

# An Ecological Future and the Pursuit of Justice: The Key Challenge of Our Times

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*There is an inseparable connection between **the pursuit of an ecological future and the pursuit of justice**. We can have both or we will have neither. That needs to be our guide for the economic and ecological transformation to come.*

Two underlying global dynamics are leading us toward self-destruction.

First, economic activity is relentlessly **driving ecological damage through pollution, depletion, and habitat destruction**. The result is the accelerating sixth global mass extinction of the Anthropocene. This is extraordinary.

A cataclysmic event with global geophysical consequences for the ecosphere is the result of self-conscious human action. In the past, periodic mass extinction were unleashed by forces like mass volcanism pouring gigatons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, or the result of a huge meteor strike ending the age of dinosaurs killing most living creatures and leading to the extinction of 75% of all species.

The truth is that current human conduct is unsustainable. Unless substantially reformed, it will end as a consequence of ecological collapse and the great dying now underway. Mass death will be shared by humanity and not just by others, the insects and amphibians now vanishing globally at alarming rates. Mitigating the consequences of the great dying will require deliberate and quick action to eliminate fossil fuel pollution, to pursue a zero pollution, zero waste industrial ecology, to practice an ecological agriculture, forestry, aquaculture.

Second, is understanding that the practice of pollution, depletion, habitat destruction rests upon injustice, inequality, and enormous disparities of power between the few and the many. The world led by a billionaire class is incompatible with both the effective practice of democracy and an ecological turn. While some billionaires may harbor ecological sentiments, the existing market rules under which they have created and expand their wealth and power are based upon the practice of ecological pillage and inequality as usual.

Our central task is more than just installing solar panels and wind machines. The good news is that an ecological turn is both within our technical capabilities and can be guided by straightforward reforms of the price system and a legal mandate for fiduciary responsibility as the pursuit of ecological ends and justice. Our difficulties are largely political, and therefore amenable to democratic processes and insistent demands of millions, and soon to be billions, in the street.

Guiding the pursuit of profit or surpluses toward ecological ends, for a global market system

to restore and protect the global ecosphere and the global commons of air, soil, ocean means first, comprehensive new ecological market rules that send clear price signals for sustainability where sustainable goods and services are cheaper gain market share and become more profitable, and second, a legally binding definition of fiduciary responsibility that the pursuit of economic growth results in ecological improvement in the context of social and ecological justice, for example, the replacement of fossil fuels with energy user owned renewables.

The social and economic context is a global convergence upon sustainable and just norms for all. The results are ecological sustainability, shared global prosperity, and building a global peace system that replaces a war system.

The rise of toxic nationalism, of Trumpism in the United States and similar excrescences globally are a reaction, in part, to the inequality and unfairness of business as usual. What is particularly pathetic in this expression of desperation is a willingness to embrace climate denial and policies of roll back of all ecological regulations as part of the relief promised by Trump [et. al.](#) whose message is wrapped in familiar racist tropes against dark skinned immigrants and the “danger” posed by desperate migrants seeking asylum.

The economics of efficiency and zero fuel cost renewables with falling capital costs and improving efficacy is leading by fits and starts toward a global renewable transformation. At the same time, the deepening and emergent consequences of climate change will lead to serious action. While elements of the Republican Party will continue to deny the reality of climate change, these policies have the same shelf life as denying gravity because falling down is unpleasant. Wild fire, floods, droughts, super storms, winter tornadoes, crop failures are making it clear that the clock is ticking louder and louder. The necessity to deal with the consequences of climate change before geophysical forces foreclose options is become clearer by the minute. The debate is now switching to what must be done, and how to do it.

Our key global challenge is to create the financial tools and market rules to encourage ecological economic growth in a way that supports social and ecological justice. We will have both ecological sustainability and social justice or we will have neither. That is the lens through which to scrutinize and pursue a Green New Deal and our future policies.

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**Roy Morrison** builds Solar Farms. His next book (forthcoming) is *EEG: Reversing Climate Change and Building an Ecological Civilization*.

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