

**Transcript: *Wake Up, New York! A Sunrise NYC Podcast***

## **06: Good Jobs for All: How to Build a Green Economy that Works for Everyone**

This week, we continue our conversation about Good Jobs for All with Sunrisers Mia and Veekas, Professor Matt Huber, and Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13). You may have heard of the Green New Deal or the Civilian Climate Corps and thought, “what does that mean for me and my community?” After hearing the news from the IPCC report, you might be wondering how to put political pressure on your representatives to pass climate legislation or secure funding for green energy in our infrastructure bill.

We can and we must get millions of people back to work in good-paying jobs building a sustainable, just, and people-centered economy. But what does a just transition for unions and other workers look like? How can organizers help push this legislation? How can you get involved in the movement? Listen in and learn about how Good Jobs for All works for you and your future, how to put pressure on your politicians, how to get your community involved, and more!

*The following has been lightly edited for clarity.*

[00:00:00] MUSIC (THEME: “Time Capsules” by Janet May)

[00:00:27] **JENNA:** Welcome back to *Wake Up, New York! A Sunrise NYC Podcast*, the show that highlights New York City-specific politics, policy, and the road towards a Green New Deal. I'm your host, Jenna (and I'm Paola). Last week, we spoke about the Good Jobs for All campaign and why we're working so hard to push Congress to pass a jobs guarantee that would put people to work combating the climate crisis.

[00:00:51] **PAOLA:** This week, we're going to keep chatting about this fight. We'll touch on the work we have done and the work we have left to do and what it's going to take to pass legislation for Good Jobs for All and create a Civilian Climate Corps that will work to save our home.

[00:01:04] **JENNA:** So let's dive right in and learn more, starting with an explanation from Syracuse University Professor Matt Huber about the theory of change – that is, how and why we can achieve the changes we need – and how it's going to help us win a Green New Deal.

[00:01:21] **MATT HUBER:** What was very exciting about the Green New Deal theory of change was that it was very simple: that if you start to pass policies that improve people's material lives under the banner of climate action, you might start to realign the political system, because again, people don't have any evidence over the last several decades that policies do improve their lives, or that the government can help them. People just feel like they're on their own and they have to survive as isolated individuals.

Of course, it's a chicken and egg thing. It's like, we have to actually get those material improvements first to start to build that popular support. That's why I think if even a little bit comes out of this infrastructure spending we want to really make it visible that this is what climate action looks like.

A sort of amazing thing about the original New Deal was that these things were announced and started to get implemented in 1933. By 1936, FDR was able to pull off one of the largest landslides in political history in this country. You know, he became one of the most popular presidents in our history. He literally won all but two states in 1936. It just built up this incredible popularity in a rapid time, just because they were using public power to improve people's lives at a rapid clip.

I mean, we've actually seen this over the last year. The stimulus checks, you know, were issued extremely rapidly. And once people saw those in their bank accounts, they were like one of the most popular policies that have been passed in recent years.

[00:03:01] **JENNA:** Professor Huber, who's writing and research focuses on the intersection of climate politics, economy, and class, believes that the most effective way to build popular support for a political program is to highlight the results – if the political results are there, the people will follow.

[00:03:18] **MATT HUBER:** We got to stop thinking we're going to win climate action by this kind of moral superiority of knowing the science and knowing the direness of the science and explaining how the greenhouse effect works to people. Again, that's not going to resonate with people.

People want to know: how are they going to feed their families? How are they going to pay the electricity bill? How are they going to pay for rent and heat? And, what's so amazing about the potential of this kind of politics is that almost everything that people need in their lives needs to be decarbonized. They need food, they need energy, they need housing, and all of these sectors – if we could start to build a politics around those sectors that linked improving people's access to energy, food, housing, under the banner of climate action – then perhaps

you start to build up that popular support. But you have to start. And again, I think the masses of people haven't seen enough evidence that we've even started with that kind of politics yet.

Obviously, we're in this very dicey political moment. But in so far as Sunrise and other social movements that are pushing for a sort of radical public investment in climate infrastructure – when those policies start hitting the ground, when they actually start impacting rural communities, poor urban communities – I think we really have to do the work to kind of make clear to people that these things that people see in their lives that are improving their lives is climate policy. That is something that the government is doing to use the power of the public sector to solve this existential crisis.

And then I think when people start to associate climate actions with very clear, easy to understand material improvements in their communities and their lives, Climate action will become more popular.

[00:05:10] **PAOLA:** Sounds familiar? That's because it sounds a lot like how we talk about a Green New Deal and why it's essential not only for fighting the climate crisis, but for convincing people that action is needed. And that that action can be turned into tangible good in every aspect of people's lives.

But what's our role as organizers and getting a Green New Deal, including campaigns like Good Jobs for All, enacted? How can we create this necessary change? Congressman Espaillat, the US Representative for much of Upper Manhattan and the West Bronx says the first step is putting pressure on the politicians that need convincing.

[00:05:46] **ADRIANO ESPAILLAT:** As we debate green initiatives, we need to be part of the effort to move those legislators that are not there – that are thinking in very conventional ways – to come our way. I think it's critical that we know, and we're laser focused on, in making sure that we contact those legislators that need convincing. Let's not preach to the choir. I know we need to ensure that the choir is there for us, but let's be very clear in focusing on who it is that we need to convince. And let's take it there.

[00:06:21] **JENNA:** There's a growing movement in support of the Good Jobs for All and Civilian Climate Corp campaigns. However, organizers are faced with many obstacles. Veekas, an organizer with Sunrise NYC leading efforts on Good Jobs for All, sees issues with political structure and individual politicians themselves.

[00:06:43] **VEEKAS:** Joe Biden negotiated with Republicans and Exxon lobbyists to come up with a bipartisan infrastructure deal that stripped out most of the climate provisions. We were very frustrated by that. And so, Sunrise Movement showed up in DC with 500 or more people

and blockaded the White House; folks got arrested and made a big splash in the news; AOC, Jamaal Bowman, Cori Bush were there; and, we made it very clear, along with dozens of others in elected office, the federal level, that we will not stand for an infrastructure bill that does not address climate change the way we need to. So, we already have seen President Biden and the White House walking back the amount that they have sacrificed to those priorities. You know, we will continue putting pressure on the white house to actually be leaders on that front.

[00:07:40] **PAOLA:** A lot has happened since we've recorded this episode. Last week, we saw the Senate passed the infrastructure bill, and now that is moving to a vote in the House. But as Vika says, the infrastructure bill is missing a lot of the climate components that originally had because President Biden gave into Republican pressure and negotiated away a lot of key climate legislation. The next legislation that holds hope for a CCC and big climate investments is a funding bill that Congress is trying to pass through reconciliation.

[00:08:10] **VEEKAS:** At the congressional level, there is a process called reconciliation in which, as long as 50% (plus one) of members of Congress vote in each house for a bill (if it's a funding bill) then they can bypass the filibuster requirement. Now I believe we should just remove the filibuster for stuff like this, but our esteemed federal legislators do not agree at this point. So they are releasing reconciliation packages for infrastructure, and those are where we have more opportunity to actually put in the climate investment that we need, such as a Civilian Climate Corps.

And so the big win is that we've put a lot of pressure, specifically in New York, on our Senator and also the Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer to support a bold, big ambitious Civilian Climate Corps on the order of magnitude of creating over a million jobs. On July 7th, Senator Schumer came out in support of a Civilian Climate Corps. And not only that, he specifically called out Sunrise Movement for pushing him to come out for it, and saying that we were the ones who convinced him of this once in a lifetime opportunity. And that's, that's really exciting.

So it is going to end up in the infrastructure package that he puts out and we are going to continue working with him to ensure that it is fully funded. And that it actually is big enough and powerful enough of a program to actually solve the various crises we're in.

[00:09:57] **JENNA:** In some ways, the biggest impact organizers need to make is to influence certain lawmakers away from pandering to fossil fuel billionaires and corporate interests.

[00:10:08] **VEEKAS:** Of course, there's obstacles. Most of the obstacles revolve around billionaires and corporate interests wanting to maintain their power and their exploitative system that they benefit from while the rest of us have to suffer.

And so, just like how in the last year they have gotten by an order of magnitude richer while the rest of us have suffered, they want to continue doing that into the future. And so they're already doing everything they can to prevent the passage of a package like this.

So an executive at an Exxon was caught on camera talking about how they have certain centers on their speed dial that they call up to muddy the waters on climate. And that includes Senator Kyrsten Sinema, who has been not the most vocal proponent of necessary climate legislation, and also Joe Manchin. And they, in fact called, Joe Manchin their kingmaker.

And so we have to keep pushing Democrats across the country, including Sinema, including Manchin, but also everyone else in the Senate and House, to not be like them. And to effectively shame them into supporting the legislation that young people need to protect our futures. And we will do that. We're already doing it.

[00:11:44] **JENNA:** The pressure required is massive and we need everyone possible involved. How do we get more people active in organizing against fossil fuel interests and for the change that we need?

[00:11:57] **ADRIANO ESPAILLAT:** Well, I think we need to be imaginative and we need to be bold in our actions. And unfortunately, some people are confined to thinking that way. And, as a result of thinking in very conventional ways, traditional ways, because of that, are sort of left behind.

I think we need to be bold. We need to be innovative and we need to think not just about the present, but the future as well. And ensure that we have this Corps that will engage, you know, young people and seniors and folks all over our communities, to be educated and be part of the climate solution. Not just a spectator or someone sitting on the bench, watching what's happening across their neighborhoods.

[00:12:45] **VEEKAS:** The Civilian Climate Corps is really, really inspiring. Like everyone I talk to – you know, once they get a chance to really sit with the idea of what it could look like if we had a massive jobs program to solve society's problems – people are really jazzed and people feel hopeful in a way that few things give hope nowadays.

We need to bring that message to every little community in the country. And there's a lot of ways to do that. So getting involved with Sunrise, you'll see that there are the rallies and the protests – those things make the news a lot – but you know, there's also programs to help you organize a teach-in in your community. You know, that's a presentation, maybe cater some food, have some speakers, and talk about what Good Jobs for All would mean for your community. And I think it takes all of those different ways of organizing. And so whichever aspect of that is inspiring or exciting to you, there is a place for you to do it.

[00:13:47] **JENNA:** Mia, an 18 year old organizer with Sunrise, agrees with Veekas.

[00:13:52] **MIA:** Go to an action. They're so fun. Whatever the next action is.

So, I joined Sunrise last summer. I created my own hub – super cool, super stressful, but got a lot out of it. And that's when I really started to participate in Sunrise and all the actions. I went to the DC action on July 28th and then the New York City Schumer action in front of his office July 1st and I got arrested – crazy, never thought that would happen.

All of that to say, actions are super powerful. Senator Schumer said he would support the CCC. And I almost cried when I read that tweet. I was like, “oh my God, we did it!” But yeah, go to an action because they're super powerful, they're a way to create community, meet people and to get involved with a movement, if you don't know where to start and if you're new to one.

So, go to a Sunrise action. The next one that's happening. I don't know when it is, but go to it!

[00:14:51] **PAOLA:** Matt agrees that movements, specifically Sunrise, have been instrumental in pushing the Biden administration to embrace and build climate action. He reiterates that it's also the role of organizers to communicate these political initiatives in order to build population.

[00:15:06] **MATT HUBER:** We should be aware that there were some missteps in the rollout of the Green New Deal in 2019. Very early on, in Spring 2019, the AFL-CIO came out nationally and kind of opposed the Green New Deal and said it was unrealistic, it's radical or whatever. But they also said that ‘no one really asked us about this program.’

And so, the kind of forces behind AOC and think tanks like New Consensus and the Sunrise Movement probably need to do more work to kind of get the unions on board and supportive of this policy from the get-go. And actually, we have examples of what that looks like in other contexts. There's a great effort in the state I'm in called Climate Jobs New York, where they have, from the ground up, tried to build basically union participation in envisioning policies

that basically center union jobs in the build-out of clean infrastructure. And it was, you know, really putting the unions at the start of the conversation from the get go.

And another example is in Maine, in the spring of 2019, they were able to pass pretty transformative state legislation that they call the Green New Deal but the AFL-CIO in Maine to support this legislation because they, from the start, really had the unions on board and in conversation and a part of visioning what the policy was going to look like.

At least from a kind of a socialist perspective, the working class is not the agent of change because they're the most oppressed class or because they're morally superior to all of us. It's simply because of their strategic location in the workplace that gives them this power. That has really nothing to do with how good or how moral the working class is; it just has to do with structural power in the workplace. In Buffalo, the amazing campaign of India Walton – in her victory speech said, “we are the workers, we do the work.” And that's the core of that structural power. They do the work and if they don't do the work, it creates a crisis very quickly.

And I think we saw, at quite an inspiring scale, the youth climate movement trying to use the strike tactic with the school strikes, but we also saw that that didn't have the same strategic capacity to really create a kind of crisis that could spur massive radical change, like a labor strike could. Now, if those students were able to get the teachers involved too, and really start doing things like the West Virginia teachers did – where they were shutting down school districts and not just on Fridays, but for weeks – then you can start talking.

Working class and labor have this very specific power that, in a capitalist system, they alone have. And that's why we focus on them.

[00:17:59] **JENNA:** For many reasons, the most instrumental group within the working class are labor unions. Their support for political campaigns is vital.

Professor Huber argues that it is also in our union's best interests to support the Good Jobs for All campaign in the face of declining union membership; these policies would support and further demand project labor agreements that require a project to use union labor. This would mean a significant increase in union contracts and an expansion of union membership. Additionally, he believes that this campaign in combination with policies like the ProAct could be the basis of a massive expansion of the union movement, especially in sectors that are mostly controlled by private capital, including renewable energy.

[00:18:48] **MATT HUBER:** We actually have to make the case to the unions that it's actually an existential threat to them, that – if they don't get organized on the Green New Deal, or let's

just say this energy transition – that they could be left in the dust by, I would call it a kind of voracious green capitalism, that basically hands over the energy transition to private, renewable capital that is very hostile to unions. And so the only chance I think we have to sort of build out unions with the Green New Deal is to make sure that those investments, I would again hope their public investments, mandate and ensure that union contracts, project labor agreements, come with them.

[00:19:27] **JENNA:** To start getting unions on board, Professor Huber believes the most effective way is a grassroots bottom-up approach, which can rapidly catalyze change.

[00:19:38] **MATT HUBER:** We need to sort of articulate a rank-and-file union strategy for the climate movement that is about really trying to build the members, the workers, and these unions to buy into the necessity of climate action. For a variety of reasons, I think a lot of union leaders and union strategists realize that we can't radicalize all unions all the time; we need to be strategic about what unions we focus on. And, someone like Jane McAlevey has really argued persuasively that, for the labor movement as a whole, we really should strategically focus on healthcare and education.

But for climate, I think the sector that we really need to focus on is electricity because it's literally the sector at what many climate scientists would call the linchpin of decarbonisation.

Because if we don't clean up electricity, we can't so-called electrify everything and decarbonize the rest of our energy system – without this clean electricity sector. But the very interesting thing about the electricity sector is it's one of the most unionized in the entire economy. The electric utility sector has unionization rates of upwards of 25%. Whereas in the economy, it's more like 10%.

So there's actually already been efforts by some members in the unions that represent electricity workers, like the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, to really start working on what they call a rank-and-file strategy for a Green New Deal. And the IBEW and the Utility Workers Union of America.

We can start working in these sectors and try to kind of build a rank-and-file movement within these unions themselves. And again, this is hard work. It's not a shortcut. It's not gonna happen as rapidly as we need it. But in some ways, sometimes when we think about climate action, it becomes so overwhelming that 'we have to change everything,' as Naomi Klein says, 'we have to change all of society all at once.'

To me, the idea of radically transforming a relatively small electrical utility union seems a little less daunting. And something that we should at least consider – because, for all the talk in the



climate movement of public power and public electricity, there's really not been enough outreach and focus on engaging with these workers and unions that are deeply embedded in the electricity sector that could have a lot of power to help us translate.

[00:22:09] **PAOLA:** Together we have the power to rapidly transform sectors of industry, society, and our economy to address the wide ranging impacts of climate change. And on an individual level, as organizers and people who care deeply about solving this crisis, we have to wonder, what do we look forward to? What does the future look like where we have Good Jobs for All, pass a Civilian Climate Corps, and mobilize our society to combat the climate crises?

[00:22:38] **MIA:** I'm hearing all these things, going into college, which is like, 'you need to do something that makes you happy, but also earns you money, and you need to do something where you can live a fruitful life, but also have a stable income.' And I think that was always like a norm for me. But I never considered doing something I love. Like, I couldn't imagine that future for myself, just because I've been told all my life that I have to sacrifice one or the other.

Going into college, I'm like, I don't know what major I want because I want to get good money and have a secure job, but also want to do the things I love. And I think... but now, you know, learning about Good Jobs for All, learning about the CCC, learning about all these things that can be put in place to make life better, having that right in front of me right now, it allows me to see that Good Jobs for All would allow people – your children, your sisters, your brothers, anyone in your life – to do the things they love in a productive, green way.

[00:23:50] **PAOLA:** So what is Mia's dream job with the Civilian Climate Corps?

[00:23:54] **MIA:** [laughing] I've thought about this? So, um, my dream job is probably something in filmmaking or teaching, maybe a combination of the two. For the longest time my dream job was being an art teacher, exploring the world through art and helping younger kids do the same thing. And I think creating like your version of the world on a piece of paper and or any other medium, that would be my dream job: to do that every day.

[00:24:31] **VEEKAS:** I only recently realized – like, if we pass a CCC that is as transformational as I hope – I think I would quit my job and join the CCC. Like, I'm fairly certain I would do that. I just think that there's so much opportunity to create a better world and what I would want to do.

So I talked earlier about, you know, when I was younger, I wanted to be a teacher. That didn't pan out because I wanted more safety and security for my own life. And I don't... I guess I don't really want to be a teacher anymore. What I would really love to do is to work on

regenerative agriculture or regenerative farming, because the more I learn about the world around me, like even my tiny little backyard, I can tell how much this exploitive mindset has influenced even the types of plants we choose to plant and the types of pesticides we use. And, the sense that we need to control everything has actually caused most of the problems that we face in a backyard setting but also as a society.

I would love to maybe combine those two interests to teach about permaculture or teach about the importance of pollinators, and create community gardens and stuff like that, for not only kids but for the wider community. I think that would be just the most incredible job.

[00:26:13] **PAOLA:** We will achieve the promises of Good Jobs for All. It won't be easy and much of the fight is still ahead of us, but together we are moving forward, accomplishing this vital aspect of a Green New Deal, not just in New York, but across the country. Organizers everywhere are working around the clock to build the necessary mass support for this campaign.

Earlier this summer, at a Sunrise rally in Washington, DC, US Representative Jamaal Bowman of the New York 16th congressional district was one of the many politicians who showed passionate support for Good Jobs for All.

[00:26:50] **JAMAAL BOWMAN:** We've got people from all over the country: the Northeast, the Midwest, the South, out West [cheering]. This is a movement, this is a movement. I am here because of the movement and it's not just a national movement, it's an international movement. But as we know, all politics is local. So I want to take us back to my district, New York's 16th congressional district where we just defeated a 31-year incumbent because of the Sunrise Movement [cheering].

But here's the deal, here's the truth of the matter: I represent the Bronx, I represent Mount Vernon, I represent Yonkers, shout out to Yonkers, and a big shout out to New Rochelle [cheering]. So, I represent other areas as well, but I want to focus on these areas for a moment because these are the areas where the racial injustice, the economic injustice, and the environmental injustice continue to live and breathe in our country. These are the areas where COVID ravaged my district because of the comorbidities that exist due to the climate crises and environmental racism [banging].

These are the areas where public housing continues to crumble because the federal government has not given a dime to public housing in ten years [jeering]. These are the areas where our public school infrastructure continues to fall apart because it's a hundred years old. These are the areas where children are living with lead paint [booing]. And developing cognitive difficulties because they live with that paint and we're not doing a damn thing about

it! This is the area where Robert Moses built the Cross Bronx Expressway [jeering] that destroyed the Bronx, that now has people inhaling these fumes leading to asthma, upper respiratory illness, and horrible qualities of life.

Now, I love my entire district, but I need to contrast Yonkers, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, and the Bronx with Scarsdale, Mamaronek, Rye, and Bronxville! Because, if you live in my district and you're white, you're more likely to be wealthy. You're more likely to go to fully funded schools. You're less likely to have asthma, and you're more likely to have green, beautiful places to hang out, play, and live. That shit ain't right!

I am unapologetic – I ran for office to represent those who have been marginalized, neglected, and disenfranchised in my district [cheering]. So, now is the moment.

[00:29:55] **VEEKAS:** What I want people to always remember is that there is reason to hope and that there's reason to be optimistic, that we can make our world a better place. The fact that we look around and we see that the systems all around us are broken and are failing us and are causing incredible suffering can be true at the same time as the thought that we can change it. I encourage everyone to imagine – just think about the imagination you had as a kid – and imagine what the world could be like and just know that we can get there and we will get there.

[00:30:54] **PAOLA:** Thank you for listening to *Wake Up, New York! A Sunrise NYC Podcast*.

[00:30:59] **JENNA:** We're your hosts, Jenna Tipaldo and Paola Sanchez. And we produced this episode with Frankie James Albin, Natalie Bartfay, Hillary MacDonald, and Jilly Edgar.

[00:31:09] **PAOLA:** Special thanks to Representative Espaillat, Professor Matt Huber, Mia, and Veekas, for speaking to us. We are also continuing to put pressure on politicians and we're growing our team and the fight for Good Jobs for All. You can join us by signing up for our Slack on our website,

[00:31:25] **JENNA:** To learn more about Sunrise NYC, visit us online at [sunrise-nyc.org](https://sunrise-nyc.org). And you can learn more about the Good Jobs for All campaign at [goodjobsforallpledge.org](https://goodjobsforallpledge.org).

## **SHOW NOTES**

*This episode of WAKE UP, NEW YORK! was produced by Frankie James Albin, Natalie Bartfay, Jilly Edgar, Hillary McDonald, and your hosts – Paola Sanchez and Jenna Tipaldo. This episode was mixed and edited by Natalie Bartfay. Our music is composed and performed by [Janet May](#). Special thanks to Sunrise members Veekas and Mia, Adriano Espaillat, and Matt Huber.*

*If you're interested in getting involved in Sunrise Movement NYC, find us at [sunrise-nyc.org](http://sunrise-nyc.org) or follow us on social media @sunrisemvmtnyc.*