

**NATIONAL PEOPLE'S ACTION:**

**LONG-TERM**

**AGENDA**

**TO THE NEW ECONOMY**

[npa-us.org](http://npa-us.org)

During the fall and winter of 2012 hundreds of community leaders from the NPA family gathered in cities and towns across the country to begin reimagining what's possible. Leaders were challenged to imagine a new economy in the United States; an economy that works for all of us, one that makes people - and not profits - the bottom line. What follows is a snapshot of where we are in our process to develop the principles and structural transformations of our long-term agenda. It's a work in progress that we will continue to strengthen and refine as we deepen our thinking and sharpen our strategy.



# WHY <sup>A</sup> LONG-TERM AGENDA?

## The Building of a Long-Term Agenda

Hundreds of National People's Action leaders from around the country are traveling to Washington D.C. to celebrate our 40th Annual Conference and to begin the work of the next forty years; to change the economy in our country from one that works only for the wealthy and corporations to one that works for people - all people.

We are at a critical juncture for the larger economic and racial justice movement. We are organizing in a moment marked by Wall Street crashing the economy and getting off scot free, unprecedented inequality and a particularly devastating loss of wealth in communities of color, massive roll back of government services and jobs, and a new round of attacks on labor unions and workers. As we seek to rebuild our economy and our politics, three roads have emerged that we can take:

The first is to simply fight to keep what we have. This means drawing a line in the sand to save our jobs and homes, and trying to protect the best social programs and policies we have left. While we must defend our communities, defense alone is a path toward defeat. If we want to win, we have to go on offense.

A second route is working to get back to the old economy - the "Clinton economy" - or the way things were before the financial crisis. While for many of us these periods were more hopeful than where we are now, profound racial and gender disparities and environmental destruction meant they didn't work for all of us. We need to do better.

A third and more powerful path is to completely re-imagine what's possible. To refuse to let the challenge of the present prevent us from fully rethinking how our democracy and economy work. If we lower our expectations of what's possible, then we've already lost. But, if we craft a vision for an America in which the health and well-being of all families, all communities, and our planet are prioritized in our national bottom line, we can inspire millions of people to join us.

**We are taking the third road.**

## NPA's Principles of the New Economy

**1. Democratic Control of Capital.** Currently, too much money is controlled by too few people. To create a just economy we'll shift significant amounts of capital toward more democratic forms of control, whether toward publicly or community held institutions. This could include democratically-managed public institutions such as a federal infrastructure bank and state banks as well as laws that favor community held economic structures that keeps wealth in our communities, such as worker-owned cooperatives and community land trusts.

**2. Racial Justice.** The new economy will finally address persistent structural barriers to racial equity and opportunity. As part of building toward a new economy, we will advance countless policy reforms that include improvements for all people, but that also ensure significant additional resources are targeted to communities of color to address long-standing racial disparities. A racially just economy will include an end to the mass incarceration of people color, and restoring a broad set of rights to returning citizens.

**3. Corporations serve the common good.** We will create a new bottom line for corporations, one that accounts for the health and well being of the entire population, not just profit. To do so we need to dramatically restructure corporations and our relationship with them. Over time, corporations will be held to a higher and higher standard for investing and contributing to the common good. They will need to demonstrate a public purpose that is about serving, not harming, the public. And if they can't or won't do this then we will break them up or dismantle them.

**4. Real Democracy.** We will advance a "people-in, money-out" agenda that dramatically expands citizenship, voting rights, and voting ease and accessibility. We will dismantle the current money-driven political process by reversing Citizens United and creating a public financing system for elections. We will expand democracy to include participatory budgeting, exercising control over local institutions, and encouraging our own people to seek elected office.

**5. Ecological Sustainability.** The reality of climate change has made the issue of protecting our environment not only an ecological issue, but a social justice issue too. Transforming our economy gives us an opportunity to rethink growth, and redirect investments into green alternatives.

## NPA's 40-year Agenda for a New Economy

To make our vision of a new economy real, we began the work of creating a 40-year agenda to guide us. We are creating the long-term agenda to help us become more strategic and to build the power that we need to win large-scale change. By naming the principles of the economy we want, and the pathways that will get us there, we are able to think beyond the next campaign, and instead have an eye toward a series of changes we need to win, over time, to create an economy that serves our values.

Our Long-Term agenda is not a blueprint or a series of specific policy wins for the next 40 years that will produce a new economy. Decisions about the campaigns we take-on as a network will be influenced by the long-term agenda, but we cannot know the precise set of structural reforms that will result in the new economy. Ultimately, the campaigns we choose will depend just as much on resources, opportunity, and political moments. The long-term agenda is simply a guide that will keep us true to our course. It helps us to create a narrative that makes connections between campaigns and from one campaign to the next. It is set of pathways that keep us working in the direction of winning the structural transformations that must take place to create the new economy.

The pathways, or **Structural Transformations** represent major changes that must take place to change the economy. For example, we know that we cannot have an economy that works for people without real democratic control of government, so that is a structural transformation that we must achieve to get to the new economy. Structural transformation happens when many large and small structural reforms take place and collectively shift the balance of power to create large-scale change in society.

# STRUCTURAL REFORM

Structural Transformation happens through winning many small and large changes that build on one another over time until the narrative and the balance of power shift, and cause structural transformation. We call these smaller changes **Structural Reforms**. Structural reforms are the stepping-stones on our pathways of Structural Transformation that will ultimately change our economy. They are changes to laws, policies, and rules that change power relations, structurally, by giving power to people, and/or taking power away from corporations and the 1%. Thinking in this way is a breakthrough, because, in addition to winning campaigns that improve people's lives and build our organizations, we are now focused on changing the landscape upon which the next set of fights take place. For example, when we win a path to citizenship for 11 million immigrants, we will change the landscape, laying the groundwork to seek to win the right to vote for people returning from prison in every state. Once we do that, we will have a different democracy because we've increased the number of people of color that can exercise the power of the vote- and we are in a stronger position going into the next fight, and so on.

Focusing on structural reforms presents us with new factors to consider as we decide which campaigns to run. When we look at the current political openings and the possible campaigns we could run in those moments, we will ask a new set of questions -- does this move us toward our long-term agenda? Does this campaign include a structural reform that means we fight the next fight on stronger footing?

This is ultimately about us recognizing our fights are not a series of discrete campaigns, but instead a set of efforts within a larger strategy that ultimately leads to the people on our side having more power, and the opposition being weaker. What we are doing is raising our game in terms of strategic thinking and practice.

# NPA's PATHWAYS TO STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

**DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT:** People, not corporations and the 1%, need to control government and the political process. We need a real democracy that engages all people and makes policy based on the public good. We must have a right to vote that is sacred and protected. People must have meaningful opportunities to engage in decision making at the local level and those opportunities must be available to everyone regardless of race, gender, and wealth.

**PUBLIC CONTROL OF THE ECONOMY:** We need an economy that is designed to benefit people – all people, not just the few. We need a financial sector designed to promote real investments in infrastructure, jobs and housing, not for financial speculation. We need to restore and expand the public sector and make real investments in our shared future.

**STRUCTURAL EQUITY:** As long as our institutions consistently produce worse outcomes for people of color, women, and poor people, we cannot hope to have an economy that works for all people. A new economy is not possible until we address the persistent structural barriers that are faced by these communities.

**COMMUNITY CONTROL:** Communities must have the ability to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The cost of decades of decisions made by people outside of poor communities with no meaningful input from those who must live with the consequences has been devastating. Communities must have the power to make decisions about allocation of resources for housing, education, and health care in the way that takes into account the needs, conditions, and particular cultural/historic circumstances of the people who live and work in the community.

**GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY:** The consequences of an economy based on corporate greed have not only been bared by people, but by our planet. We cannot continue to operate as corporations have - with no regard for the destruction created by their quest to increase profits. We must live and work in sustainable ways that do not destroy the planet.

## What This Means for NPA:

- We are building and working off of a long-term agenda. NPA will become a network that is thinking decades ahead about what we are trying to win and what we are trying to build.
- We want to expand democratic control of money, advance racial justice, have corporations serve the common good, realize real democracy, and advance ecological sustainability.
- We are a network that focuses on winning structural reforms; reforms that make people's lives better, build our organizations AND change the balance of power.
- We will run strategic campaigns that take the fullest advantage of the political moment to shift narrative and win structural reforms.
- We are building organizations that fight for governing power. We are no longer content being at the table, we want to run the table, along with our allies. This means we are serious about growing our base and developing leadership, are fearless about money, and building electoral muscle.

# NATIONAL PEOPLE'S ACTION

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Special thanks to our strategic partner, Grassroots Policy Project, for their wisdom and leadership in developing our Long-Term Agenda.

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