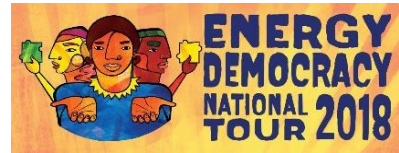


# Tour Report

## November 1, 2018



The Energy Democracy National Tour 2018 has now concluded! Tour events began in April and continued through October. This report is to provide a summary of the accomplishments of the Tour and propose opportunities to leverage those accomplishments to strengthen the emerging energy democracy movement in the U.S.

This inaugural Energy Democracy Tour has identified and highlighted the alternative, frontline-led and justice-centered renewable energy efforts of communities across the country. The Tour brought national attention to these efforts and helped provide material resources to advance them. It also has woven these efforts into a fabric that represents a national political current of historic significance.

The Tour has highlighted the struggle of communities to take over ownership and control of energy resources from powerful interests and place them in the hands of local communities. This is the struggle to democratize energy: to empower our communities and to meet their needs to survive and prosper.

Energy democracy is emerging as a strategic vehicle for realizing a just transition to a renewable energy economy.

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## Tour Accomplishments

The Tour consisted of a series of events hosted by thirteen local organizations across the country to highlight and advance the work they are doing in their communities. Collectively, these efforts represent an emerging national energy democracy movement that can play a pivotal role in defining our energy future.

Tour accomplishments included:

**Identifying energy democracy initiatives across the country:** Our Tour organizing efforts focused on reaching out across the country to identify organizations and events that are advancing energy democracy work. We identified events we could promote and help support—creating a calendar of events that represents the emerging energy democracy movement. We first reached out to organizations affiliated with the book, *Energy Democracy: Advancing Equity in Clean Energy Solutions*, but others soon came to our attention as news of the Tour spread, and as a result, the Tour was extended an additional two months to incorporate as many of these initiatives as we could, within the timeframe and resources available.

**Providing resources to advance energy democracy work:** We created an [Energy Democracy National Tour website](#) to provide information about Tour events and the organizations hosting them, and to tell their stories. We also provided resources to help make these events possible. This support included providing editors or authors of the *Energy Democracy* book as event speakers, providing books where requested, and most importantly, providing stipends to help underwrite event expenses where needed.

### **Building political support for energy democracy:**

Our Tour organizing also included building political support for energy democracy events through Tour sponsorships by national organizations. We published four Tour Bulletins to advertise Tour events; these were for use by Tour sponsors and Tour event host organizations to publicize the Tour and drive interested readers to the resources available on the National Tour website.

### **Building a collective energy democracy leadership:**

The organizations hosting Tour events represent the grassroots leadership of the emerging energy democracy movement. We sought to recognize and encourage more collective, self-conscious leadership of the Tour, and of the energy democracy movement more generally. As Tour organizers we convened conference calls of Tour event host organizations to evaluate the Tour effort, identify common challenges, promote deeper collaboration among host organizations, and develop responsibility for the movement as a whole. These conference calls have built momentum and leadership for further collaboration in strengthening the emerging energy democracy movement.



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## **Tour Summary by the Numbers**

Below is a view of the achievements of the Tour as represented by its scope and scale:

- ✓ Seventeen events from coast to coast, spanning eight months from April through October
- ✓ More than 1700 community members across the country have participated in Tour events, demonstrating a commitment to advancing energy democracy principles, policies, and campaigns.
- ✓ An attractive and informative website, which highlights the Tour - EnergyDemocracy.us
- ✓ Five Tour Bulletins, which were sent to more than 500 recipients
- ✓ Nine national organizations signed on as political and outreach Tour sponsors:
  - Emerald Cities Collaborative
  - Local Clean Energy Alliance
  - Climate Justice Alliance
  - HipHop Caucus
  - NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program
  - Race Forward
  - We Own It
  - Sierra Club Ready for 100
  - 100% NGO Network
- ✓ Four conference calls of Tour event host organizations to build stronger relationships and develop collective leadership

- ✓ \$30,000 provided to support Tour events in cities across the country (\$20,000 in stipends and \$10,000 in other support)
- ✓ Discussions with nine organizations regarding prospective Tour events (that could not come together within the timeframe and resources of the current Tour):
  - Buffalo, NY: Clean Air Coalition, Community Action Organization of Erie County, PUSH Buffalo
  - Philadelphia, PA: Centennial Parkside Community Development Corporation
  - Throughout the South: Justice First Tour
  - Milwaukee, WI: Wisconsin Green Muslims
  - Highland Park, MI: Soulardarity
  - Oakland, CA: People Power Solar Cooperative
  - New Mexico: New Energy Economy
  - New Orleans, LA: Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
  - Tennessee, Virginia, No.Carolina: Appalachian Voice

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## Calendar of Tour Events

The calendar of Tour events provided much greater visibility to the emerging energy democracy movement.

Below is a chronological summary of the line-up of Tour events, from April through October. For more information on these events click on the “[Tour Events](#)” menu on the Tour Website.

- **5th Annual D.C. Solar Congress, Washington, DC, April 14**

**Host organization: Solar United Neighbors**

Nearly 100 solar supporters (longtime solar advocates, solar homeowners, and newcomers) from around the District joined together for a full day of learning, sharing, and discussion to advance the future of solar power in D.C. The Congress highlighted the District’s Solar for All program that seeks to provide the benefits of solar electricity to 100,000 low-income households and reduce their energy bills by 50% by 2032.

- **Victory Party – No Puente Power Plant! Oxnard, CA, April 26**

**Host organization: California Environmental Justice Alliance**

Since 2014, Oxnard residents have fought to defeat NRG’s proposed polluting power plant on the coast of Oxnard. This victory party was the first step to advancing local community initiatives to use energy democracy as a strategic vehicle to realize a just transition to renewable energy.

- **Stop Proposition 70 Training, San Francisco, CA, April 30**

**Host organization: California Environmental Justice Alliance:**

This training session was for community leaders to help them educate the community about the danger of Prop 70 in California—a critical state proposition to defeat for energy development resources to flow into historically disadvantaged or overburdened communities.

A June 5 election victory on Prop 70 helped advance energy democracy and the development of local distributed energy resources in low-income communities.

- **National webcast on Energy Democracy, May 4**

**Host organization: Emerald Cities Collaborative**

More than 350 people around the world tuned in to learn about the emerging energy democracy movement, as represented by Denise Fairchild of Emerald Cities Collaborative, Ashura Lewis of One Voice, and Vivian Yi Huang of Asian Pacific Environmental Network.

- **Towards a Just Transition: International Labor Perspectives on Energy, Climate and Economy, New York City, May 29**

**Host organization: Trade Unions for Energy Democracy**

This was a one-day conference of more than 50 participants from the global South and global North, representing 31 unions as well as 15 environmental, community-based, research and policy allies. The day's panels explored strategies for responding to the climate emergency by connecting workers' immediate struggles and concerns to the need to challenge the ownership and control of energy resources—by bringing together progressive trade unions and social movements.

- **Building a Movement for Sustainable Environmental and Economic Justice, New York City, June 1**

**Host organization: Co-op Power**

Organizers for a new community energy cooperative in New York City held a gathering at The Left Forum to educate people about energy democracy and discuss the needs for community understanding and local ownership of energy generation, jobs, and enterprises that can support communities in the transition to a more just and sustainable energy future.

- **Putting Portland Clean Energy Fund on the Ballot, Portland, OR, June 27**

**Host organization: Coalition of Communities of Color**

The Portland Clean Energy Fund is about residents of Portland creating their own clean energy future, where new renewable energy and energy efficiency investments improve their homes, improve their city's environment, train their workers, and support their businesses. The Fund would address social and economic inequity by providing major new economic opportunities for low-income Portlanders, including women and communities of color. 35,000 signatures were needed to qualify for a City ballot measure, and the community collected over 60,000!

- **Energy Justice Summit, Portland, OR, July 13-15**

**Host organizations: Coalition of Communities of Color, Verde, OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, and others**

About 40 members of the community came together to forge a collective understanding of energy development fundamentals and energy democracy, including how to address the disproportionate negative impacts of the fossil fuel economy on low-income communities and communities of color. The summit explored how a long-term community-driven effort could develop and implement community-based renewable energy resource development, thereby empowering participants to advocate for energy programs that provide environmental, economic, racial, and social justice benefits.

- **Clean Power to the People – A Plan for Local Clean Energy in the East Bay, Oakland, CA, June 28 & July 20**

**Host organization: East Bay Clean Power Alliance**

A community workshop was conducted about the benefits of local clean energy resource developments for communities traditionally shut-out of the clean energy economy: renters, low income people, and people of color. The workshop and a subsequent rally and press conference were part of the organizing that has led to East Bay Community Energy—a public energy services provider—being the first Community Choice energy program in the US to launch with a Local Development Business Plan for bringing local economic, environmental, and social justice benefits to the community.

- **Rural Electric Coop Community Strategy Meeting, Jackson, MS, July 21**

**Host organization: One Voice**

Close to 200 community member-owners from both the Twin and Yazoo County electric cooperatives gathered to discuss, strategize, and organize their first campaigns to elect cooperative members to their respective cooperative's board of directors. Guided by One Voice's Energy Democracy – Electric Cooperative Leadership Institute team, these community members selected candidates for board elections and planned actions for obtaining the necessary proxy votes for victory.



*On July 21, almost 100 community members showed up at community strategy meeting in Twin County, Mississippi to take back control of their local rural electric cooperative*

- **Energy Democracy Training, Chicago, IL, July 25**

**Host organization: Center for Earth, Energy, and Democracy**

On behalf of the Midwest Environmental Justice Network, the Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy, based in Minneapolis, MN, hosted two Energy Democracy Trainings for Illinois local community-based organizations and groups.

- **Cooperative Energy Fair, Dorchester, MA, Aug 18**

**Host organization: Co-op Power**

More than 100 people attended an outdoor Energy Fair, which also included an indoor forum covering the topic of energy democracy: "Community Power: the New Way of Living, Working and Sharing."

- **Just Energy Summit, Atlanta, GA, Sep 21-22**

**Host organization: Partnership for Southern Equity**

A variety of different voices united to advance collective action towards a more equitable and inclusive clean energy future—in which no one is left behind—for metropolitan Atlanta and the American South. The Summit included an action-packed agenda with experts, activists, and changemakers from around the nation who understand that as the South changes towards an inclusive clean energy economy for everyone, so goes the nation.



- **Community Solar Training, NYC & Worcester, MA & Online, Oct 6 & Nov 3**

**Host organization: Co-op Power**

Co-op Power has raised funds to demonstrate how to partner non-extractive financing with community organizing to build a scalable system of consistent financing for community-led and community-owned solar projects. Through a series of Community Solar Trainings, Co-op Power shared how community members can access these funds to develop solar in their local community, especially for people with limited resources!

- **Imagine Women Hip Hop to Energy Democracy, Muncie, IN, Oct 26**

**Host organization: Indiana NAACP Environmental Climate Justice Program**

This convening gathered Hip Hop, Art, and Energy Efficiency in a breakfast symposium and a roundtable to imagine energy democracy for communities across the State of Indiana. The Indiana NAACP Environmental Climate Justice Program is committing to remain steadfast in connecting community to energy democracy principles.

- **Community Solar Garden Launch Ceremony, Minneapolis, MN, Oct 29**

**Host organization: Cooperative Energy Futures**

This event was a celebratory launch of the community solar garden built through the partnership between Cooperative Energy Futures and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Similar to a community garden, where each person has a plot of land, community members join Cooperative Energy Futures and buy solar garden subscriptions. This lets them receive credits on their electric bills for the electricity produced by their portion of the solar garden.

- **National webcast on Change the Rules: From Hate to Hope, Oct 30**

**Host organization: Oregon Just Transition Alliance**

Oregon and Portland have an opportunity in the November elections to support initiatives that are bold, visionary, and led by and for frontline communities. This webcast discussed how communities in Oregon are advancing energy democracy with initiatives such as the Portland Clean Energy Fund, which would tax corporations to finance clean energy projects that benefit low-income Portlanders, including women and communities of color.



*Washington, DC Solar United Neighbors team working on Solar for All program for low-income homeowners*



*Jessica Tovar (East Bay Clean Power Alliance) led the rally to support Local Development Business Plan at East Bay Community Energy board meeting.*

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## Opportunities

The Energy Democracy National Tour represented another step in a multi-year effort to popularize and advance the movement to democratize energy in the United States. It was a sequel to the *Energy Democracy* book, seeking to leverage the book to define and develop a more conscious energy democracy movement. It served to weave together the various strands of that movement and help develop a collective responsibility for strengthening that movement.

We have sought through the Tour to build relationships with and among organizations doing energy democracy work. Tour event host organizations saw the Tour as promoting and strengthening their work, and they worked to publicize the Tour and help build it. The Tour Bulletins and conference calls of Tour event host organizations were tools for this type of engagement.

Many of these organizations belong to existing networks and political centers that represent different perspectives and strategies for advancing a climate justice movement. Yet these organizations participated and contributed to the Tour because of a common interest in growing the energy democracy movement from the ground up.

As noted earlier, we have hosted conference calls of Tour event host organizations to discuss their collective needs and chart future directions for the movement. While all these organizations have had limited time and resources for these discussions, they also have expressed real needs. Initial discussions have highlighted the need for easier access to energy democracy resources (educational, technical, programmatic, policy, and financial), for a more popularized energy democracy narrative, for broadening local perspectives to more national considerations, and for a more identified national leadership.

One outgrowth of these conference call discussions has been the call for a more in-depth, in-person convening for the purpose of identifying common needs and resources, promoting deeper collaboration and sharing among host organizations, and developing collective responsibility for the energy democracy movement as a whole.

As a result, a proposal for an Energy Democracy Convening in early 2019 is under discussion. The convening presents an opportunity to cross-pollinate the different organizations and networks of the emerging energy democracy movement, bringing them together to plan in a more cohesive and collaborative manner for strengthening the energy democracy movement.

**Tour Host Organizations**



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

