



**LCJF**

LATINO  
CLIMATE JUSTICE  
FRAMEWORK

¡Luchando por la Liberación Ambiental!





# INTRODUCTION

One year ago, on October 15, 2021, 22 Latino/a/x organizations<sup>1</sup> from across the country came together to expand on our successful 2021 National Latinx Climate Crisis Letter and create a more comprehensive, lasting Latino/a/x framework for addressing the climate crisis: the Latino Climate Justice Framework (LCJF).

The extended battle over President Biden's climate agenda has shown the need for such a framework. While we welcome new policies to address the climate crisis, there still needs to be more focus on the priorities, needs, and disproportionate impacts on Latino/a/x communities across the country.

The framework presented in this report builds upon the significant work of frontline climate and environmental justice leaders to highlight those disproportionate impacts and help ensure our priorities are included, elevated, and protected.

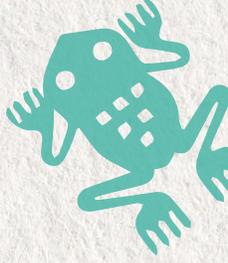
Our hope and intent is to influence and galvanize federal, state and local efforts as much-needed federal funding goes out to states and localities through the newly passed Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. This easy-to-follow framework provides a tool for our partners to engage in these efforts and advocate on behalf of Latino/a/x communities.



<sup>1</sup> Note: The original 22 partner organizations that have contributed extensively to the development of the LCJF may cover some but not necessarily all the issues laid out in this report in their day to day work.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### OUR URGENCY

We are living in a climate crisis. According to the world's leading scientists, we have until 2030 — only a little over seven years — to dramatically cut carbon emissions to stop warming at 1.5°C. If we don't, conditions will continue to deteriorate at alarming rates. But our communities don't need a scientific report to confirm what we already know. Extreme temperatures, scorching fires, severe droughts, flooding in our streets are plaguing our communities right now.

A long history of racism, classism and political apathy in the U.S. has placed Latino/a/xs, especially low income families, at the frontlines of the climate crisis. Systemic and systematic injustices have affected where we live, what types of jobs we occupy and our lack of access to robust health services. As a result, Latino/a/x communities are particularly hard-hit by climate change.

More than half of Latino/a/xs in the U.S. live in California, Texas and Florida, states that have experienced increasingly destructive extreme weather events fueled by climate change. The Southeast U.S. is home to some of the fastest growing Latino/a/x communities and is threatened by increasingly dangerous heatwaves. And Puerto Rico is already experiencing impacts of increasingly severe storm seasons with devastating consequences on health, infrastructure, and the economy.

Latino/a/x households in these areas and elsewhere have significantly less resources to adapt to and combat the effects of climate change than white households — the median wealth of Latino/a/x families in 2019 was \$36,100 compared to \$188,200 for white families, the equivalent of almost five Latino/a/x families. And the U.S. government has for years underinvested in infrastructure to protect low-income communities and communities of color, leaving them dangerously exposed to escalating climate impacts.



## OUR CALL TO ACTION

Our *comunidades* across the country need climate solutions to mitigate, prepare for and prevent the devastating impacts of the climate crisis and protect against the dangers posed by fossil fuels and other polluting sources. These solutions must produce tangible improvements in the quality of life for our *comunidades* in terms of better air and water quality, equitable access to nature, local economic development, public health, and community prosperity and resilience.

The bipartisan infrastructure law passed in November 2021 and the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provide considerable and much-needed investments in projects that will boost clean energy and climate resilience. Yet, significant trade-offs were granted with troubling handouts given to the fossil fuel industry that must be addressed by our leaders.

We cannot afford to continue to bankroll the fossil fuel industry. We must eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, and redirect investments to advance local and community control of clean, renewable energy production and distribution, while making fossil fuel and other companies pay for the consequences of their pollution on public health, the environment, and climate change.

In this effort, we must prioritize environmental justice and frontline communities, and tap into the ancestral knowledge of *nuestras comunidades*. Many Latino/a/x communities are fierce stewards of *Madre Tierra*, protecting Her abundance and living in communion with Her natural cycles. Latino/a/x communities historically have a culture of resourcefulness, utilizing the resources around us without squandering or wasting unnecessarily – it's time for our leaders to listen to our cultural wisdom and apply it to bold solutions.

## OUR THEORY OF CHANGE:

### Cataloging and Amplifying Distinctly Latino/a/x Needs and Solutions

Policy proposals to address the climate crisis often fall short in addressing the disproportionate impacts on Latino/a/x communities and our distinct needs. Items like climate migration, citizenship, farmworkers, language access, and issues plaguing Puerto Rico are not given the consideration that is needed to make sure that Latino/a/x people see ourselves in the proposals and as part of the solution.

The Latino Climate Justice Framework (LCJF) provides a blueprint that Latino/a/xs across the country can turn to as they advocate for climate solutions in their communities.



According to the U.S. Census, Latino/a/xs reached a population of over 60 million people in 2019, and by 2045, we are expected to comprise nearly 25 percent of the U.S. population. Yet despite representing a significant economic engine in this country, our communities persistently encounter disproportionate economic and health impacts, something the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored. Today, Latino/a/xs are overrepresented among people living in poverty and face poorer health outcomes due to persistent systemic environmental and economic inequity.



We also recognize that Latino/a/xs are far from homogeneous. Rather, we seek to elevate the diverse concerns and interests of Latino/a/x communities that should be accounted for in any climate policy debate.

As the largest ethnic minority population in the U.S., we comprise a culturally, economically, socially, and politically diverse group dispersed across all 50 states and territories representing distinct experiences and interests. From domestic care workers in Miami to farmworkers in California's Central Valley, the realities that unite and define Latino/a/x lives and livelihoods are multidimensional and intersectional.

## **LATINO CLIMATE JUSTICE FRAMEWORK (LCJF)**

We have divided this framework into three chapters that run the gamut on Latino/a/x-specific climate issues: everything from dramatically improving our transportation and electrical grid system, to cleaning up the thousands of abandoned oil wells posing risks to our communities, to boosting community resilience and increasing equitable access to nature's benefits, to comprehensive immigration reform and increasing access to funding opportunities. While the framework isn't exhaustive, we sought and received extensive feedback from partners and collaborators to cover the core current climate issues impacting our communities.

By outlining the common interests and perspectives of Latino/a/x communities in the climate policy discourse, we aim to provide a vision of how climate and environmental justice solutions can adequately respond to the unique problems and needs faced by Latino/a/x communities across our nation.

## OUTCOMES

In our work, GreenLatinos consistently strives to create new, engaging, and inclusive opportunities for collective action, advocacy, and education. Collaboration is a lynchpin to our work; it defines our organization and enables us to grow the power and reach of our work. We also understand that climate action must go beyond decarbonization and address racial and environmental justice and social equity.

We hope this framework will create new pathways for advocacy collaboration with fellow Latino/a/x-led and serving organizations as we press forward in our shared fight to protect and uplift our communities in the face of climate change and other environmental threats. It also underscores gaps in policy that must be addressed to achieve better social, environmental, economic, and health outcomes for Latino/a/x communities and greater access to the policy making process to build our power. This is the fight of our lives. Our battle against climate change is a moral imperative, an environmental emergency, and an economic opportunity for our *familias*.





# CHAPTER 1

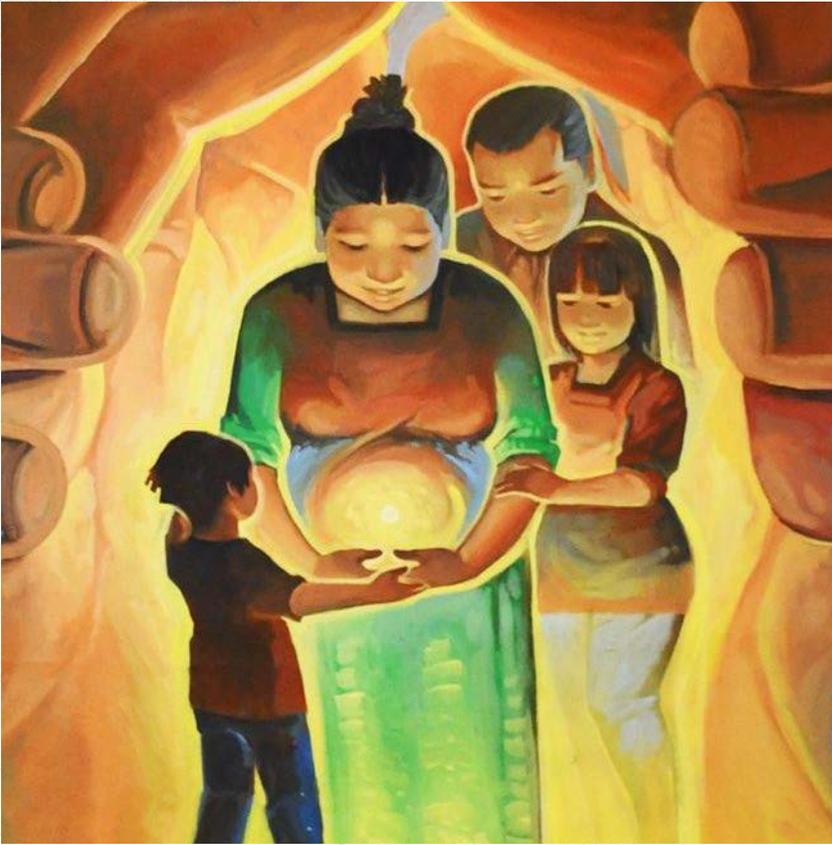
## THE PATH TO ENERGY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We have a fossil fuel addiction. This addiction to oil, gas and coal has lined the pockets of corporations at the expense of our planet and the communities living on the frontlines of extraction. The fossil fuels burned for transportation and electricity generation produce heat-trapping climate pollution and health-harming air and water pollution. By 2060, global plastic production is projected to triple and will account for 20 percent of all fossil fuel consumption.

Petrochemical facilities and disposal of plastics that they create disproportionately harm people of color and low-income communities. A recent report found that globally, “more than 8 million people died in 2018 due to air pollution from burning coal, diesel, and other fossil fuels” and the pollution produced by combusting fossil fuels “contributed to about one in five deaths worldwide.”

The sobering reality is that Latino/a/x communities in this country bear the brunt of climate, water and air pollution. Nationwide, Latino/a/x children are more likely to have asthma, and those with asthma are almost twice as likely to die from an asthma attack than non-Latino/a/x white children. Undoubtedly we need energy to power our world, but it’s time for us to trade in practices that extract from Madre Tierra – producing pollution that harms us all – for clean, renewable alternatives that harness the natural energy of the planet, allowing us all to breathe easier while creating millions of jobs.

In this chapter we look at the problems the legacy of extraction has produced for Latino/a/x communities and we advocate for solutions that will facilitate a phase out of fossil fuels and a just transition toward a clean energy and zero emission transportation future.



## ADVANCING CLEAN, RENEWABLE, COMMUNITY-BASED ENERGY

### Our Goal

Modernize our electric grid and equitably advance clean, affordable renewable energy through investments in community-based energy programs, such as community solar, and opportunities for low-income students and workers to enter clean energy careers.

### The Problem

- **Latino/a/x households pay disproportionately high energy costs.** The House Energy and Commerce Committee noted in an [April 2021 hearing](#) that two-thirds of low-income households face a high energy burden. This amounts to nearly 26 million U.S. households. Concerningly, Latino/a/xs are overrepresented among people living in poverty. Latino/a/x communities account for [18.7 percent](#) of the U.S. population yet make up 28.1 percent of the poverty rate, and [more](#) Latino/a/x children live in poverty than any other ethnic group. The average low-income household spends [8.6 percent](#) of their income on electricity, compared to 3 percent for the average non-low-income American household.
- **Low-income, Latino/a/x households and communities have so far been left behind in the transition to clean energy.** The Energy Department's National Renewable Energy Laboratory [estimates](#) that more than 40 percent of total U.S. residential solar potential is with low-to-moderate income (LMI) customer groups, yet low-income households represent only [15 percent](#) of solar adoption. Low-income households face [barriers](#) to capitalizing on clean energy solutions such as upfront costs and lack of qualifying credit. Moreover, a [2019 study](#) by researchers at UC Berkeley and Tufts universities found that in census tracts with the same median household income, majority Hispanic census tracts had 30 percent less installed than other tracts, while majority white communities had 21 percent more rooftop solar installed. This trend was also identified with predominantly Black census tracts.
- **Latino/a/x workers need a pathway to clean energy jobs.** Latino/a/xs, particularly those of immigrant backgrounds, disproportionately work dangerous jobs and represent [over 20 percent](#) of all occupational fatalities, so clean energy jobs could offer a literal lifeline. [UnidosUS](#) also found that nearly 90 percent of Latino/a/xs surveyed would rather work in clean energy over a fossil fuel company, assuming equal compensation and benefits. Unfortunately, clean energy jobs often lack equitable access and therefore we are [underrepresented](#) in the emerging clean energy sector that is anticipated to create [millions of jobs](#).



## Solutions

### Invest with justice in clean energy

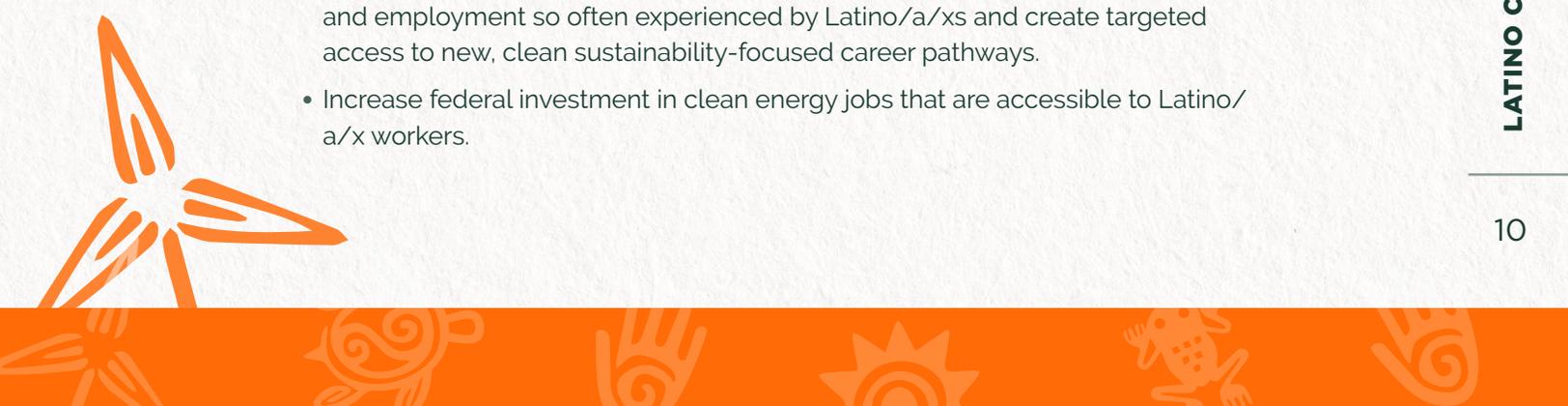
- Prioritize communities of color and low-income communities in clean energy infrastructure investments going forward; these communities should receive at least 40 percent of clean energy infrastructure overall benefits, as committed to by President Biden in his Justice40 initiative.
- Invest in weatherization and energy efficiency to lower energy bills, diminish dependence on polluting fossil fuels, and build more resilient communities.
- Achieve a climate-resilient, collectively governed grid infrastructure that ensures reliable and democratized energy access for all.
- Enact policy models like the Public Power Resolution, which establishes electricity as a human right and public good, and moves to establish an accountable, equitable, transparent, 100 percent renewable, public power system.

### Accelerate the transition to renewable energy (i.e., wind, solar, geothermal and small-scale hydropower)

- Adopt a national Renewable Energy Standard (RES) that would achieve 100 percent renewable, pollution-free electricity by 2035 without false solutions like forest biomass, carbon capture and storage (CCS), trash incineration, chemical recycling, and gasification, among others that may lead to increased carbon pollution.
- Broaden access and ensure renewable energy standards include robust community-based energy projects, including microgrid projects, demand energy response incentives and rooftop and community solar programs coupled with battery storage, energy efficiency options and comprehensive electric vehicle charging networks.
- Make clean energy affordable to low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities to ensure benefits are experienced by those who need them most.
- Make appliance efficiency rebate programs accessible at the time of purchase not during tax filing.

### Advance economic equity and opportunity for Latino/a/x workers

- Develop a renewable energy workforce that reflects the population.
- Dismantle discriminatory structures that impede access to quality education and employment so often experienced by Latino/a/xs and create targeted access to new, clean sustainability-focused career pathways.
- Increase federal investment in clean energy jobs that are accessible to Latino/a/x workers.





- Create new education, training, and employment programs in emerging sectors tailored to the skills of Latino/a/x workers and the needs of their communities.
- Target marketing of clean energy jobs in Latino/a/x communities and offer a living wage and fair benefits.
- Ensure holistic safety nets can support Latino/a/x communities amid job transitions, including paid worker retraining programs, free childcare, healthcare coverage services, and opportunities to make family-sustaining wages in new, sustainability-focused careers.
- Improve worker safety regulation and reduce legal hurdles to unionization.

## ADVANCING CLEAN MOBILITY, TRANSPORTATION AND SHIPPING

### Our Goal

Accelerate zero-emission transportation, freight movement, ports, and public transit, and advance affordable EV purchasing and comprehensive EV charging infrastructure in low-income communities.

### The Problem

- **Latino/a/x workers and families rely heavily on public transportation.** According to 2016 data, Latino/a/xs commute by public transit significantly more than their white counterparts. Workers of color also disproportionately have long public transit commutes of 60 minutes or longer each way. This time costs money, reducing opportunity for economic upward mobility and capacity for investment in social capital, including spending time with family, participating with community events and organizations, and civic engagement. It is also detrimental to health as it adds more sedentary hours to their lives and less time to exercise.
- **Pollution from school buses endangers children.** School buses transport 25 million children to school in the U.S. each day. Most of these buses run on dirty diesel engines, spewing pollution that causes cancer, triggers asthma attacks, and makes the climate crisis worse.
- **Latino/a/x communities are especially vulnerable to pollution from trucks.** Medium and heavy-duty vehicles account for around 24 percent of GHG emissions in the transportation sector. They are also a major source of harmful air pollutants, including PM<sub>2.5</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub>. Further, these air pollutants are significantly higher in zip codes with majority Black, Latino/a/x, and low-income populations, and the health consequences are severe. For



example, majority Hispanic San Bernardino County (CA), which is known for its warehouses and heavy truck traffic, gets an “F” grade from the American Lung Association, with 38,788 cases of children with pediatric asthma and 152,317 adults with asthma.

- **Latino/a/xs disproportionately live near ports and railyards.** EPA has recognized that more than 13 million people, predominantly low-income, Black and Latino/a/x people (including 3.5 million children), live near major marine ports or railyards, and are thereby exposed to substantially increased health risks from freight transport-related air pollution.



## Solutions

### **Prioritize livability of neighborhoods by building safe, accessible public transportation options where they are lacking**

- Invest in public transportation, prioritizing states most lacking adequate public transit options for residents.
- Accelerate policies that improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists like vision zero programs and highlight model programs that incentivize non-vehicle modes of transportation.
- Fund and incentivize non-vehicle mobility programs in states and municipalities, including congestion pricing, zero emission zones, complete streets, and clean corridors.

### **Accelerate zero-emission transportation deployment in an equitable manner**

- Require vehicle manufacturers and truck fleets to transition to 100 percent zero-emission vehicles no later than 2035.
- Protect independent truck owners and prevent the burden of transitioning to zero-emission trucks from being passed on to them by ensuring access to sufficient funds that offset the cost of transitioning to zero emission vehicles.
- Mobilize resources in new technology development for building a sustainable and multimodal zero-emissions transportation network that improves the livability of all communities, including significant investment in public transit.
- Create and expand incentive programs that equitably benefit and incentivize lower and middle-income buyers to ensure that EVs are affordable to all.
- Create strategies to make EVs more accessible that take into account differing

levels of technology literacy, language needs, increasing knowledge about costs and incentives, and more holistic education about why EVs are an asset to the environment and quality of life.

- Deploy electric charging infrastructure that is convenient, safe to access, and affordable while prioritizing deployment in disadvantaged communities with low EV-charging access.
- Advance globally-focused climate justice legislation that responds to the environmental impacts and human rights conditions in mining communities impacted by rare earth mineral extraction largely used for electric vehicle batteries.
- Provide federal funding to states and localities to transition to zero emission buses.

### **Accelerate development of zero emission ports**

- Reduce port pollution in impacted communities by investing, developing, deploying and enforcing zero-emission heavy-duty truck programs, clean shipping projects including on-shore power programs, incentives for clean transportation of goods by rail, and zero-emission cargo-handling equipment in and around ports.
- Address warehouse pollution associated with truck trips moving goods to warehouses through policies like indirect sources rules.

## **REDUCING FOSSIL FUEL POLLUTION AND SACRIFICE ZONES**

### **Our Goal**

Protect our *comunidades* from pollution generated by oil and gas infrastructure.

### **The Problem**

- **Oil and gas operations are hazardous for public health and safety, especially for those in nearby communities.** In addition to greenhouse gas emissions (in particular, carbon dioxide and methane), oil and gas operations generate an array of dangerous pollutants, including hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter, as well as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), which react together to form ground-level ozone pollution. Additionally, research has shown that incinerators and landfills are more often sited in frontline communities including Latino/a/x communities. Living near these operations is associated with higher risk of cardiovascular



disease, impaired lung function, childhood asthma, cancer, anxiety, depression, developmental disorders, preterm birth and impaired fetal growth.

- **Latino/a/x households disproportionately live near oil and gas operations.** Recent analysis demonstrates an overlap of high density oil and gas operations, communities of color, and people living below the poverty line. About 17.3 million people live within a half mile of an active oil and gas well, including 1.6 million Hispanic people; 919,000 Black people; 311,400 Asian people; and 260,000 Native American people.
- **Latino/a/xs, particularly children, disproportionately suffer from poor air quality caused by fossil fuels.** People living in majority Latino/a/x neighborhoods are dangerously exposed to higher particulate matter and nitrogen oxides levels than residents of majority white neighborhoods, contributing to higher overall rates of heart disease, cancer, asthma and other health problems. For example, in California 44 percent of Latino/a/xs communities have poor air quality, in comparison to 25 percent of non-Latino/a/xs communities.

## Solutions

### Reduce pollution (e.g., methane, benzene, particulate matter, ozone) from existing fossil fuel operations

- Promulgate and enforce strong EPA rules requiring oil and gas operators to install pollution mitigation measures (e.g., new technology pilot projects, leak detection and repair equipment (LDAR), and adequate fence line monitoring), prioritizing disproportionately burdened communities.
- Demand that setbacks or “buffer zones” of at least 1,500 feet are established around active oil and gas wells to protect communities in close proximity to the risk.
- Conduct a robust review of National Ambient Air Quality Standards to develop stronger standards for PM<sub>2.5</sub> and ozone pollution.
- Invest in data collection and monitoring to better understand public health impacts of the climate crisis, particularly on overburdened communities of color, and invest in public health infrastructure that can mitigate these impacts, including Spanish, Portuguese, and Indigenous language resources accessible to Latino/a/x communities.
- Prioritize pollution mitigation investments (e.g., new technology pilot projects) in disproportionately burdened communities.
- Ban refineries’ use of hydrofluoric acid — a highly dangerous substance used in refining processes.



### Phase out fossil fuels

- Stop auctioning off U.S. public lands and waters to fossil fuel companies.
- Halt all new permits for fossil fuel exploration, production, and infrastructure.
- Phase out all subsidies, and divest all public financial investments from the exploration, production, and distribution of fossil fuels.
- Ensure worker retraining and education programs for fossil fuel workers are funded and developed that center Latino/a/x, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color communities to ensure they receive the early benefits of a just transition.
- Establish a federal jobs guarantee offering incentives for green jobs, such as social safety benefits and family-sustaining wages.

### Ensure polluters pay the full costs of their license to operate

- Increase the Superfund excise tax so polluters pay for the cleanup of pollution they produce.
- Enforce policies such as *extended producer responsibility* laws that shift the responsibility away from the consumer and back to the producer.

## PLUGGING AND REMEDIATING ABANDONED OIL WELLS

### Our Goal

Remediate environmental hazards from orphan and abandoned oil and gas wells.

### The Problem

- **Millions of abandoned oil wells pose serious public health and environmental hazards.** From coast to coast, there are three million abandoned wells. According to the EPA, roughly two million may be “unplugged,” or not properly sealed to prevent air and water quality impacts, according to the EPA. These wells leak toxic air pollutants, contaminate groundwater, and emit methane, posing significant risks to humans and the environment.
- **States with the highest concentrations of Latino/a/x populations have some of the most abandoned wells.** Texas and California, which are both more than 39 percent Latino/a/x, have 6,489 and 2,777 orphan wells, respectively. And New Mexico, which has the highest Latino/a/x population by percentage (almost 48 percent) of any state, has well over 600 abandoned wells. Nearly nine million people live within one mile of a documented orphan well in the U.S. Of those, almost 2.5 million are Hispanic or Latino/a/x.

## Solutions

### Plug and remediate orphan and abandoned oil wells

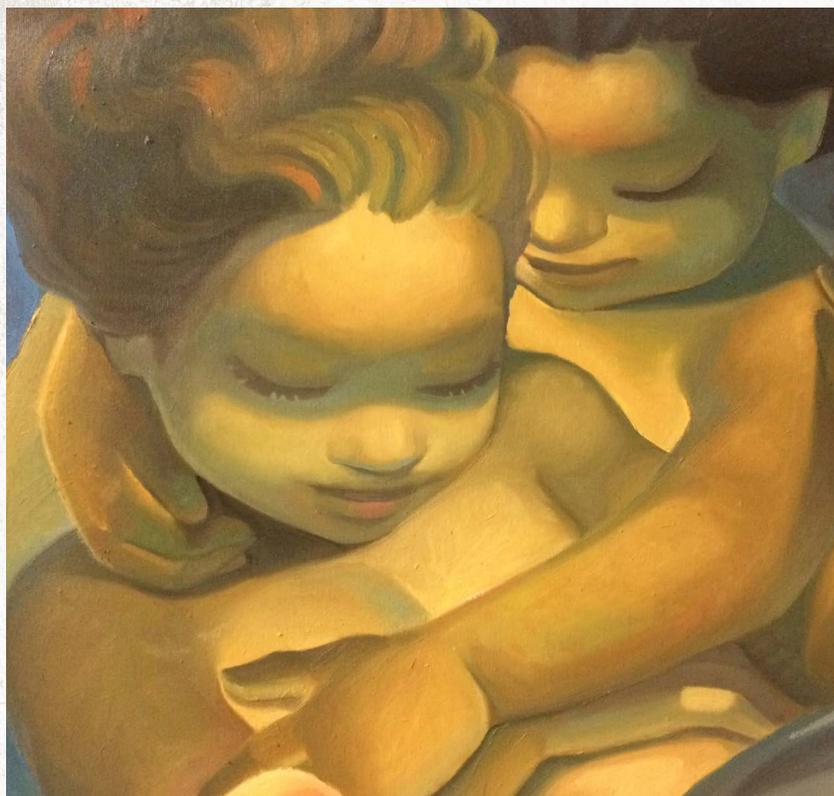
- Ensure sufficient funding is administered through the Interior Department for robust plugging and remediation of all documented orphan wells in the U.S. As part of this, the Interior Department should identify undocumented wells and assess allocation of the \$4.7 billion provided in the bipartisan infrastructure law for addressing abandoned wells in combination with state bonding funds to cover costs for orphan wells with no identified owner.



- Prioritize wells that are located within 1,500 feet of communities.
- Make uniform reporting requirements from states mandatory.
- Create a transparent, national database where data can be stored and shared with interested parties, including state governments, community members, industry professionals, and researchers.
- Reduce future orphan well burden through enhanced plugging rules, assurances of private funding to plug wells, and reforms to idle well management and transfer rules.

### **Create opportunities for workers to plug and remediate wells**

- As funding to plug orphan and abandoned oil wells ramps up, ensure oil well plugging and land remediation work pathways are aligned with just transition programming for workers coming out of the active fossil fuel industry.
- Facilitate managed decline of the fossil fuel industry and phase out of all fossil fuel production, accompanied by massive investment in clean energy.
- Establish a federal jobs guarantee offering incentives for green jobs, such as social safety benefits and family-sustaining wages.



## CHAPTER 2



### PROTECTING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Latino/a/xs in the U.S. and abroad live on the frontlines of the climate crisis. More than half of Latino/a/xs who live in the U.S. live in states that are experiencing severe and destructive weather events. Our communities are heavily represented in outdoor jobs such as farmworking, exposing our communities to extreme heat that puts workers at elevated risk for heat stroke and dehydration. As climate change intensifies, displacement of communities in the Global South becomes an increasingly outsized problem, fueling the movement of climate refugees.

Given these vulnerabilities, it should not be a surprise that Latino/a/xs are the ethnic group reporting greatest concern about the climate crisis, with 69 percent of Latino/a/x's being "alarmed or concerned" about climate change. Additionally, "68 percent of Latino voters said they have experienced the impacts of climate change in the last five years." And in the 2020 election, environmental protection and climate change were two of the top six issue priorities for Latino/a/x voters.

While we transition away from fossil fuels and into a clean energy future, it is critical that we support our communities by providing climate resilient infrastructure, and we address the risks associated with the climate crisis now. We must prepare for a future influx of climate refugees, take care of our farmworkers that are disproportionately exposed to extreme heat, and ensure our water supply is clean and sustainable. This chapter looks at problems and solutions in these critical areas.

## BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

### Our Goal

Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure and healthy green and blue spaces in vulnerable communities, determined and designed by community members.

### The Problem

- **Latino/a/x communities live in areas that are highly vulnerable to climate change.** Latino/a/xs in Western states are twice as likely to live in areas affected by extreme heat and wildfires than the rest of the population. In California, Central Valley counties have historically averaged about 45 days per year with a heat index above 90°F and about six days per year with a heat index above 100°F. Latino/a/x communities are also particularly vulnerable to flooding, drought and other climate-driven disasters.
- **Latino/a/x communities are less likely to have green and blue spaces that mitigate extreme heat.** In the United States there is a nature gap; communities of color, including Latino/a/x communities, are three times more likely than their white counterparts to live in areas that lack natural spaces. Not only does this reduce general quality of life, it increases the danger posed by climate change: Analysis shows that places near a park can be up to six degrees cooler than surrounding areas without this natural feature. However, the data also shows that parks are not all built the same. Parks that are in predominantly non-white neighborhoods have half as much space and serve a population nearly five times larger than parks located in majority white neighborhoods. In addition, Latino/a/xs are 21 percent more likely than white people to live in urban heat islands.
- **Latino/a/x households and communities are less likely to have resources to protect themselves from climate disasters.** Latino/a/xs and other communities of color typically have fewer resources to prepare for and protect themselves against climate change – for example, they may lack air conditioning or transportation to flee an extreme weather situation. This contributes to the fact that Latino/a/xs are more likely to die from extreme heat: Non-U.S. citizens between 18 and 24 years old face 20 times higher risk for heat-related death than their U.S. citizen counterparts and "94 percent of reported noncitizen heat-related deaths occurred in Arizona, California, and Texas," states with some of the highest Latino/a/x populations. Latino/a/xs may also be less able to obtain emergency funds available following extreme weather events because of language and other access barriers. There is growing evidence that FEMA helps white disaster victims more than people of color, even when these groups encounter the same level of damage. This means aid is not being targeted to those most in need, and FEMA is not meeting its legal requirement to provide aid without discrimination on racial or other grounds.



## Solutions

### Implement resilient community policies

- Invest in critical infrastructure that supports vulnerable communities to strengthen resilience to the shocks and impacts of the climate crisis.
- Make investments that respond to specific areas of vulnerability that are unique to each community to include socioeconomic and physical impacts of climate-driven disasters.
- Increase investments in habitat restoration and resilience projects with no matching requirement for grants, port electrification projects and EPA's environmental restoration and management programs.
- Create more technical assistance to ensure that the communities that need investment the most can gain access to federal programs.

## PROVIDING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

### Our Goal

Develop equitable access to clean, healthy and affordable water infrastructure for all disadvantaged communities.

### The Problem

- **Latino/a/x communities are disproportionately suffering from drought and flooding.** Latino/a/xs are already less likely to have access to clean water: More than two million people in the U.S. lack basic access to clean water, and Latino/a/x households are twice as likely to lack complete plumbing as white households. Water availability is becoming less predictable in many places as climate change and the overuse of drain rivers, reservoirs, and underground aquifers places increased strain on water sources. In California, a report from the Legislative Analyst's Office noted that rural, low-income Latino/a/x communities were hit hardest by the last drought, and this trend will likely continue in the most current drought. More than 1,000 household wells have gone dry in California in 2022 alone; reservoirs on the Rio Grande that supply three million people from Brownsville to Mexico are at an all time low; and in 2021, the Colorado River Basin saw its driest year in recorded history. Farmworker communities like Tooleville and East Orosi have also had public wells fail in recent years. Moreover, a recent study found that the flooding from Hurricane Harvey in Houston impacted low-income Latino/a/x neighborhoods in disproportionate ways and in particular those outside of FEMA's 100-year floodplain.

- **Latino/a/xs are more likely to have contaminated drinking water.** Over 25 million people in the U.S., according to [The Guardian investigation](#), are receiving drinking water that does not meet federal health standards. This includes violating limits for toxic contaminants. These failing water systems serve roughly 5.8 million Latino/a/xs. Moreover, counties with populations that are 25 percent or more Latino/a/x have contaminated drinking water at twice the national rate, and Latino/a/xs are more likely to live near polluted rivers and streams. Climate change is adding to this problem: Flooding from extreme weather is contaminating water sources and threatening to destroy water points.
- **Inadequate investment in water infrastructure places a disproportionate burden on Latino/a/x households.** Federal funding for water infrastructure has dropped [77 percent](#) since the mid 1970s. Consequently, U.S. [drinking water infrastructure](#) received a C- grade and [wastewater infrastructure](#) received a D+ from the American Society of Civil Engineers on their 2021 Infrastructure Report Card. An analysis from the [U.S. Water Alliance](#) concluded that failure to invest in safe water and sanitation will cost U.S. households \$7.7 billion in medical bills over the next 20 years. Utilities have placed the burden of crumbling infrastructure on the consumer – water bills have increased, on average, by [27 percent](#) between 2010 and 2018. These rising water bills impact low- and moderate-income households particularly hard, including a disproportionate number of Latino/a/x families, whose median household income is [\\$20,000 less](#) than the median income of white households.

## Solutions

### Develop equitable access to clean water infrastructure for all underserved communities

- Significantly increase federal water infrastructure funding and financing programs to ensure they are adequate to meet the needs of communities.
- Monitor and exercise oversight over distribution of enhanced State Revolving Fund resources provided in IIJA.
- Institute more technical assistance and funding programs like the recently announced USDA-EPA partnership on wastewater and sanitation.
- Support programs for pre-disaster adaptation and resilience like FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program (BRIC) but restructure them with an equity lens to ensure they reduce barriers to access for the low-to-middle income communities who need them most.

### Make State Revolving Funds (SRFs) more accessible

- Ensure that both federal and state policies regarding equitable distribution of infrastructure funding through the Clean Water SRF and Drinking Water SRF are equitable, effective, and incentivizing resilient infrastructure.

- Provide federal criteria requiring states to provide detailed information on what disadvantaged communities receive funding.
- Eliminate the matching requirement for local governments applying for funds.
- Invest in EPA technical assistance for the SRF applications to ensure that communities that need investment have access to the funds.

### **Protect water access for all people and communities**

- Require states receiving any federal funding to adopt bans on residential shut-offs due to inability to pay for all utilities in the state.
- Establish and fund a permanent nationwide water and sewer assistance program for low-income households, which includes strategies to reach renters and hard-to-reach populations as well as technical assistance to utilities to help them participate in the program

### **Designate an environmental justice liaison or team located in the Office of Water**

- Dedicate an environmental justice liaison or team to ensure water equity concerns are accounted for in decision making and policies, including enforcement, rulemaking and guidance development, outreach, data access, and economic analysis.
- Institute a formalized policy for identifying disadvantaged communities (such as EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool) to inform decision making whenever possible.
- Develop a cross-agency plan for using federal resources to support disenfranchised communities dealing with water crises without criminalizing them through counterproductive fines and injunctions. Truly invest in these communities and create long-term affordability.

## **PROTECTIONS FOR FARMWORKERS**

### **Our Goal**

Protect farmworkers from extreme heat and harmful chemical exposures.

### **The Problem**

- **Farmworkers and others who work outside face myriad health and safety dangers.** Farmworkers in the U.S., who roughly number around three million, migrate primarily from Mexico and Central America and many are undocumented. Seventy-seven percent of agricultural field workers in the



U.S. are Hispanic, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Farmworkers are at high risk from a host of dangers, including extreme heat and other climate dangers, polluted air and water, and exposures to pesticides and pathogens.

- **Working conditions are getting ever hotter because of climate change.**

Research shows that if climate warming emissions continue unabated, by 2055 “half of the 233 U.S. counties with more than 500 agricultural workers will reach or exceed OSHA’s high risk level for heat” (heat index of 105°F-115°F) during the growing season. Given that migrant and seasonal agricultural workers typically work long hours outdoors, they are at much higher risk for extreme heat impacts on both their physical health and mental wellbeing.

- **Farmers may use more dangerous pesticides to counter rising pest**

**problems caused by climate change.** Rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels lead to increased incidence of crop disease and pests, which may cause some farmers to use more toxic pesticides that are dangerous to workers. Rising temperatures and extreme weather can also lead to upticks in waterborne diseases, which can sicken workers and make it harder to keep our irrigation-dependent food supply safe. Moreover, Latino/a/x migrant and seasonal agricultural workers who depend on employers for work and wages may be reluctant to report work-related illness.



## Solutions

### Provide strong protections for farmworkers

- Establish a federal standard at OSHA to protect workers from heat-related illness and death modeled after California’s standard that clearly defines workers’ rights to have access to water, shade, rest breaks, and training. This standards should include:
  - Access to fresh and cool, clean drinking water and bathroom facilities located close to the workplace.
  - Access to ample shade at 80 degrees for all workers.
  - High-heat procedures triggered at 95 degrees and observation and monitoring of workers for signs of heat illness.
  - Mandatory multilingual training of managers and workers to identify and prevent heat illness.
- End the exclusion of migrant farmworkers from legal protections for overtime pay and minimum wage.
- Ensure proper EPA health protections from pesticides and toxic materials handled by farmworkers and ban the most toxic pesticides and fertilizers including all organophosphates (OP), while adopting safer alternatives.
- Cancel registration for all organophosphate pesticides used by farmworkers for crops that the EPA cannot prove to be safe.



### **Increase opportunity and access to multilingual farmworker protection resources across relevant agencies**

- Develop and implement weather warning alert systems for emergency climate risks, including forecasted extreme heat days for farmworkers in the languages they speak. These should be developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in partnership with the National Weather Service.
- Develop and enforce farmworker training on issues such as pesticide safety and heat stress in languages workers can understand, with particular attention to speakers of Indigenous languages and workers with limited literacy skills.

## **CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION**

### **Our Goal**

Define and address root causes of global climate displacement and migration, focusing on the climate refugee crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## The Problem

- **Climate displacement and migration is already happening.** Globally, climate change-driven natural disasters are already leading to climate migration or relocation. These shocks are now driving migration more than poverty or the desire for political freedom. People migrating for safety and security from extreme climate disasters is a form of adaptation to these impacts.
- **Climate change will be a major driver of emigration from Latin America countries.** This is particularly true for Central American and Caribbean countries and territories, where increasingly erratic weather conditions, heat, and lower agricultural productivity are already forcing climate refugees from the region.

## Solutions

### Redress environmental harm domestically and in the Global South

- Develop, improve and codify Executive Order 14013 "Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration" and ensure inclusion of safe pathways for climate migrants.
- Expand criteria and admittance of refugees to account for those fleeing from climate change-driven disasters, conflict, or environmental degradation
- Approve and extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for migrants from countries affected by climate disasters.
- Support adaptation policies and climate-change-related solutions abroad to reduce forced climate migration.
- Ensure the U.S. contributes a fair share in financing global climate mitigation and working collaboratively with the global community to identify just solutions.
- Ensure that domestic climate policies don't create burdens for vulnerable communities in the Global South, such as policies that may drive demand for extractive resources in the region.
- Develop strategies to mitigate incidence and impact of domestic climate migration in the U.S. and its territories.

## CHAPTER 3

### PROVIDING EQUITABLE ACCESS AND REPRESENTATION

Latino/a/xs in the U.S. — who are burdened by health, economic, social, and political disparities along with disenfranchisement due to immigration status, racism, and other forms of marginalization — have largely been excluded from the decision making that shapes the outcome of our lives. This is the case despite the fact that Latino/a/xs have accounted for 70 percent of the U.S. workforce increase in recent years and continue being a critical component of the U.S. economy.

Language is still too often a barrier to access and equity. In the U.S., 13 percent of the population speaks Spanish at home, more than any other non-English language and representing the second largest population of Spanish speakers in the world. This includes more than three million people who live in Puerto Rico, who are especially vulnerable to climate change but lack voting representation in the U.S. Congress and have been consistently denied needed funding.

Ensuring language access in every level and structure of government is one important component for Latino/a/xs to be equitably considered and included in decision-making processes. Another important component of inclusion is ensuring there is broad reach to Latino/a/x communities, meaning that important components of decision-making processes such as comment periods and opportunities to share our voices are promoted widely by government agencies and distributed in ways that Latinos/as/x communities can meaningfully engage. Finally, there must be opportunities for the funding of low-income, people-of-color-led organizations, as well as projects that will benefit communities of color.

Just solutions to our climate crisis must move beyond a decarbonization-only approach, account for economic disparities and ensure that deeply vulnerable groups from our communities, such as migrants, farmworkers, and frontline workers, are included in policy strategies to grow economic opportunity. The solutions offered in this chapter would provide inclusivity, access and funding to our communities, which are critical for righting the system wrongs of the past.

## INCREASING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, LANGUAGE ACCESS AND PATHWAYS TO SERVICES

### Our Goal

Increase community involvement in decision-making processes, including those provided under NEPA, for environmental, conservation, energy, and climate mitigation and adaptation projects, and expand access to linguistically appropriate, culturally competent, and adaptable information and services.

### The Problem

- **Almost half of Latinos/as/x in the U.S. are ineligible to vote.** Just half of the total Latino/a/x and Hispanic immigrant population are eligible to vote. Those who are ineligible to vote are often left out of the policy-making process. The 2016 Supreme Court case *Evenwell v. Abbott*, however, concluded that a state can design its legislative districts based on total population, rather than the number of people who can vote, recognizing that all constituents are entitled to participate in policy making – even if they can't vote. In her decision, the late Justice Ginsburg wrote, “nonvoters have an important stake in many policy debates...”
- **Non-citizens are not welcomed into the process.** The word “citizen” is a heavily value-laden word for immigrants who have not yet achieved U.S. citizenship status. It is not an inclusive term. Documents like “A Citizen’s Guide to NEPA,” could benefit from a title change to “The People’s Guide to NEPA.” Many in the immigrant community without citizenship status (e.g., permanent legal residents or so-called “green card holders”) may, from the title of the document itself, reach the conclusion that participation in NEPA is not intended for them because they are not citizens.
- **Procedures for environmental policy making often lack full public participation.** Errant interpretations of policy procedures like NEPA can exclude the public from input. Current attacks on NEPA advocate for dangerous changes such as shorter public comment periods, inequitable access to information, and elimination of critical steps like document translation – all in the name of expediting approval of projects that could have irreparable harm on a community if built without adequate transparency and input. These attacks on NEPA would inevitably lead to decreased civic engagement from Latino/a/x communities.
- **Spanish is still too often a barrier to participation, services and information.** Despite the fact that Spanish is the most common non-English language in the United States, spoken by 13 percent of the population at home and representing the second largest population of Spanish speakers in the world, document

translation, interpretation availability and targeted promotion and outreach to Spanish-speaking communities is still too often lacking in government processes.



## Solutions

### Include non-U.S. citizens

- Recognize that not every U.S. resident has citizenship; therefore, public forums should not be held in venues requiring state-issued ID to enter, which restricts participation based on age and citizenship status.
  - Eliminate presence of uniformed officers, including Customs and Border Protection or Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, at public forums that often deter undocumented persons or mixed status families from attending and participating in public processes.
- Replace the term "citizen" with more neutral terms like "people" or "community" to gain more diverse and equitable participation in the NEPA process.
  - Do not limit community outreach efforts to voting populations – include community members under age 18, non-citizen residents, and citizens convicted of felony offenses.

### Adopt stronger policies for transparent, inclusive environmental reviews

- Support legislation like the Environmental Justice for All Act to enhance transparent and inclusive public participation in federal decision-making.
- Establish interagency working groups to promote meaningful involvement and due process for overlooked communities.
- Strengthen and expand NEPA to consult communities early and often regarding land management and permitting decisions. Create enforceable mitigation measures and more robust analysis of cumulative and indirect effects, require health impact assessments, expand on the tribal role in the review process to include issues that impact tribal interests, and set clear standards and mechanisms for communities to seek legal recourse if their interests are not fully considered or incorporated into federal land management decisions.
- Issue a Secretarial Order from the Secretary of the Interior to ensure transparent and inclusive public participation in land management decisions. The Secretarial

Order should aim to regain trust and effectiveness through better reciprocal engagement and collaboration with the public.

- Require public meetings on environmental justice issues in each region of the Interior Department to gather public input as a baseline of communication and participation.

### **Require translation and interpretation at every step of the public input process**

- Every agency should conduct public hearings, and translate (in writing) or interpret (orally) information about projects and rulemakings in languages other than English as appropriate for the impacted communities. If a certain percentage of the population speaks a different language (or languages), translation should be provided for all communications.
- For every agency, hire qualified interpreters and translators who demonstrate proficiency in spoken English and at least one other language, including specialized vocabulary for that set language.
- Require announcement of public notices in English as well as any required alternative languages in all available venues. This includes email announcements, physical public notices posted in community points of interests, websites, social media, and other forms of media.
- Collaborate with local ethnic media outlets to ensure public notice announcements are disseminated directly into multilingual and multiethnic communities.

### **Ensure public input accessibility to people with disabilities**

- Make online and in person information accessible to people with disabilities, including providing ASL interpretation, auditory and/or written descriptions of images, and ADA compliant websites, in both English and languages other than English as needed.
- Make public input forums ADA compliant and accessible to people with disabilities by ensuring enough advance notice and accommodate processes for their specific access needs.

### **Define “equitable access”**

- Use the definition of “equity” in President Biden’s Executive Order 13985 to develop the definition of “equitable access” for the federal government and for states to base their own definitions on. The E.O. defines “equity” as, “the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous and Native



American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.”

- Add language to explicitly include people of Middle-Eastern and African descent (not African-Americans, but people who are natives of the continent of Africa), who belong to ethnic categories that are overlooked in the United States and lumped together as “other.”

## MAKING EQUITABLE FUNDING DECISIONS

### Our Goal

Ensure that government program dollars, including Justice40 designated funds, are invested in longstanding frontline entities serving their own communities while understanding that Justice40 is a basement, not a ceiling for climate justice investment.

### The Problem

- **There is a legacy of discriminatory government policies that have systemically harmed communities of color.** Racist policies like “redlining” have impaired the opportunity for communities of color to attain economic wealth at the same levels as white communities. In the 1930s the U.S. Federal Housing Administration refused mortgages in communities considered “hazardous” to investment – communities that were largely made up of people of color and low-income households. Around this time, denial of healthcare and insurance in communities of color was common practice – legacies that have left an indelible mark on communities of color in the U.S.
- **There is a significant wealth gap between white communities and communities of color in the U.S.** In 2019, white households in the U.S. had a median household wealth of \$187,300. In comparison, the median household wealth for Hispanic households was \$31,700 and \$14,100 for Black households. Prioritizing government investments in communities of color that have been systematically deprived of investment is critical to begin repairing these longstanding inequities.



## Solutions

### Ensure robust implementation of Justice40 so distributed funds provide maximum impact for disadvantaged communities

- Clarify the definition of “disadvantaged communities” for federal and state programs and agencies to ensure that government program dollars are allocated to the communities that need funding most and have been victims of the highest historical disinvestment.



- Provide technical support and capacity building to local governments and community groups representing disadvantaged communities so they can successfully apply for federal grants.
- Simplify grant application processes to make federal funds more accessible to disadvantaged communities.
- Work with state governors and agencies and local governments and community groups to support the delivery of Justice40.
- Launch the Environmental Justice Scorecard with agency methods for calculating and tracking community benefits.
- Release a full list of federal agency Justice40 programs and issue final White House Justice40 implementing guidance for federal agencies.

- As recommended in the UCLA report, *Making Justice40 A Reality*, include communities with high cumulative levels of pollution exposure and associated health impacts.
- Expand the definition under Justice40 to include mobile populations such as farmworkers, which are united not necessarily by geography or living in close proximity to a point source of pollution, but by occupation and a set of common socioeconomic conditions.
- Provide clear guidance on how the Justice40 program will be administered with the opportunity for ample public comment.

### Apply an equity lens to FEMA decision making

- Reassess current FEMA and other federal funding distribution processes to create more equitable policies.
- Restructure programs that support pre-disaster adaptation, like FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program, with an equity lens to ensure they reduce barriers to access for the communities who need them most.
- Create an "equity standard" for FEMA and similar agencies by which to judge whether grants increase or decrease equity over time. Agencies like FEMA should assess current processes of distributing mitigation and preparedness funds to determine which policies, regulations, and legislation must be revised to produce more equitable outcomes.

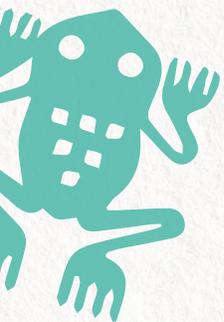
## LATINO/A/X STEWARDSHIP OF THE NATURAL WORLD AND HERITAGE SITES

### Our Goal

Conserve and reframe histories of significant places, lands, and waters to better incorporate and reflect our Latino/a/x cultures, values, and histories.

### The Problem

- **The importance of Latino/a/xs in American history is too often ignored.** Only 24 of the more than 400 National Park units specifically preserve Latino/a/x history and elevate Latino/a/x stories and contributions past and present. Moreover, there is little evidence that any of the 1,000 marine protected areas preserve Latino/a/x history and stories. This is prevalent despite the long history and critical role of Latino/a/xs in what is now the United States.
- **Hispanics are underrepresented in conservation agencies.** In 2020, Hispanics constituted only 5.6 percent of the National Park Service general workforce, and under 5 percent of the NOAA general workforce, despite making up 18.5 percent of the U.S. population.
- **Little effort is being made to understand the relationship of Latino/a/xs to public lands, waters and ocean.** Currently, there is no comprehensive focus on what Latino/a/xs think about public land and ocean conservation, or their access to enjoying public lands and coastal areas especially when their livelihood is in the vicinity of, and directly connected to, public land, coastal and marine destinations.



## Solutions

### **Direct federal agencies to make use of powers to conserve lands, water, and ocean that are of significance to Latino/a/x culture and histories**

- Designate wilderness and wilderness study areas, areas of critical environmental concern, national conservation areas, marine protected areas, and backcountry conservation areas in regions with large concentrations of Latino/a/xs.
- Designate national monuments through the use of the Antiquities Act in collaboration with Latino/a/x community members and Latino/a/x-serving organizations to reflect our history and elevate our stories.
- Enact portions of the 2017 Presidential Memorandum “Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks, National Forests, Marine Protected areas and Other Public Lands and Waters” for the leaders of executive departments and agencies and enhance opportunities for all communities to experience public land, water, and oceans in accordance with guidance on actions written into the memorandum.
- Increase opportunities for Latino/a/xs by providing professional development opportunities and tools to create, retain, and sustain a strong, diverse workforce; strengthen leadership engagement to foster diversity and inclusion in the workforce; and identify opportunities for eliminating existing barriers to the successful growth of diversity and inclusion in the federal workplace.
- Improve interpretation, an intentional approach to communicating about the natural world, in protected lands and marine areas to highlight Hispanic and Latino/a/x histories in those areas.

### **Develop a comprehensive understanding of the quality of life and access to public lands and marine protected areas for Latino/a/xs who live or work in “gateway communities” to public land and marine destinations**

- Invest in interviewing and reporting on the access that Latino/a/x and other communities of color who live and/or work in public land and marine recreation economies have to healthcare, housing, education, childcare, paid leave, and access to the surrounding public land and marine destinations.
- Investigate community concerns about the environment and quality of life and invest in addressing these concerns.

### **Create opportunities for all people to experience public lands and waters and to participate in decision making**

- Implement the *America the Beautiful Initiative* as an action plan to improve access and effective collaboration with Latino/a/x and other overlooked populations, addressing the biodiversity, climate, and nature gap crises, providing access to lands and waters near communities with the highest needs, and creating and implementing a Justice40 metric.



- Invest in public participation opportunities to provide equitable access to nature among Latino/a/xs. Address the impacts of land and water management policies, including meeting people where they are and creating interagency opportunities to provide engagement.
- Addressing public participation barriers by providing federal community grants so Latino/a/xs have access to scientific and technical assistance to inform understanding of land, water, and ocean management decision-making processes.
- Support and expand equitable access to parks and recreation by adopting the Outdoors for All Act, The Parks, Jobs, and Equity Act, and the Transit to Trails Act.
- Support and expand programs that provide outdoor access for youth and disadvantaged communities and provide permanent funding for these programs.

## REPRESENTATION FOR PUERTO RICO

### Our Goal

Build an equitable and resilient future for Puerto Rico and the territories.

### The Problem

- **Puerto Ricans are among the most vulnerable to climate change.** Over 2 million people in Puerto Rico reside in the coastal municipalities prone to impacts of climate change-induced sea-level rise. And Puerto Ricans face other neglected hazards to their health and safety too: In 2015, community water systems that served 99.5 percent of Puerto Rico's population were in violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Additionally, almost 70 percent of people on the island consumed water from sources that violated SDWA's health standards. In 2017, Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico's already vulnerable electrical grid, leaving the population in a state of disaster and emergency – effects that are still present today.
- **Three million U.S. citizens living in Puerto Rico lack a voting representative in Congress and are too often overlooked by federal decision makers.** Unincorporated territories “belong to, but are not part of” the United States, and in them the Constitution does not apply in its entirety. This adds a new dimension of climate vulnerability to the territories since they do not have the same constitutional mechanisms that the 50 states enjoy to request or receive support from the federal government.

## Solutions

### **Develop, implement and enforce policies and strategies to ensure Latino/a/xs in Puerto Rico are included and represented**

- Treat Puerto Rico as an equal partner in the U.S. with adequate Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security benefits, access to funding, etc.
- Develop data collection and monitoring systems to better understand public health impacts of climate change, particularly on overburdened communities in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories where the data is abundantly lacking.
- Revive the Insular Area Climate Change Act, which provides for climate change planning and resilience efforts in the U.S. Territories and States. It should include these critical components:
- Create a federal interagency task force to provide U.S. territories greater access to climate crisis-related federal programs.
- Establish an Office of Insular Area Energy Policy and Programs within the Department of Energy to better direct energy management and administer grant programs to expand renewable energy and energy efficiency and develop sustainable infrastructure to withstand natural disasters in the insular areas.
- Establish an Insular Area National Program Office within EPA focused on strengthening infrastructure to withstand natural disasters, expanding renewable energy and energy efficiency, providing technical assistance, and centralizing EPA efforts in the insular areas.
- Cancel federal loan repayments and the waiving of matching fund requirements for insular areas, which for decades have struggled with limited financial resources.
- Implement recommendations of the 2020 report "Queremos Sol," including reforming the Puerto Rico Power Authority (PREPA) and building out climate-resilient energy infrastructure like microgrids through the territory.

## **REMOVING BARRIERS TO IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Our Goal**

Address the disempowerment caused by the overt and unintentional racist and xenophobic barriers to legal immigration and citizenship status in this country.

## The Problem

- **Latino/a/xs experience discrimination based on their skin color and immigration status.** Of nearly 60 million Hispanics living in the U.S. 33 percent are foreign-born. About 38 percent of Latino/a/xs reported recently experiencing discriminatory practices or circumstances. In addition, 62 percent of Latino/a/x adults in the U.S. say that having darker skin color is a disadvantage to get ahead in the U.S, and 59 percent say that lighter skin color is an advantage to get ahead.
- **Immigration reform has been put to the side.** Latino/a/xs have generally agreed that the U.S. immigration system needs to be transformed, with the majority of respondents saying the system requires major changes (53 percent) or needs to be entirely rebuilt (29 percent). Only 17 percent responded that the U.S. immigration system needs little to no changes.

## Solutions

### Adopt comprehensive immigration reform

- Provide a path to citizenship for undocumented people and family reunification, including by adopting the Dream Act, preventing deportation for certain types of immigration cases, and creating a path to lawful permanent resident status for long-time recipients of Temporary Protected Status and similar programs.



- Prioritize naturalization in the U.S. immigration system.
- Adopt stronger protections against exploitation of immigrant and undocumented workers, including by reforming the temporary foreign worker programs to reduce labor exploitation.
- Reform protocols at the border to ensure that immigrants are provided full access to asylum and refugee protections. This includes the demilitarization of the U.S. Southwest border, divesting from border enforcement, immigration detention reforms, and ending racial profiling.
- Issue work permits to immigration benefit applicants while paperwork and application is processed.
- Eliminate immigration detention centers.

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CLIMATE JUSTICE  
FRAMEWORK**

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