

We can prevent energy disaster

BY VAN JONES • August 17, 2008

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Too often in our history, national transformations are born only of great calamities. The New Deal arose from the Great Depression, our manufacturing sector matured during World War II and the end of slavery required a Civil War.

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Fortunately, the situation today is reversed: We can transform our country and *prevent* a calamity by moving now toward a clean energy economy.

The need for transformation is clear, as millions of Americans suffer through another economic downturn, simultaneous wars sap our strength and test our spirit, and we see all around us the strange and terrible changes our planet is undergoing.

Some might say these threats are temporary, and we can wait them out. But the people of Detroit and hundreds of other communities who have lost jobs, gotten notices of foreclosure or have loved ones fighting overseas know there is no time to waste. We need answers.

The good news is that we know the common source of the threats we face: Our addiction to fossil fuels. When we fill our gas tanks, mourn our heroes or feel the temperatures rise, we experience three symptoms of a single disease. Curing that disease will help solve the problems of today -- but just as important, it will open new vistas of opportunity for those who need opportunity the most.

Success will be impossible without the clear eyes and strong hands of working Americans -- the growing number of people who maintain the wind turbines of Texas, install energy-efficient materials in Midwestern homes and build the hybrid and electric vehicles that will revive America's auto industry.

Millions of local jobs that cannot be outsourced will be required for the manufacture, installation, transport and maintenance of clean energy sources. The sun, wind and heat of the Earth will provide an unlimited

supply of free fuel, taking the place of costly and volatile fossil fuels that have hamstrung our struggling manufacturers. Urban Americans will benefit from cleaner air as dirty power plants located disproportionately in low-income communities are shuttered and replaced by clean facilities and new jobs. Affordable, environmentally friendly housing will come to low-income neighborhoods, lowering utility bills and reducing the pollution that causes asthma. The local food and community gardening movement will continue to support local agriculture and healthy, affordable diets.

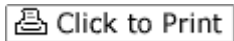
These changes are beginning, but success is not guaranteed. Our leaders must see the irresolvable flaws of fossil fuels and embrace clean energy opportunities, and we must come together as a nation to build a common future.

We will not solve all our problems overnight or without hard work. But we can choose to embrace the technologies and the spirit of progress at our fingertips. It is up to us, and we can start right now.

***VAN JONES** is the founder and president of Green for All, a national organization dedicated to building an inclusive green economy. Contact him c/o the Free Press editorial page at letters@freepress.com.*

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