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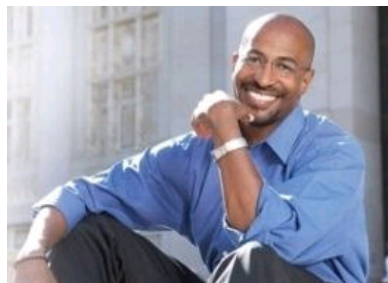
Van Jones Q&A About His New Book "The Green Collar Economy"

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Environmental activist Van Jones' new book "[The Green Collar Economy](#)" debuted at number 12 on the [New York Times best sellers list](#) this week. The book describes how transforming America into a more green society would not only tackle the problem of global warming, but would also reduce energy prices and produce an abundance of jobs that would help turn the economy around.

The Huffington Post recently spoke with Jones via email about the Green Jobs Act of 2007, his reaction to making the Times' list, and what each of us can do to help create a green economy.

How important is it for green policy to be embraced and advanced by government? Can green collar jobs be created in the absence of supportive government policy?

Some can -- but not enough. The government is still on the wrong side of the clean energy revolution. This year, it gave billions to the big polluters and spent billions more in military protection for overseas oil routes. Plus the polluters still have a free pass to dump megatons of planet-cooking carbon into the air -- without paying a cent for that privilege.

Meanwhile, our poor renewable energy companies barely got their little tax credits extended. That's a shame. We need the government to support the problem-solvers in this economy, not the problem-makers. Then we will see an explosion of green-collar jobs.

Both major party candidates talk about a green economy almost in terms of science fiction, X million green collar jobs by 20XX. How have you managed to find support for your book now, when it seems almost too early for even presidential hopefuls to be realistic about a greener economy?

Green-collar jobs are not fictional or far-off. The Center for American Progress and PERI just put out a "Green Recovery" report. It showed that a \$100 billion federal investment would create two million new, green-collar jobs -- in just TWO years. That's just helping America deploy our existing, off-the-shelf technologies and proven solutions. No technological breakthroughs needed. And some of that pays for itself, in energy savings.

So when you think about the green economy, don't think about Buck Rogers. Think about Joe Sixpack -- putting on a green hard hat and going off to fix America. Think about Rosie the Riveter -- manufacturing solar arrays and wind turbines.

Story continues below ↕

Were you surprised that the book made it onto the New York Times list?

Everyone told us it was impossible. First of all, I am an unknown, first-time author. Secondly, no other black environmental author has ever made it onto a bestseller list. What we decided to do was just send out emails to all our friends. But that triggered this incredible community response.

Hundreds of activists and organizations started forwarding our email to their lists, and then the bloggers jumped in -- and sales just exploded online. At that point, we started praying, maybe, for the bottom slot. But number 12? That really blew our minds. I guess people are excited about new, holistic solutions.

How were you involved in getting the Green Jobs Act of 2007 passed, and what kinds of jobs were aided by that?

The Ella Baker Center and Green For All worked with lots of partners to get it passed. Fully funded, the Green Jobs Act will help train about 30,000 people a year, in trades ranging from solar panel installation to green construction. But federal funding for new programs like ours has gotten gummed up this year. Congress should appropriate those dollars as a part of the stimulus package -- so we will have enough trained workers to retrofit and repower America.

What kinds of jobs could be created in a greener economy that wouldn't involve working directly with energy? Is there any hope for a liberal arts major, or should kids who want to work in a greener economy still be looking for engineering degrees?

The green economy has a tremendous wingspan - from the "PhDee's" in green lab coats, to the "Ph-Doo's" in green hard hats. We need green MBAs, green marketers, green screenplay writers, green attorneys, green everything. The whole economy is going to undergo a transformation.

How can the United States afford to think about the environment at a time like this, when the basic infrastructure of the economy seems to be in real danger? Can there really be any way for us -- and for a new president -- to think about credit and carbon at the same time?

Well, for too long, we powered the U.S. economy with consumption, not production ... massive debt, not smart savings ... and environmental destruction, not restoration. Those days are over. To green the economy, we stop borrowing and start building. We stop relying on credit from overseas; we start relying on creativity here at home. And we generate jobs by protecting America's beauty, not destroying it. We can turn this breakdown into a breakthrough - if we make clean energy the cornerstone of the new economy, not credit cards.

Green-collar jobs will save our economy, not just the Earth. The time has come for some green Keynesianism: deficit spending to create green-collar jobs upgrading our power grid with solar and other renewable sources; rebuilding our water infrastructure; retrofitting and weatherizing millions of buildings so that they waste less energy and water; planting trees and creating community gardens. That would create millions and power us through this downturn. The wisest way to jumpstart the economy is to green our infrastructure.

What are the three best things a regular person can do to help create and grow a green economy?

Vote, vote and vote. This is not just about changing lightbulbs; this is also about changing laws. For example, as bad as gas prices were last summer, home heating prices may be more painful this winter. Let's tell Congress not to leave Americans out in the cold. As a part of the stimulus package, the government should launch a massive winter jobs program. We could put millions to work retrofitting homes - blowing in green insulation, replacing old windows and putting in more efficient boilers. That would create jobs, cut carbon emissions and keep people warm and housed. GreenForAll.org can help you take action. Let's bail out the people and the planet this winter.

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