that white supremacy thought, and actions persists in workplaces and organizing spaces in the United States. Sense of Urgency has three bullet points as in their definition of the attribute. "Continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences."²¹⁵ This highlights Henry's concern about the amount of thought that Sunrise has space and time to give while they are pursuing such wide and challenging goals.²¹⁶

The second bullet point connects with Aisha's concerns about which opinions and ideas are centered and asked to be carried out by all the members of the Sunrise Movement no matter their particular experience or leanings in the movement.²¹⁷ The definition continues with this next example of how urgency can allow an organization to repeat the status quo and continue to center white people.

²¹³ Henry, Personal Interview.

²¹⁴ Okun, Tema, "White Supremacy Culture" (dRworkd dismantlingracism.org, n.d.), http://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf.

²¹⁵ Okun, Tema, 2.

²¹⁶ Henry, Personal Interview.

²¹⁷ Aisha, Personal Interview.

“frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color to more quickly win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)”²¹⁸

While hearing from Sunrise hub members about the effects of urgency of their ability to organize effectively, I asked the executive director of Sunrise, Varshini Prakash about the eight attributes of white supremacy and how she thought Sunrise was doing grappling with speed and representation. She started by saying, “I don't know that we're perfect at this by any means, I don't think we actually have figured it out totally.”²¹⁹ She continued,

“Before we launched the movement we spent a year, thinking about what it was that we needed to do and the kind of movement we needed to create and who was to be in it... It wasn't the perfect DNA that we came out with, but the amount of intentional time is I would say such a huge, huge component of why we have been as successful as we have.”

Here, Varshini notes the time taken by the movement in the early stages to look at problems that could occur and address them as quickly as possible. She says that the success of the Sunrise movement has come from planning for change upfront. Varshini speaks on the ways currently that they are trying to make intentional decisions taking into account frontline communities, and she ended by saying that they are planning now for a more equitable leadership team that will be operating soon with more frontline leadership.

Varshini did touch on the concerns about growth and urgency that other members had brought up, but overall she talked about a plan for action to be taken and meetings that were currently happening, but not current actions steps that work to combat the ever present sense of urgency in the climate movement. Even within this plan for action, Varshini will have to make sure that Sunrise is planning with the community and taking the time to heard from all the stakeholders, this will take the urgency and make it possible to fight for climate justice. The

²¹⁸ Okun, Tema, “White Supremacy Culture,” 2.

²¹⁹ Prakash, Personal Interview.

Sunrise Movement may struggle without inclusion of frontline communities as it continues to push climate actions without taking the necessary steps to centering the uplifting and leadership of people of color.

Planning for inclusion, Planning for Massive Action

The concept of planning as inclusive and planning as a way to channel power came through often in interviews as many participants were seeing the ways that planning made massive change possible. Mani, Sunrise national member said, while answering the question of how Sunrise is working to center frontline communities in the movement as well as in the leadership.

“I would say, [structural inclusion and leadership by frontline communities] is not something that we've perfected but something that we do prioritize. We're doing a round of hiring a decent number of new people into our staff right now, We have an expectation that we want more than 50% of those hires to be, people of color.”

Mani noted a method of planning for inclusion, by hiring people of color into leadership roles in the Sunrise movement. They are working to do this type of intentional leadership hiring as part of the process to make Sunrise more equitable in leadership. A number of participants noted that their largest challenge with Sunrise was their lack of leadership representing different education levels, class and race.²²⁰

Sehrish spoke about when she joined Sunrise last year through an interest meeting on her college campus which is around 50:50 people of color and white people. “I looked into [Sunrise] and it was really, really white, I was like, ‘I'm cool, I'm good, I don't need to join another white org.’”²²¹ She continued by speaking about how in the room for that meeting she was one of four people of color out of 50 people. She asked the facilitators what they were going to do to

²²⁰ Mani, Personal Interview.

²²¹ Sehrish, Personal Interview.

increase the participation and inclusion of people of color, poor people and other frontline communities who were not showing up to the meeting. They answered saying they were working on it, and she said “you need to work on it better.”²²²

From that point forward she has been the equity lead for her hub and increased the membership of frontline communities in Sunrise. Sehrish, made the choice to initially stay because she felt very uncomfortable with the lack of people of color and made it a goal to stay in Sunrise and challenge them on why the hub was this way. This decision is one that many people would not make based on the responses from other participants who felt distanced from majority white and privileged groups and went on to build their own hubs. Sehrish risks and accepts the emotional and social labor of tokenism by her hub as she is placed into a role where she is convincing, talking with and leading the recruitment and inclusion of frontline communities.

If Sunrise is planning to include leadership position for people of color, it is unclear to the participants in my interviews. How Sunrise is planning on representing them in the movement? Skyler noted that their community feels this way often, “It makes us angry, Skyler said, in a post, real communities have entirely lost trust in movements for change because of reasons like this we have zero platform.”²²³

Planning for change and planning for inclusion matters a lot when looking at where inclusion needs to happen in the Sunrise Movement’s structure. Many participants brought up necessity for training and cultivation of leaders of color. Sunrise ran and continues to run Leaders of Color trainings around the country where members from different parts of the country come together to learn and bond with each other as leaders of color in the movement. Three of

²²² Sehrish.

²²³ Skyler, Personal Interview.

the participants spoke about these trainings as important and memorable pieces of their experiences in Sunrise.

Sehrish shared her experience with the trainings and what she gained from the trainings which, she thought, were going to uplift the leaders of color and give them skills for strong hub management from Sunrise. She noted that while Sunrise worked hard to make sure that leaders of color had a chance to connect or “trauma bond” as she called it, there was not a lot of training and more discussion on how to be a person of color in a group of white people.

“The leaders of color training honestly ended up not being a Leaders of Color training, we didn't get to learn any real skills because the whole time we trauma bonded... Towards the end of the training, we were supposed to meet up with the antiracist training for white leaders, and talk to them about how racism and stuff like that has affected our experiences within Sunrise and within our hubs and how that needs to be addressed. And I feel like, we felt like we spent a majority of the training, just figuring out how do we approach [White Sunrise members] with this subject like I always felt like a good like four hours one night, when we could have been like learning something just figuring out like how, when we want to say what do we need to say how do we say it, and stuff like that. I just **I feel like that just took away time from us learning.**”²²⁴

The Leaders of Color trainings left Sehrish wishing for more support and for Sunrise to place less emphasis on people of color figuring out what to do to feel more comfortable and empowered in a Sunrise space, and for the movement to put their own resources into it. Here is a tension between planning for inclusion and planning for external change. How can Sunrise plan for external change and system change, when the experience of Sehrish and other members of color in Sunrise are under heard and not centered? How will they stop repeating the status quo?

Sunrise Movement as a whole is instituting Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion or JEDI teams and working groups in their hubs nationwide. These teams are planning for the inclusion of members of frontline communities, through partnership building, cultivating leaders

²²⁴ Sehrish, Personal Interview.

of color and working internally to change the types of oppressive systems that exist already in the hubs.

A few of the participants I spoke with mentioned JEDI teams in their hubs. JEDI came up when the participant was white or when the hub had been struggling with frontline inclusion because of whiteness in the hub. Eric, who identified as white, spoke about JEDI without being prompted, saying that it was a good start to working out the concerns about inclusion and exclusivity in their hub. Eric noted that “In terms of the local organizing, I think there's a lot of work that sunrise still needs to do around anti oppression.”²²⁵ He spoke about how they were leading the charge for Sunrise on building a “Just Hub Guide.” This guide would serve as a way for new hubs and existing hubs to look at the structure they build see who it is serving and how that is working out.

After Eric shared his thoughts on the JEDI working group he noted that as a hub leader he was not an expert on what was happening in the JEDI hub and told me about other people, mostly people of color to reach out to and to ask about the JEDI work that was being organized. He ended by saying that,

“We also know that like any time of silo equity work and like a person or a team inevitably you're going to fail, it needs to be like woven throughout” and “I think that [changing the way Sunrise works with POC] is like an intervention that I'm really excited to invest in and see where that goes.”

Eric comprehends that it is important for all people to be part of the JEDI work, but then did not know about his hub’s work to fight anti-oppression within the hub. Rebecca also noted that JEDI work was beginning in her mostly white hub, but she did not know what they were working on because she leads community events and simply did not interact with the JEDI team

²²⁵ Eric, Personal Interview.

often.²²⁶ “[We need to be] working on how Sunrise (*her hub city*) is still like a fairly white and fairly middle class group and that we really need to be like centering with people who are the most affected.”²²⁷

Rebecca, who identified as white, talked about how this call to action came from being called out by local organizations about how Sunrise needed to do better in planning for inclusion of local community organizations.

Henry continued with the same distress in lack of original care for frontline communities in the Sunrise structure. He noted that it is often about how many people show up to meetings on equity concerns. He was frustrated when he told me that at his majority white hub, 30 people came to the potluck community meeting, but only 4 people came to a meeting discussing the plans for JEDI. When I asked him if his Sunrise hub had any specific tactics or methods of combatting the exclusion of frontline communities in the hub, he started with "Sunrise doesn't give a shit about frontline communities" followed by “Sunrise uses this term (frontline communities) to check boxes when they interact with external entities, but in all reality they do not truly care about frontline communities.”²²⁸

After Henry shared his frustration and the work that his hub was starting and working toward, he said “You can talk about efforts, but like, in terms of methods and tactics I think you could honestly say, none.”²²⁹ Henry’s experiences in his hub reflects the discontent and concerns that Henry has with the nature of the Sunrise movement. As Bond and Exley in *Rules for*

²²⁶ Rebecca, Personal Interview.

²²⁷ Rebecca.

²²⁸ Henry, Personal Interview.

²²⁹ Henry.

Revolutionaries, put it, “If it is not led by people of color and immigrants, if it doesn’t have fighting racism and xenophobia at its core... then it’s not a revolution.”²³⁰

The question of inclusion comes to resources and intention, urgency and planning. What is the purpose of having a working group if no one attends the meeting? Where is Sunrise working to actively center climate justice through their principle “We are Americans from all walks of life”²³¹ and through the first Jemez principle “Be Inclusive.”²³² Are these conversations within Sunrise just talk? Is there action as well?

Other Participants noted that being inclusive to low income people and people of color began with the forming of the hub. Neveah, when defining a frontline community noted the majority of the categories such as race, class, toxic proximity and beyond. “Those, [frontline communities] are like the most important people to be in our movement,” she said in response to how does your movement uplift and center frontline communities. She continued by discussing that her hub is almost all queer, black women and therefore have not had any problems with including frontline communities and she had also not heard of JEDI before.²³³ Neveah’s hub internally is majority frontline community members. She noted that it was not hard to recruit or sustain a base of members who were people of color or low income because those were the people who founded the hub. This is a different set of experiences compared to the other participants, Neveah’s hub still worked hard to maintain an exclusive space, but they struggled less in the beginning because the hub members came from the communities Sunrise is trying to stand alongside.

²³⁰ Bond and Exley, *Rules for Revolutionaries*, 36.

²³¹ “Our Principles.”

²³² SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d., 1.

²³³ Neveah, Personal Interview.

Planning for inclusion through working groups and in the structuring of the movement is important, but as seen in the responses from participants, it tends to be pushed back as an issue of secondary importance and not one where most of the energy is allocated. Planning often felt unproductive to the members I spoke with, they wanted action and to see the types of changes to the structure of the hub to happen now and be prioritized like the other goals of the movement such as the Green New Deal and other climate actions.

Varshini spoke about planning in her interview and stated that a Sunrise moto that she holds is “Plan beat no plan.”²³⁴ She continued to describe the founding of Sunrise and the work that went into the original planning for the hub. There was a year of planning that occurred before the launch of the movement, where the DNA and principles were created and Varshini notes that they are not perfect, but the movement had an intentional and planned founding. She continues by stating,

“I think we do fall into the mistake of urgency and having to make quick decisions and move on quick timelines, and at the same time I've really seen us take the time to convene people where necessary to have the important conversations. We spent four days in North Carolina having conversations about justice and equity, and spent a ton of time being like, ‘this is a huge issue in our organization, we're not just going to ignore it or try to create like Band-Aid solutions to it,’ we're going to sit down and try to come up with an organizational process that will lead to complete transformation of our organization and our team.”

Varshini is relating back to the theme of planning as a form of inclusion. She said above that Sunrise is working to restructure the leadership to better reflect communities of color and the people who are represented by climate justice groups. By Sunrise taking on this important work hopefully it will begin to center the urgency of frontline community inclusion as paramount to win the climate justice and the Green New Deal.

²³⁴ Prakash, Personal Interview.

Planning for inclusion includes far more than simply who comes to Sunrise meetings and if the building is accessible, but also why people come to Sunrise and how are they received? How does Sunrise manifest in community? Where does Sunrise allocate funding? Who does Sunrise partner with to win a Green New Deal and build a strong movement? These questions are beginning to be answered by members of the Sunrise Movement around the country and they are the focus of a number of national members as well.

If the reality is that Sunrise will need to be in a coalition with other movements, organizations and communities members to win a Green New Deal then they cannot proceed with exclusive behavior. As Skyler and Aisha point out in their interviews, Sunrise needs the rural, low income Americans of color to be committed to the movement, along with other frontline communities to make the change happen. Beyond that, Bond and Exley state that there is no such thing as a single issue revolution,²³⁵ because all justice is intertwined. Sunrise must take on the issues they are fighting for, but know that without the collective power and action of many powerful movements, justice prevailing will become impossible. Collective liberation²³⁶ through climate justice along with racial justice, social justice, gender justice and beyond will need to happen to win.

The next section will examine the final question asked to the participants in looking at where Sunrise can improve their inclusion and centering of frontline communities.

²³⁵ Bond and Exley, *Rules for Revolutionaries*, 159.

²³⁶ People & Planet, "Introduction to Collective Liberation."

Chapter 4: Recommendations

Towards the end of each interview, every participant had the opportunity to make recommendations about how they believe Sunrise can do better centering frontline communities. Recommendations came out of the ideas that many of the participants had brought up during their discussion about their concerns with the way Sunrise was operating as a national movement and within the context of their particular hub. Common themes rose from the recommendations from each individual participant. This section will outline the recommendations which participants made to Sunrise followed by a final analysis of the Sunrise Movement's efforts and conclusion.

Green New Deal for Rural America

One recommendation came from concern and questions brought up by Skyler and Aisha, both of whom are from the rural Midwest. Who is Sunrise spending the millions of dollars on? Skyler and Aisha shared their concerns that Sunrise was spending millions of dollars convincing politicians that the Green New Deal is the bold and necessary change needed in the United States. They spoke about how there was a need for Sunrise to stop spending their money on convincing politicians to support a Green New Deal, and use resources to convince rural America to support a Green New Deal instead. Sunrise should be spending more time and energy getting the Midwest on their side.²³⁷

Skyler said, "You have to get within the culture of the community and gain trust, because without trust no one is going to do anything for you in rural communities."²³⁸ They recommended that Sunrise spend time with the rural hubs and communities they will need on their side moving forward. The farmers and miners who will constitute the workforce of the

²³⁷ Aisha, Personal Interview.

²³⁸ Skyler, Personal Interview.

Green New Deal must be worked with to understand the importance of the bold changes to come. In fact, the adaptations from a Green New Deal will be possible, Skyler says, only if rural America is on board.

To stand up for rural Americans, Sunrise needs to show up, national members and directors need to come and learn about rural communities. Skyler states that they want to show national members around and help them to understand why they matter, not just have them come in and take photos or participate in an action and leave. Stay for a week and understand the community.

"Just experience it for a couple days. Get an idea of how to interact with the people and understand the culture, because like America is so big. There's so many different cultures are so many different identities within America. It's a difficult task, but experiencing everyday life from a different perspective, is something I just suggest."²³⁹

Aisha builds from this idea of Sunrise national working to understand, listen and support rural communities. She said, "**I want sunrise to prioritize us** and like us, the way it says it wants to, **as they prioritize you**, the Green New Deal, as much as it prioritizes trainings and summits."²⁴⁰ They said Sunrise needs to support rural communities because they make the food that powers America and will be essential advocates of the Green New Deal. They said Sunrise might not know the power that they have to uplift the rural communities in America, but they do hold it.

"I feel like because Sunrise's leadership is like primarily comprised of these liberal arts kids, people who are higher class, higher income. They live in this bubble of understanding and **they don't realize like all the power they have to help us**."²⁴¹

Aisha's ask was for Sunrise to publicize and uplift the needs of their hub, and they pointed out how people with resources don't understand how much power they have to help

²³⁹ Skyler.

²⁴⁰ Aisha, Personal Interview.

²⁴¹ Aisha.

move rural hubs into the spotlight. This set of recommendations for rural Americans and the Green New Deal points out the need for Sunrise to look at more than simply who is elected to implement a Green New Deal, but who will need to be on their team to make it happen. The idea of investment in rural communities and farms is part of the conversation around the Green New Deal. A group of scholars in agricultural history, ocean science, policy and community studies came together in 2019 and drafted a *A Green New Deal for People and Nature: Food, Forests, Farms and Oceans*.²⁴²

This document outlined in one section the importance of investing in rural America for supporting land transfer between farms, building demonstration farms to teach farmers new methods, returning land sovereignty to indigenous people, and investing in low income and marginalized communities and helping them return to farming.²⁴³ Legislation is already being created outlining the agricultural aspects of a Green New Deal. On February 26th, 2020, Representative Chellie Pingree, introduced a bill which outlines steps to bring about zero emission agriculture for the United States by 2040. These types of recommendations are foundational to a Green New Deal, a Green New Deal will need to focus on agriculture and land and Sunrise must reach those communities on the rural frontline.

Partnerships and Sister Movements

From the Sunrise Members I spoke, many people recommended that Sunrise can improve or begin their efforts in uplifting and centering frontline communities by focusing on partnerships and similar movements. Partnerships are relationships between Sunrise and organizations which are fighting for similar issues, goals and with the same people or on behalf

²⁴² Brian Donahue et al., “A Green New Deal for People and Nature: Food, Forests, Farms and Oceans,” January 7, 2019, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/13Ydy7NwS2wbvMj1uziMUU-t68MZnqaYAwgwYOcXDwV4/edit#>.

²⁴³ Donahue et al., 2.

of the community. Sunrise currently works on partnerships and in relationship with other organizations, or they state that as one of their principles, “We stand with other movements for change.”²⁴⁴ The Jemez principle 4 states “Work together in Solidarity and Mutuality.”²⁴⁵ It continues in the definition, “Groups working on similar issues with compatible visions should consciously act in solidarity, mutuality and support each other’s work.”²⁴⁶

Tori, a 30 year old black and Hispanic woman from the West Coast, noted that Sunrise needs to look more deeply at the needs in the communities they are operating in and take initiative from what is being done already. This was a common theme, many participants recommended that Sunrise stop trying to create every single event they attended and instead show up for others.²⁴⁷ There is no reason to reinvent the wheel, when other community organizations have been here longer and have the cultural knowledge of the community they are in.

Henry spoke about how Sunrise should use its power and money to resource share with movements that are fighting for frontline communities at the margins of the mainstream. These groups being the Climate Justice Alliance or the Poor People’s Campaign or any other movement pushing for jobs, justice or climate action. Henry’s Sunrise hub has worked on partnerships in the past and he recognized the work that was put into that, but also talked about how specifically Sunrise places a lot of pressure on themselves to make actions and rallies from the ground up which promote big picture concerns such as clean air, clean water and green jobs and calling on the government to protect these rights.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ “Our Principles.”

²⁴⁵ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

²⁴⁶ SouthWest Organizing Project.

²⁴⁷ Tori and Phoebe Dolan, Personal Interview, Voice Recording, February 3, 2020.

²⁴⁸ Henry, Personal Interview.

Henry recommended that Sunrise needs to slow down and take a look at the work already being done where they are located and figure out how they can show up for the frontline movements instead of creating more actions which have the potential of tokenizing the communities they are in and not truly representing the concerns that they have.

Continuing on the theme of partnerships, Mani spoke about the ways Sunrise has made partnerships on the frontline as they work to build out programs through existing community organizations. An example Mani gave comes from the partnership Sunrise has with the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice.²⁴⁹ This organization is teamed with Sunrise National to bring Historically Black Colleges and Universities or HBCUs on board with the Green New Deal. “There's no point rebuilding infrastructure twice over,” Mani said “I see investing in HBCUs and investing in the South’s wellbeing really important morally but also strategically, I don't think we're going to be able to win without that type of investment.”²⁵⁰

This coalition built between Sunrise and the preexisting movement for environmental justice in the south made their plan for launching programming at fourteen HBCUs in the South far more equitable and made sure they were run by people who represented the frontline that was recruited. This demonstrates a time when Sunrise reached out and connected with an organization already involved in the community and in the work that they wanted to accomplish. Partnerships such as this one are a model for the future of Sunrise’s work within frontline communities. The Jemez Principle 4 looks beyond simply standing with other organizations, but including their goals as a frontline run organization with the goals of Sunrise as a way to bring about resource sharing and stronger base development.

²⁴⁹ “Deep South Center for Environmental Justice,” enmasse - Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) - Website, accessed March 24, 2020, <http://www.dscej.org>.

²⁵⁰ Mani, Personal Interview.

The recommendation to strengthen and center partnerships and partner organizations is not new to organizing spaces. Given the large number of recommendations from the participants interviewed, there is a need for Sunrise to take this on.

Invest in Organizers of Color and End Tokenism

Reflecting on the concept of tokenism and the ways that it fractures organizing and climate movement spaces, Sunrise runs a risk of failure when communities and individuals are tokenized. Throughout the interviews, participants of color spoke about how being tokenized made their time working with Sunrise challenging and a negative experience. One of the ways to uplift and center frontline communities and in this case, communities of color, is by compensating them for their organizing time and energy, just as Sunrise compensates their white or educated organizers in leadership roles. They must pay leaders of color and make sure they have access to the resources, publicity and trainings. This section will focus on the responses and recommendations participants gave to minimizing the negative outcomes of tokenism in the Sunrise Movement.

Sehrish's recommended that Sunrise allocate funding and resources to invest in leaders of color. This means investing in hubs in 'bad areas' and in young people who are come from these communities. She noted that to effectively build leaders of color, people who reflect the backgrounds of the community the hub is in need to be the recruiters. This could come from an information packet that Sunrise makes around how to justly recruit people of color to a movement that is here to support them and knows that the fight for climate justice is one where people of color and low income people will need to be central in order to win.²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Sehrish, Personal Interview.

“[Sunrise should] not only be centering BIPOC voices and stories ... also centering the narrative that this is not only a fight for climate and for our lives but it's also a fight for equity for communities that have been traditionally left out”²⁵²

This idea for a guide for hubs to be founded with racial justice at the core, reflects upon the Just Hub Guide which Eric brought up in his interview.²⁵³ Neveah recommended that Sunrise teach about privilege when hubs are founded. She noted that working in her Sunrise hub taught her a lot about privilege in the movement and that people are fighting in different ways and at different capacities and that there needs to be a discussion about that in order for Sunrise to be able to address the types of challenges it has around tokenizing and excluding frontline communities. Neveah noted that building her hub made her confront some questions about privilege. She talked about how she needs to be “really keeping in mind that like just because I am a person of color, it doesn't mean I understand all people of colors' experiences.”²⁵⁴

Her recommendation is that Sunrise looks at where they have hubs and hold meetings. Are these spaces ones near public transit lines? Is food being provided if the meeting is during a meal? Who is organizing the space and is the physical meeting space welcoming to all? Neveah talked about how these types of questions are important when creating a more inclusive meeting and that her hub, which she noted is mostly queer women of color, works very hard to make sure that people can get to and from meetings at little to no cost so that anyone can truly be part of their Sunrise hub. Neveah thought about times she has had to host meeting in primarily white and rich areas, "there are people who wouldn't feel safe here"²⁵⁵ she says, and that alone should be enough for a hub to reevaluate their location and the goals as a group. “Be Inclusive”²⁵⁶ the

²⁵² Sshrish.

²⁵³ Eric, Personal Interview.

²⁵⁴ Neveah, Personal Interview.

²⁵⁵ Neveah.

²⁵⁶ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

first Jemez principle is one which Sunrise is guided by, therefore Neveah's recommendation goes along with the initial message.

More recommendations were made throughout the interviews, participants proposed that Sunrise increase trainings as a way to uplift and center frontline voices. Prioritizing leaders and members of color to be able to grow into the roles that were opening up for Sunrise members. Rebecca recommended better communication between Sunrise hubs and the greater community around their place in rallies, protests and other events. She noted that her hub has struggled to know when to step up and take on leadership roles and when to step down and look at ways to support and stand in solidarity with other movements.

Varshini Prakash spoke about the ways she is hoping that Sunrise will begin to be a better space and movement for frontline communities. Varshini began answering this question with a pause and started a few different times before truly beginning her answer. This is important to note because when talking with the executive director of Sunrise, the pausing and discomfort with the questions indicates that it may not have been asked as frequently as other questions.

Varshini spoke about her hopes for the future and they included many of the reflections of others on Sunrise as an organization. She noted the changes coming to Sunrise from her perspective as a Sunrise director. Varshini began by address the plans for change within the Sunrise movement and the beginning of the Green New Deal Network.

“One of the biggest things that we're working on right now is a **Green New Deal Network**, which is a essentially bringing together organizations across the movement landscape. These are environmental justice organizations, indigenous groups, organizations that are networks of community or may have place based community organizations. People's Action and the Center for Popular Democracy and The US Climate Action Networks that are organizing in many places [with] working people.”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Prakash, Personal Interview.

She continued with speaking about the Green New Deal Network explaining,

“About 12 to 15 groups are coming together to create this green New Deal network that will ultimately be diverting and directing resources to on the ground efforts by many of these member groups to further the Green New Deal in local, state, and federal context.”²⁵⁸

This plan for the Green New Deal taken through the action steps laid out by Varshini suggests the future of the Green New Deal is one where there is a much larger representation of people of color and frontline communities in the formation of the types of choices being made and put forward. This will build a movement which is for everyone and grows from the challenges with whiteness and white supremacy of the climate movement. A Green New Deal movement which will include low income Midwesterners, farmers and help transition workers in all industries. Sunrise’s place in the Network would be an equal to other movements and organizations and this could help level out who makes major additions and decisions to the Green New Deal. Varshini notes that Sunrise has struggled with the understanding that to win a Green New Deal in the United States they need more than simply themselves.

“Fundamentally one of the biggest issues we saw when we were growing up, engaging in climate action for the first time, was a lack of understanding that we really need a multiracial movement that has a deep class analysis as essential to winning... The biggest tool that our opposition has to divide us, is along the lines of race and class and gender.”²⁵⁹

These are the outlines that Varshini gave for the future of Sunrise. Throughout the interview she tied their success to constant learning and planning. Her “plan beats no plan” mentality reflected a different sentiment than other participants. A number of participants wanted Sunrise to take the time and energy they spend talking about how to build partnerships and JEDI

²⁵⁸ Prakash.

²⁵⁹ Prakash.

teams and take action following the lead of frontline communities. Other participants thought Sunrise should plan more and be more introspective and not rush the planning process.

Varshini's idea of the plan was that planning was the only way to truly be more equitable and create space for frontline communities in the movement.

She ended by reminding me about the balance between urgency and intention and how that line becomes harder to navigate when the climate crisis becomes more and more pressing for people on the frontline. The communities Sunrise is working to include are at peril which makes it challenging for them to slow down. Varshini's insight into the Sunrise Movement added a valuable layer to this research. She brought the perspective of planner and added context to the recommendations, critiques and praises the other 10 members of the Sunrise gave.²⁶⁰

The recommendations for partnerships, a Green New Deal for rural Americans, and ending tokenism reflect the history of the climate movement's challenges. Different groups and individuals in the movement, such as those who drafted the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice and the Jemez Principles, have pressed those in charge to make way for an inclusive movement. How is Sunrise operating in a way which ends whiteness and classism in the American climate and environmental movements and where are they repeated the status quo? Hearing from members of Sunrise led to the conclusion that Sunrise has to make conscious and bold choices to grow their movement in a way which includes, uplifts and gives a path to leadership from frontline communities. These recommendations are starting points for Sunrise.

²⁶⁰ Prakash.

Conclusion

How does the Sunrise Movement uplift and center frontline communities in their organizations, what are their tactics, where are they challenged and how are they succeeding?

The Sunrise Movement has a way to go before it will truly represent all young people and operate in a just fashion. Sunrise has not consistently prioritized uplifting and centering of frontline communities throughout their beginnings and growth as a movement. Climate action is an urgency-based movement and Sunrise has failed to manage their need for speed and rapid action along with meetings, partnerships and planning to uplift others. From the interviews and recommendations the participants gave, it is clear Sunrise must reflect on their short history and listen to their members and leaders of color. Where is Sunrise failing the partnerships and the connections they made with the community? Where is tokenism occurring and how is Sunrise going to end that culture.

They have the resources and skilled organizers to ask these questions to prioritize finding the answers without placing the responsibility on people from frontline communities to create solutions. When the participants of color spoke about being tokenized or seeing tokenism in the organization, they were still motivated to stay in the Sunrise movement and work against this oppressive behavior to fight for climate justice. I spoke to current members in the movement who were struggling with tokenism and other types of exclusive behavior coming from their hubs and Sunrise national. They are staying in the movement because they believe in the message, but Sunrise will have to act quickly and deliberately to end this oppression and continue to recruit and sustain a membership which includes.

Changing the way they are organizing to truly accommodate frontline voices will take more than simply minimizing tokenism, Sunrise will need to prioritize how they engage with white, college educated and middleclass young people. Training organizers on their own

privilege is essential to strengthening the movement. Jemez principle 5, “Build just relationships among ourselves,” outlines the idea of the success of a movement being directly tied to how members and leaders interact within the movement. Just relationships are not build overnight, according to the principle, they come from clarity brought around through transparency between members and leadership as well as skill sharing and resource distribution.²⁶¹

“Build just relationships among ourselves” should be applied as a way to look at partnerships with other movements local to the Sunrise hubs. These relationships are essential to the success of Sunrise and the demands of the climate justice movement.

On the other hand Jemez Principle 5 should be applied as a call to action for white organizers to speak about their privilege, whiteness and their place in a movement which works for everyone. Sunrise has the resources and power to provide anti-oppression, understanding whiteness and privilege trainings to all of their members. Building just relationships requires an open discussion of privilege which white people create a space and time to facilitate.

Speaking about privilege and whiteness should be built in the white organizers schedules and include trainers and people of color who would like to help facilitate the discussion and are compensated for their time. Beyond trainings like these, Sunrise needs to recognize the deeply complex issue of whiteness in the climate and environmental movement and work to incorporate experts in all fields required to win a Green New Deal into the conversation. White voices, wealthy voices, voices of color and poor voices are all valid and constructive in different ways, from providing financial support to skill sharing to being the local expert on a particular issue. Grappling with the tensions of a large and varied movement is something Sunrise will constantly be feeling and it is an important element of their work over all.

²⁶¹ SouthWest Organizing Project, “Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing,” n.d.

The Sunrise Movement is powerful, young and growing stronger and wiser every day, they have a unique position to take on the government and corporations with the moral high ground as youth, the first generations to live with extreme effects of the climate change. Sunrise has the capacity to take on this next election and make serious change in the way the government and the country understand their power in mitigating the climate crisis and implementing a Green New Deal.

With United States influx around how to best rebuild the country as COVID19 virus and poor leadership send the country into a recession, Sunrise has their first chance to be part of the movement which begins to demand elements of a Green New Deal. Actions such as an energy transition, federal jobs guarantee, universal healthcare and debt cancelations will be considered when the country plans to recover and rebuild. In a public meeting on April 2nd, 2020, I heard the beginning of the plan for action which the Sunrise Movement has begun. They are embracing this opportunity to stand with young people and design a future which incorporates solidarity among movements, climate justice and serves all.

Sunrise stands at a turning point in their movement where they have a chance to grow the climate movement and at the same time grow away from the exclusive history towards a climate justice for all.

Appendices

Appendix i

Request for an Interview

Sample email

Hi _____!

My Name is Phoebe Dolan and I am a senior at Brandeis University in Waltham Mass and a member of the Sunrise movement via New Hampshire as a summer organizing fellow and a member of the Boston hub. I work in Fossil Fuel Divestment at Brandeis as well as labor solidarity organizing. I am completing a senior thesis in environmental studies to end off my time at college.

I am reaching out to you to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting about the Sunrise Movement for my senior thesis.

I am asking you about participating in this study because I am interested to hear from hub leaders, movement leaders and organizers about the Sunrise movement and frontline communities. This interview will take 30 minutes and can be scheduled any time that works for you. I am happy to speak on the phone or over Skype or Zoom or we can meet in person, if you are in the Boston/ MetroWest area.

Let me know if you are interested in being part of my research, and thank you so much for reading!

In Solidarity,
Phoebe

Sample Slack Message

Hi _____,

My Name is Phoebe Dolan and I am a senior at Brandeis University in Waltham Mass and a member of the Sunrise movement via New Hampshire as a summer organizing fellow and a member of the Boston hub. I work in Fossil Fuel Divestment at Brandeis as well as labor solidarity organizing. I am completing a senior thesis in environmental studies to end off my time at college. I am writing a senior thesis about the Sunrise Movement and I am reaching out because I would like to interview you for it!

I am asking you about participating in this study because I am interested to hear from hub leaders, movement leaders and organizers working on diversity and equity about the Sunrise movement and frontline communities. This interview will take 30 minutes and can be scheduled any time that works for you. I am happy to speak on the phone or over Skype or Zoom within the months of January and February!

Let me know if you are interested in being part of my research, and thank you so much for reading!

Looking forward to hearing from you soon,
Phoebe Dolan

Appendix ii
Interview Guide

Questions posed during interviews

Can you share your sunrise story with me, - why are you fighting for climate justice?!

What is your history with the Sunrise Movement?

How would you describe Sunrise's leadership structure in your hub?

How does Sunrise/ do you define a frontline community?

In what ways does Sunrise work to incorporate, not only the needs of people from frontline communities, but also the importance of their perspectives throughout the hierarchy of the organization?

What types of systems are in place to make sure that not simply, white or educated or middle to upper class people are in places of power in the movement?

What types of systems in your role do you see this occurring?

Starting a movement filled with college graduates, what were the initial efforts made to reach out to frontline communities to legitimate the work that was being conducted?

Sunrise just launched a pilot program for engaging with Historically Black Colleges and Universities on the GND, this plan is called the Green New Deal Project (GNDP).

Is this in response to specific concerns with Sunrise's past methods towards engaging diverse communities?

Ending Survey questions:

Race -

Gender-

Age -

Education level-

Appendix iii
Informed consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in this research completed by Phoebe Dolan, for her undergraduate senior honors thesis at Brandeis University. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Brian Donahue, Professor of Environmental Studies at Brandeis University.

Please read form carefully and ask the researcher any questions you may have before signing this document.

If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked to sign this form. You will receive a signed copy of the form to keep for your records, included in the form a contact information for the future if you have any further questions.

What is this study about?

I am conducting research for my senior thesis, investigating the methods and tactics used by the Sunrise Movement to incorporate people from frontline communities into the movement. I will also be interviewing leaders of groups and organizations through the Climate Justice Alliance and investigating the ways that they are engaging their communities, through their local initiatives and how they uplift diversity and frontline communities.

What will I be asking you to do as a participant?

I will be asking you a number of questions about your work with your organization or movement and also a bit of background information about it. Then I will listen and take notes as you answer as well as record if you agree to it. The interview will not be longer than 40 minutes, probably it will take from 20-30 minutes. The information gained from this interview will be incorporated into my thesis that will be submitted as an undergraduate senior thesis and will be held by myself and my university and may possibly be published on the internet. It will also form part of an oral presentation that I will give to my peers and faculty members.

What are the potential risks to you?

There is a risk for emotional stress during the interview, due to the content of the questions including topics of race, gender and ethnicity. There is an extremely low possibility of breach of confidentiality. I will do everything in my power for that not to happen, but there is a small possibility that something could go wrong. Besides that I do not see any further risks this study.

Will you benefit from the study?

Participation in this study may not benefit you directly. However, the information I am gathering will help me paint a picture of the methods your organization is using to include and uplift frontline communities and by illuminating the work that you do, it will help to inspire others to do the same in their organizations. Hopefully together we can work to make the climate movement a place where all are welcome and supported.

Will it cost you anything to participate?

The only cost is time.

Will you be compensated from participating?

No.

How will your information be kept private?

You have the option of either remaining anonymous or of having your contribution to the study acknowledged. If you choose to remain anonymous, no reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. Your name, age, gender or any other details I ask for in the interview process will be secured only for my viewing and kept in a secure place, and all personal data I ask for is voluntarily given by you. The data will be stored with pseudonyms and be deidentified as soon as it can be after collection.

The information will be destroyed 3 years after the this project is complete. It will never be used by other researchers, but may be used again by this researcher. It will be deidentified and securely saved for that time.

What is you don't want to participant or change your mind partway through?

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You may also decline to answer any specific question. If you withdraw from the study at any time the information already obtained from you will be destroyed.

Who can you contact if you have further questions?

You may contact the researcher at any time over email at phoebedolan@brandeis.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, concerns about the study and do not feel comfortable asking the researcher or if you cannot reach the researcher, please contact the Brandeis University Human Research Protection Program at 781-736-8133 or irb@brandeis.edu.

For written consent to all that is stated above:

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study.

YOU MUST BE 18 YEARS OR OLDER TO PARTCIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH

I do ___ I do not ___ give permission to be audiotaped.

Participant's signature: _____ **Date** _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ **Date** _____

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