

# What is a Just Transition?

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**Greg Dalton:** This is Climate One, changing the conversation about energy, the economy, and the environment.

Climate experts agree that transitioning away from fossil fuels is vital to preserving society as we know it. But in doing so, do we risk leaving some communities behind?

**Darryl Molina Sarmiento:** If you have over half of the oil drilling sites in Los Angeles concentrated in a low income community of color, there are currently within that situation 300 jobs at risk.

**Greg Dalton:** Making a just transition to a clean, green economy has increasingly become a part of the climate conversation. And as with everything, jobs are key.

**Kevin de León:** You want to make sure that regardless if you're Latino, African-American, White, Asian-American racially mixed, that especially if you're at the lowest economic strata, that that just transition allows you to have a good paying job to put a roof over your child's head to pay for the clothes on their back and food on the table.

**Greg Dalton:** What is a just transition? Up next on Climate One.

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**Greg Dalton:** What does a just and equitable transition from fossil fuels look like?

Climate One conversations feature oil companies and environmentalists, Republicans and Democrats, the exciting and the scary aspects of the climate challenge. I'm Greg Dalton.

Our nation's dependence on fossil fuels has led to climate disruption and inequality. Underserved communities are the ones most harmed by pollution, lack of green space and heat-related illness. Transitioning to clean energy would seem to be the obvious answer. But are privileged people getting helped first and most?

**Vien Truong:** We have to make sure that we're thinking about the jobs and the industries that we're creating, make sure that they are sustainable and green and not gray, not killing people. We have to make sure that we are creating a workforce pipeline to prepare people for those jobs. And we have to make sure that we're treating people differently in this transition as well.

**Greg Dalton:** Former state senator Kevin de Leon says that in California, they're already on it.

**Kevin de León:** To date we have created 500,000 jobs in the clean energy space...that is 10 times more jobs in the clean energy space in California than there are coal mining jobs in all of America.

**Greg Dalton:** Today, we'll talk about what constitutes a just transition away from fossil fuels, with three climate justice leaders. Kevin de León is former President of the California State Senate and currently a candidate for the Los Angeles City Council. Darryl Molina Sarmiento is Executive Director of Communities for a Better Environment, an advocacy group based in Los Angeles. And Vien Truong is former Director of Green for All and senior advisor for climate justice on Tom Steyer's presidential campaign. Today's program was made possible by Chris Olin and Regan Pritzker of the Chrysalis Fund.

Truong's lifelong fight for climate justice began early. Her parents fled Vietnam during the boat people migration and she was born in a refugee camp, later making her way to the United States, along with her family.

## **PROGRAM PART 1**

**Vien Truong:** And when we got here we went to work on farmlands in Oregon, Portland, Oregon where we pick strawberries and snow peas. My mom would strap me to her back. When my grandma started getting dementia we moved to Oakland, California, so that we have family members who can watch her when they were at work. And my parents who never spoke English the only jobs they could find in Oakland was in sweatshops. We call them garment factories. And they would work from morning to night \$.25 a shirt.

That's what they did from the time I was three until the time I went to college. And this was growing up in Oakland, California during the 80s it was the crack years as they would be called now. I saw my first murder when I was eight. And growing up in these conditions now when I think about a just transition for the country I think about people who grew up on farmlands, farmers and farm workers. I think about people who live in communities that are blighted, underserved and neglected for generations. I think about the lack of resources for people who are in low-wage, low-real jobs and how do we help make sure that we are transitioning them so that no one is left behind, no worker is left behind. And that we can actually create a high road, high dignity sustainable future for all.

**Greg Dalton:** What a story. I'm moved by that story. I've heard that several times, I'm still moved by your story, Vien. Darryl Molina Sarmiento, you were 18 years old and you went on a toxics tour in Southeast Los Angeles, a poor part of Los Angeles. Tell us how that kind of pointed you in the direction you're going now.

**Darryl Molina Sarmiento:** Sure. Hi everyone. I participated in my first Communities for a Better Environment toxic tour when I was a student in college. And we toured Southeast Los Angeles and saw some of the most toxic polluters in the country. And that is when I realized that what's happening in Southeast Los Angeles and what's happening all across the United States is really similar to what's happening where my family is from in the Philippines. And so making those global connections to what's happening in Southeast LA to my own personal background and history is

what really brought me to do this work and to do it with Communities for a Better Environment. And so I started off as our youth program coordinator and that is where I worked with our youth members to push back against the construction of a 943 megawatt power plant in Southeast Los Angeles less than a mile from hundreds of homes and schools. And then I became our Southern California Program Director soon after that, and eventually 14 years later I'm here as our Executive Director. The first woman of color in the organization's history that started off, you know, from 18 years old as a participant in our toxic tours. So I feel really privileged to be able to be here and do this work.

**Greg Dalton:** Fabulous. Kevin de León, you're not a traditional environmentalist. You said that when you became president of the California State Senate you didn't call Tom Steyer or the head of Sierra Club. You got a very different background in that traditional environmentalist. Tell us how environmentalism got into your priorities in your life.

**Kevin de León:** Thanks a lot first and foremost, Greg, and to each and every one of you. I grew up in Tijuana and San Diego both sides of the border. Youngest child, single immigrant mother, third grade education. My mother had the courage of her conviction to cross the border to seek a better life for myself and for my two sisters. My mother was a housekeeper so she clean homes in a very wealthy enclave in San Diego called La Jolla, California. The large mansions on top of the hill with ocean panoramic views. And it was there that I learned the value of hard work and my mother's very strong work ethic. But at the same time the ability even at a very young age, sort of to contrast between the haves and have-nots. Beautiful open space, beautiful green grass, trees for canopy for shade, beaches. Where I grew up in a neighborhood called Logan Heights it was cement and concrete and asphalt and a dearth of trees, so there's no trees for shade.

And, you know, growing up and being able to sort of critically analyze a little better why this was the case. Obviously, politicians elected officials at the local state, federal level, planning commissioners. I'm very same with Darryl and with Vien too, made certain decisions, you know, we're gonna put junkyards here or chrome plating facility plants there. And we're not gonna build parks here and we're gonna build parks, you know, and these are the communities bikepaths and trails for walking. So obviously for me it became a human civil rights issue. And I think that's what sort of gave me that passion when given the opportunity to be in a position with a vast amount of political power and try to bring about equitable justice in the greatest state in the country, California.

**Greg Dalton:** Vien Truong, the environmental movement and civil rights movements have often looked warily at each other. There hasn't been a close relationship and there's lot of been sort of distance there and thinking, well, you don't care about our issues, you don't care about our issues. How has that evolved and where does that stand now between the sort of environmentalism and civil rights?

**Vien Truong:** Well, I think it's understandable historically, when you look at the growth of civil rights you're looking at people who were suffering from Jim Crow suffering from the lack of ability to vote, not recognized as human beings being physically and politically harmed daily, right, and eminently. And then the environmental movement was growing out of the conservation movement going into regulations and talking about toxins which you can't really see and it's hard to feel eminence, right. And so when they're arguing each other by what is more important it began argument about values and rights and whose issues should be more prominent in the mainstream. There's no -- and now what we know is there should be no winner in that conversation because both are losers, right. And there should be no oppression Olympics about whose issues matter more. And in fact now we're beginning to see that. We're beginning to see the interconnected issues of poverty and pollution.

We know the people who are suffering first and worst from climate change are the people who live at the frontlines. People who grew up in Oakland or Appalachia, people who are growing up in Detroit and in communities that are being flooded in Texas. We now know that across the board we are being impacted first and worst in communities that are underserved and historically the areas that happen the siting grounds for polluters who thinks that people of color and communities of color are where they should put polluting facilities because they don't have political voice because they won't push back or because the politicians aren't listening to them. And now what we now is the environmental movement and the civil rights movement become more united and become kind of more in conversation with each other. We know that we have to work together if we're gonna push back against these large corporate powers and big polluters. So it's a good thing we're moving in the right direction.

**Greg Dalton:** There's interesting story in The New York Times about NAACP distancing themselves from some of the energy companies that have spread money around to try to get those communities on their side. Darryl Molina Sarmiento, there are actually cases where civil rights laws have actually been used for environmental justice purposes. Tell us about that.

**Darryl Molina Sarmiento:** Yeah. Just to also respond to your earlier question, you know, our identities are interconnected. We cannot separate our race from our gender from how we're being impacted by based on where we live. And so, you know, all of these issues for us are definitely interconnected and we have to address it in that way. So environmental justice, climate justice is a civil rights issue. And those laws that exist are there to protect us and we have to use those civil rights in order to protect our environmental rights. In the city of Los Angeles we were able to sue the city of Los Angeles for their pattern and practice of siding oil drilling operations in low-income communities of color. And so we use civil rights laws to continue to protect our communities that are impacted by the fossil fuel industry.

**Greg Dalton:** Right. And so you've actually noted that there was the affluent areas. Tell us a little more about the affluent areas where there is oil wells that is very different in terms of the hours they operated the amount of lighting that sort of thing.

**Darryl Molina Sarmiento:** Right. So in the community in which we organize in in Wilmington, California and the city of Los Angeles, you have oil drilling operations that operate 24 hours a day with trucks coming in at all hours of the night. We have exposed diesel rigs versus communities in more affluent parts of Los Angeles have electric rigs and they are fully enclosed and they have limited hours of operation. And so we need to challenge the way that permitting is happening and we continue to do that. But beyond that we are pushing for, you know, a 2,500-foot buffer zone in the city of Los Angeles between sites extracting oil and sensitive receptors such as where people live and where children play.

**Greg Dalton:** Quite a struggle. And there's about 300 jobs at stake for that big change?

**Darryl Molina Sarmiento:** Right, exactly. So when we're talking about just transition if you have over half of the oil drilling sites in Los Angeles concentrated in a low income community of color, there are currently within that situation 300 jobs at risk. And so this is the perfect opportunity for us to address the issue of just transition with this case to find the solution for these 300 jobs in order for us to move away from this harming industry right next to our communities.

**Greg Dalton:** Kevin de León, what's your idea of a just transition? It's a term that's used quite it means different things to different people. What's your conception of a just transition?

**Kevin de León:** A couple things. One is we clearly have to decarbonize our economy. We have no

other choice. The scientists have spoken loud and clear. This is a political issue. It's not a scientific issue. We have all the empirical evidence that clearly suggests that we're in a pathway to a lot of bad stuff that's gonna happen it's already happened right now in real time. Right in California we have the droughts we have the extreme weather patterns. So we had a historic drought for five years and we went from historic drought for five years to a record amount of rainfall in recorded history in California. So those are extreme weather patterns and that's --

**Greg Dalton:** And Houston have three 500-year floods in three years in a row.

**Kevin de León:** Exactly. So we know it's happening right now in real time. So for me, we have no choice we have to decarbonize our economy. So a just transition. For those folks who are working in the extractive industries who are working in refineries whether it's in Richmond, California, Martinez, Benicia or down in Southern California, Torrance for that matter any other place in the country, in Texas and Houston which is the capital of refineries. We have to make sure that we can transition these folks to a clean energy economy making sure that their salaries or wages or benefits are commensurate with what they're actually, you know, receiving right now. For those who have been historically and socioeconomically marginalized for a whole variety of issues due to ethnicity due to immigration status due to their zip code. We have to make sure that we can provide a good paying job with good benefits in the clean energy space. So the one thing that we've done here in California is to date we have created 500,000 jobs in the clean energy space.

Now I wanna put this in context because that is 10 times more jobs in the clean energy space in California than there are coal mining jobs in all of America. Not coal mining jobs because we don't have coal in California but we're talking about West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, coal mine states, Wyoming, that is 10 times more jobs in California in the clean energy space than there are coal mining jobs in all of America. So the impact that you can have not just in California but in poor rural states that historically have been dependent for whole variety of reasons. And I believe, this is my perspective, that the politicians who represent them at the federal level have failed them quite dramatically knowing that coal consumption domestically, as well as internationally is going down. So they haven't positioned and transitioned their constituents to clean energy economy because it's a political situation not a scientific or economic situation. So you want to make sure that regardless if you're Latino, African-American, White, Asian-American racially mix that especially if you're at the lowest economic strata that that just transition allows you to have a good paying job to put a roof over your child's head to pay for the clothes on their back and food on the table. And at the same time when you pay out of your pocket that energy bill and whether it's through energy efficiency or whether it is through renewable energy, wind, solar whether it's distributed rooftop whether it's utility scale whether it's geothermal or other technologies that will be created in the near horizon that we can make sure that we democratize the benefits of our climate change policies to make sure every single individual again regardless of who you are and regardless of where you come from has access to the latest the greatest the most innovative and greatest technology. If we don't, then we'll continue to be a very polarized society where only those who have the highest educational attainment and the financial wherewithal to access that greatest and latest green technologies will be the only ones benefiting.

So that means if you live in wealthy neighborhoods whether it's in California or in the country then you have energy-efficient home you have rooftop storage you will have I should say energy storage, you have rooftop solar you have a charging station and you have an electric vehicle. But if a lot of folks don't have it, we'll never meet our macro target goal. So it's out of our own self-interest for our planet and for our own public health that we make sure that we have to have a just transition for everybody.

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**Greg Dalton:** You're listening to a Climate One conversation about how to bring everyone along on the road to a clean economy. Coming up, are the presidential candidates giving climate enough attention?

**Vien Truong:** I wish that we would hear more candidates that is actually saying this is their number one priority. That they are gonna act without any hesitation on day one.

**Greg Dalton:** That's up next, when Climate One continues.

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**Greg Dalton:** This is Climate One. I'm Greg Dalton, and we're talking about making a just transition to clean energy - for everyone. My guests are climate justice advocate Darryl Molina Sarmiento, former California State Senator Kevin de León, and Vien Truong, senior advisor on climate for presidential candidate Tom Steyer.

Truong is also a former director of Green for All, an organization founded by activist Van Jones that for years made job equality, and especially green jobs, a part of its mission. But the reality of green jobs hasn't matched the hype.

## **PROGRAM PART 2**

**Vien Truong:** What we never promised is that it was gonna get done in four years. So let me say that the move towards a green new future is something that we have to continue to walk on the path of. And we don't really have a choice, right. It is now the greatest global threat that we're facing. We now know it's one of the biggest global national security problems that we are facing. Syria, it was a war fought over scarce resources the rural communities were drying up and farmers had to go to the city center pushing more pressure on the lack of resources that was already happening in the city center. Now half the people that are at the borders being detained in the United States are there because of their work in agriculture in their home countries are no longer in existence and they're forced here because of lack of ability to survive and just care for their families. This is not an issue of whether or not we can transition, we have to.

The climate is already changing and we have to change along with it. We have to make sure that we're doing it in such a way that is bringing people along so that we're not leaving folks behind because there is no other choice. I will say that that forces us to think differently about this creation of a new economy. It is not just about creating jobs, which is important. And we have to make sure that we're thinking about the jobs and the industries that we're creating make sure that they are sustainable and green and not gray not killing people. We have to make sure that we are creating a workforce pipeline to prepare people for those jobs. And we have to make sure that we're treating people differently in this transition as well. And I think that's really important when we're looking at this global issue in a country that is diversifying very quickly where half the people in this country will be majority minority by 2040, 2042 is the projections. And that should be a cause for us to think about how do we celebrate diversity, how do we turn to each other not against each other.

How do we make sure that we're actually looking at how do we work together to create that bright new future that can be possible. Because if we don't do it, what we saw in 2016 was a backlash against a future that looked increasingly exclusive. It was a backlash and a vote at the ballot box that said, we are scared of leaders and lawmakers painting a future for us without us. We're scared about our future that is excluding coal miners, excluding low-income communities that is not inclusive of our future and there was a backlash at the ballot box. And I think it is incumbent upon us all to realize not only the grave threat that is possible but the grave new hope and possibility that

it's possible for us all if we do this right and well. And that is what we're hoping people can hear us and do kind of moving forward at the ballot box this election cycle.

**Greg Dalton:** I want to talk about the -- Vien Truong, you're advising Tom Steyer but look at the field of candidates and put your boss aside in terms of, you know, climate we're seeing, you know, it's much more prominent than it has been in the past. How do you see the field on climate?

**Vien Truong:** I wish I was seeing more on climate. When you look across the stage and you think about and you hear the facts about what's happening now around the real threat globally and domestically. And you hear about the real impacts to people's daily lives, you know, growing up in my community one out of four kids have asthma. We have elders who have higher rates of heart disease and strokes, pollution related illnesses. My kids are projected to live 12 years less because of the ZIP Codes that they're growing up in. 12 years is the span of time from the time they're in kindergarten to the time they graduate high school. Imagine losing all of those years of your life and you're hearing even worse in places that are losing generations of life because of the poisoned water because of the poisoned air.

And then you look at the stage of Democratic candidates and you think about what are they prioritizing, if not the lives and livelihoods of people of our kids what are they prioritizing? And I wish that we would hear more candidates that is actually saying this is their number one priority. That they are gonna act without any hesitation on day one. You think about what's happening in Flint, Michigan a 100,000 people who got poisoned. Generations of wealth that got robbed their entire homes now worth nothing. And you think about the 4,000 people who are undocumented that can't even go to the hospital. And you think if this is not a climate emergency the demands our action on day one, what is? If this was done by Al Qaeda, this would demand immediate action. Why aren't our presidential candidates that are proposing that they run the country? If you want to run the country what else is more important than our lives and livelihoods. So I wish there was more people who would say this is their most important priority, there's only one candidate that has said he will, that's Tom Steyer.

**Greg Dalton:** And he was sitting here a while ago and he would declare emergency on day one and that sets him apart from the others.

**Kevin de León:** I just want to add one thing too. I do agree with Vien and I wish with the Democratic candidates right now that are currently on stage right now. I don't really see a real strong command on the policy issues. I do see we agree that climate change is a problem it is a crisis we need to do something about it. But I'm not really seeing a really true command on the policy on the solutions how you execute it, you know, and how you maneuver it from the executive branch with their executive orders or if you're gonna try to do it statutorily through the Congress. And obviously Mitch McConnell continues to control the U.S. Senate then you're gonna have to figure out how you do the executive order that's gonna be as litigation proof as possible with a packed, you know, Trump court system at the federal court at appellate and now at the U.S. Supreme Court. I just wish there was a stronger command on this issue.

**Darryl Molina Sarmiento:** And I do want to say too that organizations that are doing community organizing on the ground are not only watching the presidential election. We're looking at our local city councils we're looking at what's happening at the statewide level and our representatives at all of these bodies, including those that are being appointed by elected officials. Because each of these decision-making bodies are impacting our communities on the ground they are making the decisions that impact us that are making decisions around permitting around fossil fuel industry expansion. And so for us as organizations we are trying to push for accountability around our decision-makers. Accountability to stay strong around influence from fossil fuel industry money. To stay strong

around, you know, push back around labor when we want to take strong climate and environmental justice stances. And so it's really important for us we send questionnaires to all of our candidates at the City Council, at the L.A. County Board of Supervisors at the Contra Costa County Board at the Alameda County. All of these state and federal and government agencies that impact the decisions of people on a daily basis. They need to know that we are organizations we are communities that are watching them that know the decisions that they are voting on and make decisions on endorsement based on where they stand around issues such as climate and environmental justice. So a lot of this work is really happening on the ground.

**Greg Dalton:** Yeah particularly with not much happening federally. Most of the real action is happening at cities and local level.

If you're just joining us we're talking about a just transition from fossil fuels to cleaner energy. I'm Greg Dalton. My guests are Kevin de León, former President Pro Tem of the California State Senate currently a candidate for the Los Angeles City Council. Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Executive Director of Committees for a Better Environment an advocacy group based in Los Angeles. And Vien Truong, former Director of Green for All and senior advisor for the climate justice for presidential candidate, Tom Steyer.

Kevin de León. I interviewed Coral Davenport recently, a New York Times reporter in Washington DC. And she said the Green New Deal is alive as a rallying cry for activists; it is dead as a matter of legislation. What is the national green deal to you?

**Kevin de León:** Well listen, it's a very good question it's been up for debate with a lot of folks because they still don't know what the new Green Deal is legislatively speaking. It hasn't been introduced, it's a resolution. I think a one page or two-page resolution. I've been very clear that in California we've already actually started the Green New Deal. And actually it's being implemented and executed. I will give them a tremendous amount of credit with regards to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez with sparking and elevating this discussion even if it's a political discussion. But legislatively there is no legislation there is no committee hearings. Nothing's been moved there's no language at all whatsoever that specifies specifically if we're gonna decarbonize a grid, you know, what are we doing with regards to energy efficiency electric vehicles and so forth. There are more sort of broad brush, you know, aspirations. But that being said, at a political level I'll give them a tremendous amount of credit for elevating this, you know, and sparking this discussion which is most needed. Having this provocative discussion.

**Greg Dalton:** Vien Truong. Is the Green New Deal kind of too ambitious, you know, includes a job guarantee includes, you know, gets at some wealth distribution some things that make even Democrats uncomfortable. Do you welcome that ambition or do you worry that that ambition might be a bridge too far and hurt the Democrats in the election?

**Vien Truong:** You know for too long our country and our lawmakers have lacked a clear vision and ambition for our country. So having a clear north star where people are rallying towards is a welcome thing. But we have to remind ourselves that the original new deal was never passed in one piece of legislation. And the Green New Deal wouldn't be either it would be done in waves and we should be able to look at what are all of these waves of legislation gonna move us towards and I love the idea of making sure that we're not leaving people behind in this transition to a green new economy.

**Greg Dalton:** Kevin de León. Labor unions are often on the side of more pipelines, more fossil fuel infrastructure. There's jobs there whether their jobs happen to be building more, you know, fossil infrastructure or green infrastructure. Sometimes those big huge fossil infrastructure projects are a



lot of jobs.

**Kevin de León:** Yeah, but I think increasingly we have labor unions in the building trades in particular that are moving towards the green energy economy. IBEW in particular, for example here in California.

**Greg Dalton:** Because they want to electrify everything.

**Kevin de León:** Yes. So, you know, obviously, their goal and agenda is to electrify, transportation electrification how we move from tailpipe emitters which is 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in California and how we electrify the transportation system so we have charging stations that are ubiquitous just like gas stations are. And there are some building trades unions without a doubt who represent their members and represent their members well who are making six-figure salaries defined-benefit pension plan and good health care. And what you don't want to do is that just transition and say we're gonna transition you from working at this oil refinery plant, you know, all of the sudden you're doing rooftop distributed generation installation and you're making \$15 an hour, minimum-wage and no healthcare, no defined-benefit. So it's a little more complicated but we have to really, really think this out. To me it's not just about energy efficiency in reducing your energy load in the way you're dealing with double-paned windows wind fenestration, sensor lighting, insulation

You're talking about an economic stimulus package that grows your economy because these are jobs that can't be outsourced to Mexico or offshore to Guangdong, China because they're labor-intensive; it must be done physically on site. So when I think about climate policies I don't think about climate policies in a vacuum, but I think about climate policies in a huge economic policy package. We got to stop, you know, we're waiting for the silver bullet or the panacea from some economists from Stanford or MIT or CAL or UCLA or University of Chicago, Harvard, Yale, stop that. This is our economics package. We're gonna reduce our carbon dioxide emissions as well as other criteria pollutants that pollute our children's lungs and we're gonna grow this economy at the same time by, you know, taking folks out of the cars tailpipe emitters into electric vehicles. And to be agnostic with other, you know, whether it's hydrogen fuel cells.

And that's how you grow an economy and that's an inclusive economy and that's how you get labor unions on board too. They have to see something that's real in the transition in the pathway for that conversion, you know. And I think that it's gonna be exciting for me to persuade folks to move onto the site but it's doable and it's within reach. I mean listen, folks invented a typewriter and they had something called the computer and that's well that's crazy and we don't know what that is. We got something as real as tangible we make it, it's American-made but we made the transition. This is gonna happen because the market forces would be much too powerful.

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**Greg Dalton:** You're listening to a conversation about building a pathway to a just and sustainable energy future. This is Climate One. Coming up, taking the clean air battle to the streets.

**Kevin de León:** Forty percent of the emitters are tailpipe emissions. Trucks and personal vehicles. That is going to be the next battlefield and it's gonna take a lot of courage and conviction because that is a frontal battle with the fossil fuel industry now and their business model.

**Greg Dalton:** That's up next, when Climate One continues.

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**Greg Dalton:** This is Climate One. I'm Greg Dalton. Climate One records many of our conversations with a live audience at our modern and green new home on the waterfront in San Francisco. When you are in town come check us out. Our programs are open to the public and listed on [climateone.org](http://climateone.org).

Today we're talking about climate justice in a green economy with: Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Executive Director of Communities for a Better Environment, Vien Truong, a climate advisor to presidential candidate Tom Steyer, and Kevin de León, former President of the California State Senate.

In less than a decade, Los Angeles will host the 2028 Summer Olympics. Plans for upgrading the city's infrastructure are already underway. There's a brand new downtown sports park in the works, along with athlete accommodations, visitor attractions and improvements to mass transit. Is this an opportunity for a sustainable building boom, or just another excuse for greenwashing?

### **PROGRAM PART 3**

**Kevin de León:** I think it's very exciting that the Olympics are coming. I don't care that much about the Olympics coming because when the cameras are shut off and when folks go back to their own native countries, you know, and people sweep off the confetti, what I'm excited about is not so much the games but all the infrastructure that will be laid out in perpetuity for generations to come that children particularly young people were able to benefit from. So that means charging stations that are ubiquitous throughout Southern California. That means dedicated electric bus lines that will synchronize with lights that can move quickly because, you know, I like the light rail but I just don't think light rail is cool enough to change behaviors. Because when they're at grade they're competing with cars because they're stopping at the lights. And it's a very expensive piece of metal to pay for and that's why folks that's not gonna change my behavior I gonna still drive a car.

And that's why, you know, laying out that infrastructure is to me is incredibly exciting. And why Southern California, specifically L.A.? Because L.A. is the epicenter nationwide 10 years consecutively the most polluted city in America. And for anyone who's from Southern California I know there's a lot of folks in the Bay Area from Southern California who grew up in Southern California. You remember the smog alerts when they wouldn't even allow children to go out into the playground. That's a thing of the past the air quality has improved quite dramatically with more cars on the road with even more people. But, we're not where we need to be.

And that's why for example, in my district I have nine major freeways, I only have like the 280 and the 101. I mean that would be a godsend. I have the two, the five the 10 the 60 Freeway the famous Hollywood 101 freeway that comes right up here, you know. I have the 134 the 210 Freeway and the 710 Freeway. All those major freeways that crisscross the district like a serpent that chokes the air the oxygen out of young girl's lungs and the number one reason for absenteeism in a public school system is due to asthma, it's due to asthma. And that is from the tailpipe you have carbon dioxide which is atmospheric which creates the extreme weather patterns climate and you have the criteria pollutants. You have NOx, SOx, particulate matter 2.5 and that's what damages permanently, you know, particularly our senior citizens, but especially young boys and girls who are growing up, their lungs never developed. So aside from the economics issue, our planet issue, it is a major, major public health issue. And by the way pollution kills prematurely thousands of people in California, but especially in Southern California and the Central Valley.

That's why we have to give it the urgency that it deserves because somehow, someway, you know, it's like a slow death. It was some sort of virus of influenza it would be the CDC would be all over this. But because it's climate and criteria pollutants and tailpipe it's a political issue. And there's

not the political will or the leadership that exists in Washington DC and that's why you made a very good point, you know, Greg, it is local it is subnationals that are gonna lead the way regardless who occupies White House today.

And even if it's a Democratic president in the near future as long as McConnell is in the U.S. Senate it's gonna be very difficult still to move things statutorily. So they're gonna have to be creative how they move things Executive Order, if not that's okay. It is the subnational governments that are gonna lead the way. And as California has become the largest economy on the planet to dedicate itself legally to 100% clean, renewable energy you have other states like Jay Inslee in Washington, Michelle Lujan Grisham in New Mexico and they're gonna follow California's lead.

**Greg Dalton:** And Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti is the new head of an organization called C40 which is the 40 largest emitting cities around the world trying to move on climate.

Vien Truong, cars are the problem story in climate and in this country and in California that gets to housing. A lot of communities don't want new housing even if it's near transit. We have a housing shortage in California and as many cities in the country. Housing is not often seen as a climate or environmental issue, but it very much is. If we had more housing near transit maybe it wouldn't be so many freeways in Kevin's district. How to get at housing?

**Vien Truong:** Well, we have to build more housing for people who across the board across all income levels it's because of the lack of supply that is increasing the cost of demand. And across California but not only here in our state in Washington, Oregon and a number of other states New York and other places we're seeing increased homelessness. We're seeing people who are living in tents and it's because we're seeing a drive towards the little availability of housing in California and in other places. So we have to build more and we have to build more across all income levels and we have to make sure that they're built in green and sustainable ways. We wanna decarbonize the energy that's going there. We want to build more housing close to where people live, eat, work and play so that we have less pollution coming out of tailpipes from cars that are going back and forth to work and to places where people have to go. So definitely many ways to get to the housing issue.

**Greg Dalton:** Darryl Molina Sarmiento. Los Angeles has a fairly positive story of building light rail. Kevin says it's expensive but there's more transit options in Los Angeles than there used to be. But with transit comes housing development which comes displacement. So how can there be housing without displacement?

**Darryl Molina Sarmiento:** I think in just in all issues, especially around climate policy we want to ensure that the communities that are being impacted first and worst low income communities of color and indigenous communities. Folks that have the ability to stay in the communities that they live in and so to make sure that they are not being pushed out. When we finally are at a place where we are able to bring in green space we're able to bring in public transportation but then cost of housing has risen and so now we're unable to stay in our communities. Or when we think about how we're being impacted by climate change and climate resiliency and our adaptation. Do we have the ability to continue to stay in our communities after we experience huge climate catastrophe. So there's a lot of issues as it relates to housing and a lot of issues as it relates to protecting homeowners, renters and folks to stay in the communities in which they are trying to protect and have their families thrive.

**Greg Dalton:** Kevin de León. Oil drilling in California is actually increasing under Governor Newsom. How do you rate Governor Newsom as a climate leader and is the state going in the wrong direction. There's actually after a dip maybe this was a market cycle but oil approval permit approvals and drilling is up in California.

**Kevin de León:** I think with our greenhouse gas emissions are millions of metric tons of CO2 equivalent drop dramatically. The economic recession played a huge role in energy labor-intensive industries in California. There is a huge concern that oil consumption has increased dramatically due to more cars on our roads and freeways. I do think that Governor Gavin Newsom is doing a very good job. It's his first year, you know, as governor as chief executive of the fifth largest economy on the planet. He's just announced in his budget of \$4 billion, you know, a bond, a green bond, you know, to really invest in technologies and deal with inequities, particularly in the hard-hit areas such as the Central Valley. So I give him a lot of credit. I will say this, and this has nothing to do with Governor Gavin Newsom but the current regime of cap and trade. I've never been a fan of cap and trade putting a price a market price on carbon because I think the polluters continue to pay to pollute.

And I think we have the scientific evidence that clearly suggests that quantifiably that we have not reduced the carbon dioxide emissions from the cap and trade regulations. And that we're gonna have to continue to move forward decarbonizing our grid energy efficiency by reducing energy load. But let me get back, 40% of the emitters are tailpipe emissions. Trucks, you know, and personal vehicles. That is going to be the next battlefront and it's gonna take a lot of courage and conviction because that is a frontal battle with the fossil fuel industry now in their business model and the way it works. So it's not a tangential indirect sort of dynamic between, you know, investor-owned utilities and municipally-owned utilities. But this is now a direct, you know, battle.

**Greg Dalton:** Vien Truong. You're working for Tom Steyer. Philanthropy plays an important part in supporting climate policy supporting organizations. Does it concern you that climate philanthropy is really dominated by white male billionaires? Tom Steyer, Michael Bloomberg, Simons family. Does that have an undue influence on climate justice issues on where that philanthropy goes. There are researches shows that a lot of philanthropy goes to large established organizations because they're safe bets.

**Vien Truong:** Well, it bothers me that we're not seeing more people investing into communities and into making sure we're rebuilding into the communities that have been underserved and neglected for so long. We need to actually have a wealth tax and we need to actually force and require as to invest more. And for me, across the board we need to see more diversity in what we're giving to. We need to make sure that with the people who have been underserved people who are at the frontlines of climate change and the climate problems are actually at the frontlines too of problem solving and deciding what are the needs and priorities of the very communities. California has actually set a model called the Transformative Climate Communities that looks at how do we invest in stakeholders like community based-organizations, local leaders and businesses in the local communities labor unions coming together to actually create what is the vision and need for our specific communities.

Even in California there's very diverse communities from rural to urban to sub-urban where we're seeing a large growth of poverty these days. And how do we make sure that we're funding them to actually do the work they need to do to set their vision for their future. And then they are eligible for an implementation grant. And there you can see not only the public money but also philanthropic money. And the capital stack of community development financial institutions market rate funds and others coming together to support the community vision moving forward.

So I think philanthropy can be better. I think philanthropy has to get credit for what it's done. We want to see much more we want to see that the giving to be much more diverse. We want to see there to be a fundamental premise and value that drives it all. Which is how can we support the very communities that are underserved and neglected for so long to be the frontlines of problem solving to be the frontlines of deciding what the vision is for their future. And not only in the coastal areas

but also in the middle of America. How do we make sure that we're investing in them so that it is leading us forward.

**Greg Dalton:** We're gonna go to audience questions for Kevin de León, Darryl Molina Sarmiento and Vien Truong. Welcome to Climate One.

**Male Participant:** Thank you, Greg. Dave Madson [ph], Citizens' Climate Lobby. Senator de León, you touched on the good, middle-class jobs that refinery workers have which is due to their unions and how in the clean energy transition we don't want to just eliminate their jobs and force them into say rooftop solar which is not union not family supporting. Do you have more specific thoughts about how to assist those refinery workers and others like them in just transition?

**Kevin de León:** Yeah, I think that as we move towards to decarbonizing the grid and obviously those are transportation lines and the electrons that we move to power, you know, our businesses and our homes, utility scale solar has a lot of employment. I was with the building trades the president of building trades of California, Robbie Hunter, a good Irishman with a heavy Irish brogue, you know, and I always need a translator when I speak with him. But he pulled out these reams of data points of folks who are in apprenticeship programs and were becoming part of the unions in getting jobs and utility scale solar. And it was very surprising, it was Martinez and Sanchez, you know, and Ching in a lot of areas, you know that social economically not well-to-do comparison to the Bay Area and in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego. So I do believe in the utility scale. I do believe that as we move towards you know, electrifying our transportation system.

I'll give you an example in Lancaster, California which is a very poor city in northern County of Los Angeles. There's a plant there called BYD and BYD is a Chinese company but there's 1000 jobs that have been created, all union jobs. And they were created because of the policies that California created and they wanted to be closer to their market. What they do is they manufacture in China but they assemble at the plant in Lancaster. Union jobs, they assemble double-decker electric buses which they export to the U.K. and the UPS electric, not CNG but electric, you know, UPS vans and everything's electric there. So to me that's the future.

**Greg Dalton:** Welcome to Climate One. Thank you.

**Female Participant:** Hi, my name is Jackie Garcia. My question is for Darryl. Darryl, I'm wondering if you could tell us how the cap and trade has directly impacted frontline communities. And if you see any litigation in the future you talked about for instance using civil rights legislation to regain local control to protect communities from pollution. Thank you.

**Darryl Molina Sarmiento:** Yes. So CBE we organize in Richmond, California here in the Bay Area and then Wilmington, California in the city of Los Angeles. And these are two cities on the west coast that have the largest oil refining centers. And that is the case with these large fossil fuel emitters is that they are concentrated, disproportionately concentrated in low-income communities of color such as Richmond, such as Wilmington. And so with the cap and trade program we actually saw an increase in emissions. We actually saw an increase in adverse health impacts as a result of those increased emissions not just of greenhouse gases but of the co-pollutants that are the ones that actually impact our health lead to increase in asthma respiratory health cancer and a host of other health impacts. And so we are not achieving our greenhouse gas reduction goals through this program of cap and trade. In fact, we are creating toxic hotspots of communities.

And so we want to ensure that reductions are seen at the source that we are working towards the decommissioning of oil refineries rather than the expansion of oil refineries which is that we're experiencing right now the expansion of refineries such as Phillips 66, right here in Rodeo, Crockett,

Contra Costa County area. The expansion of oil refineries in Southern California, the Desoto oil refinery. The expansion of freeways such as the 710 freeway in Southern California. Unprecedented permitting of oil drilling all across the state of California. So we're actually experiencing on the ground increase in fossil fuel infrastructure locking us in into decades of being polluted by this type of economy.

And so we're really working towards that just transition and we have to start now because our economies are so dependent on the extractive economy. When you have a town like Richmond when you have a town like Wilmington, we need to assess how much of our tax revenue from our city, is this coming from the oil industry and how are you gonna replace it. And it's more than just an economic replacement it's really looking at all of our communities as a whole. Moving away from extraction towards an economy that is ecologically sustainable that is democratically controlled.

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**Greg Dalton:** You've been listening to Climate One. We've been talking about what a just transition to a green economy looks like. My guests were Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Executive Director of Communities for a Better Environment, Kevin de León, former President of the California State Senate, and Vien Truong, principal at Truong and Associates and a climate advisor to presidential candidate Tom Steyer.

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