

BUILDING A RESILIENT & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY ACTION OPTIONS

- Recognize and learn from the legacy of community resilience and justice that the indigenous people of this region have practiced for centuries, before the era of colonization. Tap into local events and organizations that support native people's causes and, in the process, develop respectful relationships with native people of this area. Find ways to include their voices in developing a positive, inclusive vision for our region.
- Question your belief that you are too busy to support the creation of a just and resilient community. Consider shifting a small fraction of the time you spend with TV, videos, internet surfing, and depressing news, to the adventure of building a strong local economy and community that works "for all". Invest your creativity and yearning, along with many millions around the world and thousands in our area, into positive action. The more of us who make the commitment, the more powerful and enlivening it becomes!
- Diversity and inclusion enhances the creativity and stability, and, hence, the resilience, of human and natural systems. Commit to breaking out of the box of cultural segregation that is the norm in most of our country. Learn about the widely varied cultures in our area through reading, viewing videos, and participating in cultural events and activities. Show interest in the cultures and history of individuals you already know or are getting to know by asking thoughtful, meaningful questions and listening carefully to their replies.
- Volunteer in multicultural organizations that serve the underserved and that seek to end inequality and bias in our community. Connect and support them by serving food at special events, tutoring in community centers, supporting their causes, or lending your time and talent by serving on their Boards. Consider organizations such as the Village at Ithaca, Multicultural Resource Center, Greater Ithaca Activities Center, Southside Community Center, Dorothy Cotton Institute, Tompkins County Worker Center, Cayuga SHARE Farm, ACTION, the Ithaca City Board of Education, TC Action, etc.
- Take the TC Worker's Center pledge: During the next year, I'LL BE THERE at least five times for someone else's fight as well as my own.
- Develop trusting relationships - humbly, patiently and persistently - with people from different class, race and ethnic backgrounds. Don't expect it to be a quick or easy thing to do and resist trying to 'fix' them. Do expect to become a more passionate and compassionate person in the process. One great way to make meaningful contact with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds is by joining one of the Multicultural Resource Center's Talking Circles on Race & Racism <http://multicultural-resource.org/>
- If you are white, learn about white privilege, and once you get over the unsettling emotions that emerge, learn how to use your privilege to support people who experience marginalization and bias on a daily basis. As you develop trusting relationships, learn how to become an advocate & ally who can see this community and place through the eyes of marginalized people, and who can effectively advocate for their concerns.
- If you are white, seek out cultural events, recreational experiences, or community meetings where you are in a small minority. Even though it's not the same as being a consistently disadvantaged minority, try to learn from these occasions how differently the world can be experienced outside of the dominant cultural mindset you usually take for granted.
- Recognize that advocacy for workers rights, immigrants rights, disability rights, living wage as minimum wage, stopping mass incarceration, reducing in and out-of-school suspensions, and eliminating other forms of institutional racism and economic injustice, are essential foundations for creating resilient communities, which must be built on mutual trust. Just as there can be no peace without justice, there can be no sustainability without equity.
- See sustainability not just as a green program, but also as a living systems model of community founded on interdependence, cooperation, and deep democracy, i.e., full participation and opportunity for all. Find ways to advocate for renewable energy, local food, green housing, great mass transit systems, and zero waste systems *FOR ALL*, that specifically strengthen inclusive and participatory habits and structures.

- Learn self-reliance skills, like growing and preparing food, bicycle maintenance, home repair, and organizing neighborhood projects, as a process of building inclusive community. Choose (or help bring together) groups and environments for learning about canning, building, repairing, financial planning, participatory decision-making, etc., in ways that stretch your cultural boundaries.
- Examine and undo conditioning you may have that sharing, exchanging, reusing, repairing or buying lightly used goods and materials that you need is too “cheap”, too “hippy”, or too “lower class”. Strengthen the sharing economy!
- Practice inclusive thinking: Are the initiatives you support and events you attend, racially and economically inclusive? Ask: “Who’s here and who’s not?”, “Why?” and “What can I/we do to change the pattern?” Investigate what would make those situations more inviting to people from a wider range of cultures - and follow up. Work to ensure that solutions to the issues you feel passionate about engage and serve **ALL** parts of our community.
- Consider: “Our liberation is bound up with the liberation of *every other* being on the planet”. Look fearlessly at how power and wealth is currently distributed and work, as you can, to build an economy that works for everyone.
- If you affiliate with sustainability or environmentally oriented initiative, study how the issue it’s addressing impacts marginalized communities and individuals in their actual lived world. Put yourself in their place to the degree possible. Notice how conventional industrial processes not only waste energy and materials but also trash people and communities. See the ways in which your work is the work of justice – between species, between humans and their home places, between generations, and between communities, races, classes, and cultures.
- Cultivate your love of justice and of inclusive community, side by side with your love of place and of the earth. If you are more *environmentally* focused, watch videos and read writings of great justice advocates, and find local justice advocates to learn from and support, in order to build up your justice mindset and identity. If you are more *justice-focused*, watch videos, read writings by inspiring environmental and sustainability leaders, and find local sustainability advocates to learn from and support. Active love of justice and love of place are profound capacities we all share that deserve much more support than we currently give them.
- If you affiliate with a sustainability-oriented initiative concerned about “diversity”, before you focus on how to get people of color to come your events or join your Board of Directors, get to know people where they are, on *their* terms, and in support of *their* concerns. When you do ask people to join *your* board or come to *your* events, do so with a wholehearted, proactive effort that engages *many* people in culturally appropriate ways and that builds on genuine relationships and commitments, not as a last-minute afterthought.
- Environmental advocates need to realize why equity is such a powerful driver of ecological and social sustainability. The longer we stay divided along race & class lines, the easier it is for financial elites to keep exploiting our communities & ecosystems for their shortsighted gain. And once all people know they are valued and have a say and a stake in their community, their natural desire for a healthy environment more readily comes to the fore. And the widened demand for healthful, green options *as everyone’s right* can have a snowball effect that builds strong local economies that employ all who are capable of working. So we need to understand & keep reminding others about the importance of dismantling racism, classism, & corporate domination in our policies, projects, & in our own conditioning. Build inclusive *and* systems awareness into all aspects of sustainability work.

Justice advocates, as well, need to take on the challenge of climate change and habitat destruction and how they require *all of us* to change our behaviors, policies, jobs, consumption patterns, energy use, etc. Why? Because there will be **no** sustained benefits for anyone, if we let our life support systems fall into ever-greater states of instability and chaos. Because we can’t depend on the current exploitative, fossil fuel-based economic system, which is failing all of us miserably, even the middle class, but especially low income people and people of color. Because so many ecological strategies and innovations offer opportunities for cost savings, health improvements, job creation and small business development, that directly support the justice and self-determination agenda. And because we are all in grave danger, though it’s hard to hold that awareness on a daily basis in the Finger Lakes, and saving our communities and our home is the right thing to do.