

“Building the Bigger We” for Climate Justice



July 2016, Philadelphia, PA. Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ)'s People's Caravan, outside the Democratic National Convention (see GGJ 2016).

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Introduction

This month, I will join organizers across the U.S. working to amass thousands of people in the nation's capital marching for *climate justice* (CJ). We will fill the streets with our bodies, art, and song. Steps outside the White House, we will shake the walls of a U.S. presidential administration that denies the existence of climate change and is openly hostile to Black and Brown people, immigrants, Indigenous people, workers, women, LGBTQ people, and people of different abilities.

The march, planned for April 29, 2017, will not be the first mass demonstration to invoke grassroots articulations of CJ. On September 21, 2014, I joined some 400,000 people for the first People's Climate March in New York City, to date the world's largest day of action on climate change. Indigenous, environmental justice, and labor organizers led the demonstration. "Big Green" groups like 350.org and Sierra Club – well-resourced, white-led environmental NGOs long dominating the cast of climate activists – were pressed to take largely behind-the-scenes roles providing financial and logistical support (Kilimanjaro 2015; Giacomini and Turner 2015). Converging across a kaleidoscope of identities, struggles, and commitments, we called for jobs, justice, and climate action.

Following movements for environmental justice (Dawson 2010) and "alter-globalization" (Reitan and Gibson 2012), grassroots movements for CJ explicitly name that an unjust economic system, capitalism, undergirds intersecting systems of oppression (Kaijser and Kronsell 2014). While constantly contested and in-the-making, recent grassroots articulations of CJ in the U.S. bring together two projects as co-dependent: organizing *against* the fossil fuel industry and linked systems of gendered and racialized colonization, militarism, economic exploitation, and ecological destruction; and organizing *for* a "Just Transition" to sustainable economies powered by relationships of care, deeply democratic

governance, and decentralized renewable energy (Schlosberg and Collins 2014; Kilimanjaro 2015; Movement Generation 2016).

As CJ becomes an increasingly familiar signpost in global discourse and practice, now marks a critical moment for re-thinking and reacting to CJ movements as vectors for justice and collective liberation.¹ To those who take up the struggle for CJ as a life-or-death fight for survival, the buzzword-ization of CJ risks replicating old patterns of material-semiotic colonization, appropriation, and oppression (e.g., Williams and Mawdsley 2006; Walker 2009; Harrison 2015). Both in anticipation and response, grassroots, base-building organizations working at the intersection of racial, economic, gender, and environmental justice have grown their power through founding new and re-directing existing networks to define and advance CJ. The Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), a partnership of US-based, people of color-led, grassroots environmental justice groups, networks, and support hubs, advocates “root-cause” solutions to militarism, capitalist exploitation, and environmental injustice (CJA 2016).² CJ movement actors³ are acutely conscious that highly uneven urgencies, ranging from immediate survival to distanced concern, are drawing new people into their movements (e.g., Mamani *et al.* 2015). Ever alert to its perils, CJA and other movement actors nevertheless articulate a need to “Build the Bigger We” for CJ as critical for achieving liberatory shifts in climate politics (Kilimanjaro 2015).

¹ I expand the Catalyst Project’s definition of “collective liberation,” connecting personal liberation “to the liberation of all people” (see Dixon 2014, 73), as a shorthand for the more-than-human sense of collective ecological liberation that many CJ movement actors articulate. The Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), for example, recognizes intersecting systems of oppression that transform and work through nonhuman life and processes, as well as human beings (see CJA 2016).

² CJA is just one of several important U.S. networks channeling roots in environmental justice to CJ. The Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change (EJLFCC), founded by WE ACT for Environmental Justice in 2008, is another, partially overlapping CJ movement-building coalition of 41 grassroots groups (Schlosberg and Collins 2014; EJLFCC 2016).

³ I generally follow Maeckelbergh (2011) in using the term “movement actors” to respect that while many people pushing for CJ identify as organizers or activists, many others do not hold these identities.

With these dynamics at the fore, I set out to learn how CJ movement actors in the U.S. build solidarities between people with deeply uneven, differently real urgencies for action, and through doing so, shift climate change politics towards potentialities of collective liberation. In recognizing movement actors' practices as explicitly *prefigurative*, I join in "removing the temporal distinction between the struggle in the present and a goal in the future; instead, the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present" (Maeckelbergh 2011). Thinking with Mouffe (2005), Routledge and Derickson recognize prefigurative practices as powerful tools for mobilizing "a constitutive 'we'" through "agonistic relationships...that do not seek to eradicate or eliminate difference, but acknowledge and recognize it as different while still looking for promising, if partial, synergies to serve as the basis for solidaristic relationships" (2015, 392). These practical and dynamic solidarities, Routledge (2011) contends, "are crucial in order to construct meaningful translocal alliances" for CJ, mirroring movement actors' own call to "Build the Bigger We" (Kilimanjaro 2015).

If scholar-activists take seriously CJ movements' potential to achieve global shifts through "place-based struggles," we must search for sites of "*grounded* resistance to injustice and responses to climate change...from which resistance tactics and strategies are developed" (Routledge 2011, emphasis in original; see Cumbers *et al.* 2008). Rather than engage high-visibility, transnational "counter-summit" protests (e.g., Routledge 2011; Chatterton *et al.* 2013; Foran 2016), I focus on the more mundane movement-building practices that make them possible.

I engaged with CJ solidarity politics in practice as they weaved between several U.S. movement-building "convergence spaces" (Routledge 2003) in the summer of 2016 that interface between base-building, grassroots CJ organizations and traditional Big Green efforts for climate action. Drawing on qualitative, participatory action-research methodologies (see

Derickson and Routledge 2015), I engaged movement participants through collaboration, active participation, and conversational interviews. I center my analysis on two key convenings: the National Convening⁴ of the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), a coalition of people of color-led, grassroots groups and allies formed explicitly to advance CJ; and the Annual Conference⁵ of U.S. Climate Action Network (USCAN), an older, broader arena of climate politics with membership spanning widely different theories of change.

At CJA and USCAN's convenings, CJ movement actors engaged solidarity practices capable of meeting what I identify as the core ethos of CJ: commitment to acting now for intersectional justice even while making space and time (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014) for accommodating radical difference and uncertainty. Working through both material and relational registers, movement actors apply this ethos of CJ through prefigurative practices that diverge riskily, but generatively, from Modern configurations of politics, place, and time we are accustomed to in an age named by many as the Anthropocene (see Moore 2016). I will show how through experimental but ethically-grounded engagements of living otherwise, CJ solidarity practices enable alignment in imaginaries, strategies, and tactics that build movements more capable of enacting justice. I make a case that it is because, not in spite, of the messiness and contingency of these ongoing (re)alignments that climate justice movement actors are already transforming bounds of the possible in climate politics.

Prefiguring an ethos of climate justice

Across the convergence spaces I engaged, movement collaborators suggested a need for practices steeped in an ethos of CJ that demands *making time* for alignment across difference and *acting now* to support survival and justice for most-impacted groups (see

⁴ June 24-26, 2016; University of Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁵ June 13-15, 2016; Intercontinental Hotel, Miami, Florida.

Popke 2009, 13). Cindy Wiesner underlined this tension in articulating what it means to build CJ solidarities:

It means having...that kind of *deeper political analysis, but then also act*. And I think, that those actions are in conjunction with organizing, and also are in the frame of, “let's not just push for what's possible, but *what political space do we create if we're able to push beyond that?*”

Wiesner (who helped steer CJA's convening in June) and other convergence organizers suggested that building alignment through this two-pronged ethos of CJ demands practices cutting across traditional arenas of politics, place, and time. Organizers repeatedly invoked the metaphor of a *movement ecosystem* to elucidate how dual urgencies to act now and make time are worked out through practice. Participants identified two registers that are necessary to convoke solidarities through this CJ ethos. First, Sean Estelle articulated what many expressed as the *material* necessity of a “movement ecosystem” approach for building CJ solidarities with people carrying different experiences of “the” climate problem. Estelle, alongside others (e.g., Chatterjee), made clear that the demands of an ethos placing equal weight on opening up to difference and closing down to action cannot materially occur without practices that bring together people across “multiple fronts” of strategy and location.

At the same time, movement actors presented the *relational* need for a movement ecosystem as of equal strategic value for aligning on an ethos of CJ. Social movement geographers use the concept of *affect* to describe emotion experienced on a level that proceeds or defies representation through reasoned thought (e.g., Bosco 2007). Ananda Lee Tan described the move in 2009 to initiate what would become the Climate Justice Alliance through a multi-year process of “Alignment” as critical to opening up spaces of affective encounter that deepen relationships:⁶

⁶ Like CJA, Haraway envisions “alignment” as “a rich metaphor for wayfarers, for the Earthbound” that “does not as easily as ‘decision’ carry the tones of modernist liberal choice discourse, at least in the United States” (2016, 41-42).

It can be frustrating and time consuming, but the undercurrent is that [the Climate Justice Alignment] was a beautiful process. It was a process of making friends, building deep relationships, and by the time the first Our Power gathering happened in Black Mesa and then the second one in Richmond, I think there was a sense that, “wow, we're part of a family, we're part of a movement ecosystem that has very deep connections, not only within our place-based struggles, but has deep connections amongst each other.”

Tan and others recognized creating mechanisms for people to be vulnerable, affective, and affected as crucial to cultivate trust and empathy between participants (Bosco 2007; Juris 2008). In doing so, they open ripples for unsettling and realigning participants' experience of the urgencies at stake and realms of possibility for addressing them (Routledge and Derickson 2015). CJ movement actors thus suggested that taken together, material and relational registers demand practices that transcend Modern, capital-legitimated mindsets of *individual* responsibility (see Haraway 2016, 42) and position participants within the permeable borders of *collective* accountability to a greater “we” (Mouffe 2005; Routledge and Derickson 2015).

Building solidarities in practice through contingent alignment

I turn now to the practices through which movement participants are “Building the Bigger We” for CJ. I found a set of common practices threading across two of the movement-building “convergence spaces” (Routledge 2003) I attended in June 2016. These practices figured unevenly and in different ways. The Climate Justice Alliance (CJA)'s National Convening is the direct product of the “Alignment” process initiated by key movement actors in 2009, many of whom are also active in CJ organizing at the transnational level (see above). Therefore, I treat practices and conversations from CJA's convening as a sort of baseline for comparative analysis.

U.S. Climate Action Network (USCAN)'s June Annual Conference, on the other hand, offered an ideal opportunity to follow CJ movement actors into a space where they

have historically been excluded. Many people I spoke with recognized that USCAN, long a hub for predominantly white- and male-led Big Green groups focused on policy advocacy, is going through organizational transformation. With pressure below from CJ member groups, and especially above from Keya Chatterjee, a new Executive Director, USCAN has been actively repositioning grassroots organizers at the core of its leadership and membership (Abdul-Rahman; Chatterjee; Patterson, interviews). Chatterjee conveyed her vision to reshape USCAN as a key vehicle for building solidarities centered on CJ in the US, serving as a counterpart to transnational CJ convergence spaces happening abroad (engaged by Chatterton *et al.* 2013).

Following threads between each convening, I contend that CJ practices effectively build power through processes of alignment that push and pull between two features of a CJ ethos. On one hand, these practices are radically experimental, open to difference and potentialities (Stengers 2005; Whatmore 2009; Marres 2013). At the same time, they are grounded in unwavering attention to immediate urgencies for intersectional justice that make this work matter here and now (Kaijser and Kronsell 2014).

❖ *Making space and time for difference through “uncomfortable” situations*

Attending to the first of these features, many of the CJ movement practices featured at CJA’s convening and introduced at USCAN seemed to thrive rather than break down in the face of conflict and uncertainty. Wiesner noted the necessity of difference-confronting spaces that:

...are deliberative, they're intentional, and they don't intend to diminish the different entry points, but in fact you build on that strength, and you build on that political diversity...I think most people don't do [that] well, because either we have a politic that wants to erase those differences and/or we have a politic that then is divisive around those differences.

Weisner conveyed that these CJ movement-building spaces serve as critical arenas to align root-level imaginaries and experiences (using philosophical terms, *ontologies*) in solidarity with “frontline” communities most impacted by effects of climate change and co-pollution. In doing so, these convergence spaces invite shifts in understanding *what* problem is at stake and for whom – mirroring what Whatmore (2009) calls “ontological fluidity” and greeting “controversies” as “generative events” (Stengers 2005).

Many CJ movement practices I encountered both met Wiesner’s criteria and exhibited characteristics of what Callon *et al.* (2009) call *hybrid forums* – “open spaces for discussing technical issues, with heterogeneous involvement of people and knowledge bases” (2009, 18). Hybrid forums are designed explicitly to engage grounded practices through which radically divergent but differently real “matters of concern” are made, contested, and remade (Latour 2004).

Focusing primarily on controversies of technoscience rather than movement-building, Callon *et al.* cling to what I take as both too little faith in the ability of political formations to self-organize, and too much faith in the ethical integrity of the state, the media, and other institutions as necessary sources of legitimization (2009, 181). Both CJA’s and USCAN’s convergence practices “flipped the script” (multiple participants, CJA convening; Kilimanjaro 2015) on the role of elite voices within *and* outside the convening. Like hybrid forums, these convergences offered spaces for “intense, open, and quality” dialogical exchange between people with wide-ranging “expertise” (Callon *et al.* 2009, 158-160), from combatting systemic environmental racism in East Michigan (Copeland, interview) to re-directing Western science to address sea-level rise in low-income communities of color in southeast Florida (Hernandez Hammer, interview). But these convergence spaces were not conceived through academic theory, nor were they “competency groups” choreographed by researchers (c.f., Whatmore and Landström 2011). Rather, the convergences themselves

formed through dialogical democracy *in practice* based on long-standing relationships of power – ranging from deep solidarity to open contention – that weave through political arenas, places, and times that participants have long traversed together (see Burke and Shear 2014; Shear 2014).

Growing through relationships in practice and attentive to power geometries from the start, CJA and USCAN eschewed engagement with traditional media for participant-led live Tweeting and defy Callon *et al.*'s call for explicit validation by the state (2009, 181). CJA, for example, curated their convening with only core member groups and allies, selectively including movement-support and policy advocacy groups with which grassroots members were cultivating long-standing relationships, accountability, and trust. CJA organizers thus welcomed in some members of the larger “movement ecosystem,” but took charge of authorizing *them* rather than asking to be authorized.

Denise Abdul-Rahman explained that she and other USCAN Steering Committee members prioritized outreach to most-impacted groups when recruiting for participants and presenters. While the conference was still majority white and Big Greens were still there, many community organizers, people of color, and youth showed up, too. Discussion leaned so heavily towards topics of building grassroots power and justice that, noting the “tricky balance” required to open spaces for negotiating strategic difference between old and new factions of USCAN, Chatterjee fears they may have “lost people from this conference.” But overall, Chatterjee expressed gratification, not regret, for the number of “uncomfortable conversations” enabled through the conference.

Taken together, the democratized hybrid forum-like qualities of CJA's and USCAN's convergence spaces configured them well to deal with “uncomfortable conversations” (Chatterjee, interview) between people holding different motivating realities for being there. From the convening's start, Chatterjee emphasized that USCAN is driven by and for

members holding radically different experiences and objectives. Organizers made clear that they considered nothing *a priori*; if USCAN “can’t do anything useful...we’ll shut it down” (Chatterjee, public address). The meeting was predominately structured around member-led “Open Space” sessions governed by four rules: “Whoever comes are the right people. Whatever happens is the only thing that could’ve happened. When it starts is the right time. When it’s over, it’s over.”

Most dramatically, USCAN featured a “Strategy Panel” meant to critically engage its membership’s full political spread. Two white, male, mid-career environmentalists from large, center-left NGOs defended the “virtuous cycle” of “incrementalism.” Climate policy, they contended, should first attend to the bottom-line “irreversible effects” of greenhouse gas emissions; only then should “luxury” concerns about equity be enlisted to make policies work for disadvantaged communities. Reverend Leo Woodberry, a pastor, environmental justice activist, and community organizer; Will Lawrence, a key figure in the student-led fossil fuel divestment movement; and Janet Redman, CJA-member and past convener of the transnational Climate Justice Now! network, rebutted this incremental vision. Lawrence emphasized that grassroots, base-building strategies are essential to make possible just, equitable, and effective climate policy. He noted that grassroots movements remain systemically undervalued and underfunded. Woodberry and Redman articulated that equity must be a “bottom-line priority,” inseparable from efforts to curb fossil fuel extraction and carbon emissions. As Redman put it, “people are being poisoned today” in environmental “sacrifice zones.” “Radical pragmatism,” not “incrementalism,” she argued, is the only solution for addressing the “different urgencies” experienced for CJ.

Backed by a screen projecting live Tweets from the audience, few words were minced on the panel, and much of the room – myself included – expressed some level of surprise or discomfort. Yet it is precisely these kinds of comparatively safe, publically accountable

hybrid forums for negotiating tensions that Chatterjee hoped USCAN could create. Situations fostering what Chatterjee calls “uncomfortable conversations” exhibit features that Callon (1998) might recognize in particularly “hot” situations. On the USCAN Strategy Panel, every aspect of “climate politics” became open to uncertainty – from which aspects of fossil fuels’ impacts are relevant (carbon co-pollutants or sea level rise?), to unpacking who “we” are when strategizing against climate change’s “irreversible effects.” Participants agreed little on where to look for “expertise” (low-income communities confronting extraction or climate scientists?); even if experts could be found, there would have been no “stabilized knowledge base” to draw from (Callon 1998, 260). Participants depicted apparently “mutually incompatible” bottom-line concerns (Callon 1998, 260): an “irreversible” biophysical tipping point, from the center-left environmentalists, and stopping people from being “poisoned today,” from Woodberry, Lawrence, and Redman. For the remainder of the conference, attendees repeatedly referenced this frank exchange as *making space* for concrete projects of equitable finance, intersectionality, and grassroots power.

Chatterjee suggested that fostering these situations is vitally necessary for both their material and relational qualities. From one side, she sees a material disjunction: Big Greens have lopsided access to funding and visibility in climate activism, while grassroots, base-building organizers practice strategies most needed to achieve rapid, justice-centered emissions reduction. Building alignment on root-level understandings of the problems at stake between D.C. lobbyists and CJ organizers practicing direct action is thus pivotal to building powerful movements for CJ (Chatterjee, interview). At the same time, Chatterjee recognized that creating “memorable” even if “uncomfortable” “common experiences,” hot with emotion and uncertainty, is the only way to make these material conditions possible. The “affective solidarity” these experiences generate is strategic not for binding together collaborators already sharing common visions and practices (Juris 2008), but rather for

catalyzing “empathetic agonism” between movement actors who continue to share radically different urgencies for pursuing CJ (Horowitz 2013). Rob Friedman frames the situation on “the metaphor of dance”:

I always love spaces like this because there's an opportunity to really build those relationships that I think are fundamental to this work...A lot of people are asking questions, though, about, “what does anything we're talking about mean for my work?” Folks shift course, particularly the big organizations. They will take it seriously when they recognize that their very existence is being threatened...So we're dancing, and I mean it's going to be a salsa dance.

Friedman suggests these convergence spaces enable dialogical contention not just over strategy, but also over ontological questions of *why this work matters* altogether. In doing so, the convergence spaces reflect Callon *et al.*’s “hybrid forums”: opening channels not for closing down on “consensus,” but rather dynamically negotiating different underlying urgencies and different capabilities for addressing them (2009; c.f., Habermas 1984). Like hybrid forums, the practices Friedman and I experienced took shape through “structured space of communication and perception facilitating adjustment of identities with view towards composing the collective” (Callon *et al.* 2009, 189). Through such an unsettling process, as Chatterjee noted, CJ movement actors might lose some people. Yet by establishing publically accountable, dialogically democratic arenas, people have an opportunity to “shift” not only strategies but also basic understandings of “the” issue at stake.

❖ *Enacting intersectional justice now*

To build alignment on the ethos of CJ that I heard articulated, however, these practices needed to do more than make time and space for “ontological fluidity” (Whatmore 2009) and reach beyond an end goal of “composing the collective” (Callon *et al.*, 2009, 189); they needed to do so while holding fast attention to *acting now* in solidarity with movement actors defending survival in the face of intersectional injustice (Kaijser and Kronsell 2014).

As Friedman acknowledged, experimental spaces of confrontation and openness to difference are risky – especially for those working from CJ urgencies of survival, not only recognition:

All this work is constantly evolving; none of it is set in stone. Even if people have expertise, no one is an expert...that freaks me out. One of the biggest areas of concern remains: yeah, you can talk about “equity” all you want, but what are you actually doing? And how are you actually taking up space right now and disenfranchising others by talking about equity in a way that is not actually equitable?

While risks for misappropriating concepts of “justice” and “equity” remain very present (Mamani *et al.* 2015), CJ movement actors engaging CJA and USCAN mediated the necessary risks of negotiating difference through a second major set of practices: rituals designed to uphold the CJ ethos’ core focus on urgencies of intersectional justice. In Callon *et al.*’s configuration of hybrid forums, creating space for shifts in basic understandings of what problems are at stake requires three “implementation criteria”: “equal access to the procedure,” “transparency,” and “clarity (and publicity) of the rules of the game” (2009, 163). While closing down on few absolutes, Callon *et al.* thus envision an important role for external “mediators” to establish equity in how and when people participate.

Yet necessarily, I contend, CJ movement spaces are “hotter” and “wilder” situations than Callon and colleagues wager on when identifying these “implementation criteria” (Callon 1998; Callon and Rabearisoa 2003; Callon *et al.* 2009, 171). As many collaborators reiterated, there are no external mediators in the climate fight; *everybody* is implicated in and affected by climate change through deeply uneven urgencies and experiences (Mossett, interview; see Levin *et al.*, 2012). This hottest and wildest of situations demands more radical democratization and “stronger” objectivity – embodied objectivity, in the sense of acting from positioned experiences of feeling and responding to the matters at hand (Haraway 1988; Harding 1992; Latour 2000) – than skilled mediators and internal systems of accountability can provide. If prefigurative practices of CJ are to meet urgencies of people literally fighting for their and their communities’ lives, and external mediators are non-existent, CJ solidarity

practices must operate on “implementation criteria” that privilege people least responsible for and most affected by the struggle for CJ.

I found exactly these kinds of justice-centered, “strongly objective” implementation criteria taking shape through practices attentive to both material and relational dimensions of building solidarities. Rather than enlist “professional” mediators attempting neutrality, movement participants facilitated themselves. At USCAN and especially CJA, people with deep histories of leadership on the frontlines of disruptive fossil fuel extraction or exposure to greenhouse gas co-pollutants were granted first position in setting the terms of debate and changing the course of discussion.

To maintain this radically objective negotiation of expertise, movement actors repeatedly invoked several rituals in particular. Some of these rituals operate primarily through registers of relational, affect-heavy engagement. Storytelling, visual media, songs, chants, and even prayers by spiritual leaders served an important role at both CJA’s and USCAN’s convenings, positioned as “grounding” for evoking and focusing emotional and spiritual gravity.

For example, in an interactive workshop, USCAN facilitators made time and space for sharing “stories of self” of why CJ matters to participants. Part of the “public narrative” tool developed by Marshall Ganz, a seasoned organizer-turned-Harvard sociologist, “stories of self” empowered participants to share personal narratives of struggle that for many of us were intense and affecting (see Leading Change Network 2016). Several times, people sharing stories welled up in tears. Especially at these times, storytellers received an on-swell of support from fellow participants, expressed through shouts of affirmation, clapping, and snapping. After storytelling, organizers clustered participants into groups of people working in loosely-overlapping movement circles to practice strategic planning. Several participants I

spoke with reflected that for linking the affective experience of storytelling with strategy, this afternoon's workshop was the most valuable and stimulating of the conference.

These practices were critical in facilitating “affective solidarity” (Juris 2008). They focused relational gravity on the leadership and material struggles of those most “objectively” confronting intersecting oppressions associated with climate injustice (Latour 2000), and at the same time created space and time for all participants to (re)connect and reconsider *what* brings them to this work (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). These affective solidarities opened channels for building trust and “empathetic agonism” by affecting and being affected together (Horowitz 2013). More than this, they enabled CJ actors to pointedly refract moments of emotional rawness towards alignment on centering the struggle of most-impacted people and communities, even in the face of radically different urgencies for showing up and open disagreement on strategies needed to address them (see de Vries and Rosenow 2015). CJ movement actors thus share in an ethic of “becoming” through their articulation of a CJ ethos grounded in *process* rather than a pre-defined moral code (Popke 2009, 84; Connolly 2010).

In counterpoint, Callon *et al.* recognize the need for structures of accountability to processes temporarily stabilized through the course of dialogical engagement (2009, 163). CJ movement actors invoked other rituals primarily for their material importance for navigating the risks of making time for radical openness across difference even while doubling down on core urgencies to combat systemic intersectional injustice. I found the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing serving a key role at CJA's and USCAN's convergence spaces in solidifying accountability to this CJ ethos without closing down generative potentialities of encounter. The Jemez Principles, which came from a landmark 1996 meeting of grassroots organizers, emphasize six guiding priorities for movement-building practice: radical “inclusion”; “bottom-up organizing”; letting “people speak for themselves”; working

“together in solidarity and mutuality”; building “just relationships among ourselves”; and “commitment to self-transformation” (Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice [SNEEJ] 1996). Having established organizational commitment to the Jemez Principles in both CJA and USCAN, CJ organizers mobilized them frequently and effectively to either bring contestation out into the open or “call in” participants acting in ways that CJ movement actors felt violated their core commitment to intersectional justice (e.g., Abdul-Rahman; Chatterjee, interviews).

Chatterjee appreciated that through USCAN, CJ movement actors have helped “one or two large member organizations agree to adopt those Principles...a good starting point if [they] can not just read them, but also figure out how to operationalize them.” Some participants noted limitations: Big Greens should not get credit for simply posting principles on their website. But provoked by events like the Strategy Panel, I did see many participants figuring “out how to operationalize” the Jemez Principles. An older white man representing a Big Green wondered how he could “bring more people who don’t look like me” into his organization. Invoking Jemez Principle 4 (SNEEJ 1996), several participants conveyed that rather than seek the “optics” of “getting minorities in,” Big Greens must themselves meet urgencies of those most affected by intersections of climate injustice through their work. The next day, unprompted, the same man appreciated learning that “equity, justice, and climate change all have the same enemy.” Convoked by USCAN’s ratification of the Jemez Principles, this encounter, and others like it, appears to have helped shift some convergence participants’ ontological grounding closer in line with an ethos of CJ.

Organizers’ deployment of practices facilitating affective encounter and material accountability created *space and time* that transformed the tenor of these convergences (see Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). Thus configured, CJA and USCAN created movement spaces at once open to difference and committed to intersectional justice. Attuned to this core ethos,

CJ solidarity practices welcome *trans-political* multiplicity by leaning into rather than writing over tensions between strategies. These same practices created space for participants to connect across diverse *places* even while deepening trans-local accountability and alignment on *what* matters and *who* is unevenly impacted. All the while, CJ solidarity practices engage *trans-temporal* urgencies demanded by living in the particular “objective” present held by participants on the frontlines of injustice, rather than abstract future projections (Harding 1992; Latour 2000).

Beholden to a CJ ethos, temporal priorities shift and potentialities reorient away from “chronological” narratives Reverend Dr. Gerald L. Durley diagnosed at USCAN’s opening plenary as the climate movement’s “addiction.” Durley defined “chronos” as the linear temporalities to which we are most accustomed. These are temporalities driven by what Haraway recognizes as dangerous, unlivable stories – stories of unitary Man or “Anthropos” who acts on a passive, feminized Earth (2016). Durley emphasized the need to convoke instead the politically vibrant, spiraling temporalities of “kairos.” Stories in *kairos* are driven not by *Anthropos* or the inevitable disaster “Capitalocene,” but rather are “actively hopeful” stories of unexpected and contingent entanglements between people and things not content to live out narratives that end so badly for so many (Haraway 2016; on “active hope,” see Macy and Johnstone 2012). Haraway adapts “the Greek khthonios, *of the earth*” (2016, 173) to describe temporalities of “the Chthulucene” that demand human and more-than-human “response-ability,” laden with potential for together prefiguring the just worlds we need (Haraway 2016, 35; 55). Dancing to a similar tune through practices like USCAN’s Strategy Panel, CJ organizers made time for realignment even while centering unevenly-apportioned urgencies of survival.

Taken together, trans-political, trans-local, and trans-temporal potentialities opened by CJ solidarity practices at CJA and USCAN do more than prefigure an “alternative” system

(c.f., Maeckelbergh 2011; Chatterton *et al.* 2013). CJ movement actors' practices of alignment do not embody conventional temporalities of *revolution*, sparking sweeping shifts to the “next” economic-ecological system (c.f., Hardt and Negri 2000; Democracy Collaborative 2017). Aligning for CJ does not mean accepting climate politics as *progressive* or “incremental” (e.g., Knaggård 2014); nor hopelessly concluding that building solidarities engaging multiple urgencies for CJ is futile (c.f., Rayner 2006). CJ movement actors work through temporalities that are performative, experimental, and “radically pragmatic” (Redman, USCAN Strategy Panel; see Gibson-Graham 2008; Barnett and Bridge 2012). Whether reaching between existing toolsets or making their own, CJ movement actors build bigger, more powerful, and more just movements for collective liberation through prefiguring ongoing practices of alignment.

Conclusion

Grassroots movements for climate justice (CJ) are prefiguring practices of radical alignment across difference toward justice and collective liberation. Growing from roots in the U.S. environmental justice movement and transnational movements for global justice, Indigenous people, working people, and people of color are building power and alignment (re)centering climate politics on equity and justice (Tokar 2014; Scholsberg and Collins 2014). Environmental justice organizers in the U.S. are resurging trans-local networks of influence even while broadening and deepening CJ solidarities through building “the Bigger We” (Tan, interview; Kilimanjaro 2015).

Engaging transnational “counter-summits” and surrounding actions, social movement geographers provide important tools for recognizing practices through which CJ movement actors prefigure liberatory climate politics (Mason 2014; Routledge 2011; Chatterton *et al.* 2013). Yet addressing whether and how CJ solidarity politics actually build power capable of

shifting climate politics towards equity and justice, I have argued, calls for attending comparatively mundane, in-between spaces of movement-building. I recognize CJ movement convergence spaces as hybrid sites of “ontological fluidity” (Whatmore 2009) – destabilizing assumed realities of what matters and for whom (Callon *et al.* 2009). Doing so enables attending to the ways CJ movements confront, rather than seek to contain, risks and opportunities inherent in working across conventional lines of politics, place, and time.

Participating in two CJ movement-building “convergence spaces” (Routledge 2003) in the U.S., I found movement actors engaging radical practices of alignment. These practices risked *making space and time* (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014) for differently real experiences of why climate injustice matters, even while *acting now* based on immediate urgencies of injustice (Kaijser and Kronsell 2014). This core ethos of CJ demands attending to capabilities and lived process rather than moral prescriptions and consensus (Stengers 2005; Popke 2009; Maeckelbergh 2011). I found movement actors working through both material and relational (“affective”) registers to apply this ethos of CJ in practice. Movement actors brought these practices to life both in a space cultivated by grassroots CJ movements, the Climate Justice Alliance, and at a conference of the U.S. Climate Action Network, an organization confronting a legacy of marginalizing grassroots voices. From participant recruitment to member-led “Open Space” sessions, and from engaging emotional vulnerability through storytelling to creatively mobilizing tools of accountability like the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, CJ movement actors prioritized intersectional justice even while building contingent alignment across difference. In doing so, I experienced CJ movement practices as potent “grassrooting vectors” (Routledge *et al.* 2007) for building solidarity and grassroots power.

Practices based on a CJ ethos demand “netbags” of imaginaries, strategies, and tactics sewn through movement-building spaces that refuse conventional categorization and

compartmentalization (Haraway 2016, 43). By explicitly unsettling ontologies of “the” climate crisis, CJ movements in the U.S. are reshaping both the grounds and means of “success” in confronting climate change. Engaging a prefigurative ethos of CJ means giving up hope of treading a linear, technocratic path through *chronos* towards Progress, that ever-alluring Modern specter of the Anthropocene (Haraway 2016, 50). Yet in exchange, climate justice movements are building us footing in these contingent, ethically potent *kairos* times of the Chthulucene, telling “big-enough stories” where potentials abound and certitudes escape us (Haraway 2016, 50).

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APPENDIX: Cited interviews⁷

Convergence acronyms

Organizer	Convergence	Acronym
U.S. Climate Action Network	Annual Conference, 13-15 June 2016	USCAN
Climate Justice Alliance	National Convening, 24-26 June 2016	CJA

1. **Denise Abdul-Rahman.** *Environmental Climate Justice Chair, Indiana NAACP.*
Convergences: USCAN; CJA. Interviewed by phone (18 July, 2016).
2. **Keya Chatterjee.** *Executive Director, U.S. Climate Action Network (USCAN).*
Convergence: USCAN. Interviewed by phone (19 July, 2016).
3. **William Copeland.** *Climate Justice Director, East Michigan Environmental Action Council.* Convergence: USCAN. Interviewed by phone (21 July, 2016).
4. **Sean Estelle.** *National Network Organizer, Power Shift Network (PSN).*
Convergence: USCAN. Interviewed by video call (13 July, 2016).
5. **Robert (Rob) Friedman.** *Campaigner, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).*
Convergence: USCAN. Interviewed in person (Miami, Florida; 14 June, 2016), with follow-up in person (New York, NY: 19 July, 2016).
6. **Nicole Hernandez Hammer.** *Southeast Advocacy Coordinator for Climate & Energy, Union of Concerned Scientists.* Convergence: USCAN. Interviewed by phone (20 June, 2016).
7. **Kandi Mossett.** *Lead Organizer, Extreme Energy and Just Transition Campaign, Indigenous Environmental Network.* Convergence: CJA. Interviewed by phone (19 June, 2016).
8. **Jacqueline Patterson.** *Director of Environmental and Climate Justice Program, NAACP.* Convergences: USCAN; CJA. Interviewed by phone (21 July, 2016).

⁷ I conducted 17 additional conversational interviews that inform this paper, along with extensive engaged participation at both convenings.

9. **Janet Redman.** *Director of the Climate Policy Program, Institute for Policy Studies*
[at time of interview]. Convergences: USCAN; CJA. Interviewed in person (Miami, Florida; 13 June, 2016), with follow-up by phone (29 July, 2016).
10. **Ananda Lee Tan.** *Project Coordinator, Just Transition Collaborative at EDGE Funders Alliance.* Convergence: CJA. Interviewed in person (Brooklyn, New York; 28 July, 2016).
11. **Cindy Wiesner.** *Executive Director, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ).*
Convergence: CJA. Interviewed by phone (15 July, 2016).