



A Call to Unity: Standing Together for Climate Action

Many individuals and groups are calling on world governments to take immediate action to address the climate emergency. Building a large, strong, united movement is key to success.

As the climate emergency escalates, our movement is growing rapidly—and the speed of growth is outpacing our capacity to fully address the longstanding oppressions in society that show up within and between constituent groups. It is easy for misunderstandings to arise and mistakes to be made as we work together.

We want to acknowledge the significance, and danger, of this historical moment. In the past, during similar moments, great harm and human suffering resulted because people failed to turn toward unification and liberation. Late-stage monopoly capitalism is collapsing and desperate. More and more of the world's resources are being put into the hands of a few, while the working class is being distracted and divided.

Fascism is rising around the globe. The following are being manipulated to that end: racism, Islamophobia, classism, sexism, homophobia, antisemitism, nationalism, and more.

Fear is being used to mobilize people. Those in power are encouraging and widely using violence, including pursuing wars for the purpose of profit. All of this is happening in the context of unprecedented destruction of the environment.

Systems of oppression use a divide-and-conquer strategy. They try to turn us against each other in order to maintain power and weaken movements for change. We cannot allow this to continue to happen. It is not enough to privately oppose these developments. We need to stand together in unity to turn this historical tide.

Let us commit ourselves to doing the following:

- Remembering our large common goal to end the climate emergency—a goal that requires us to work together



- Standing together as we face our mistakes and misunderstandings, work to resolve our differences, and express our commitment to unity
- Not allowing the differences to divide us and weaken our efforts and standing against any forces that try to manipulate and divide us
- Not fighting among ourselves in our own constituencies
- Working to resolve the differences both now and in the future and to create the conditions

that will allow us to speak with the voice of a united people

- Agreeing to stay in coalitions with each other even when we have disagreements. It is not necessary that we agree on all issues in order to keep working together.

Addressing the ways we have been set against each other can take much listening, discussion, and time on everyone's part. Let us commit to doing this work. Let us commit to teaching each other about the elements of each of our



Sustaining All Life (SAL) is an international grassroots organization working to end the climate emergency within the context of ending all divisions among people. *United to End Racism* (UER) consists of a wide diversity of people in many different countries, who are dedicated to eliminating racism in the world and supporting the efforts of all other groups with this goal. UER and SAL are projects of and use the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling. Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) is a well-defined theory and practice that helps people of all ages and backgrounds exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from emotional harm resulting from oppression and other hurts. By taking turns listening to each other and encouraging the release of painful emotions, people can heal old hurts and become better able to think, to speak out, and to organize and lead others in building a world in which human beings and other life forms are valued and the environment is restored and preserved. Re-evaluation Counseling currently exists in 95 countries.



SustainingAllLife.org



UnitedToEndRacism.org



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oppressions so we understand more fully what it will take to be allies to each other's peoples. It is possible to oppose all oppression and seek everyone's liberation and at the same time build unity and connections.

When a mistake made in an organization working for social change is used as the justification for disrupting and undermining the work of that organization, this perpetuates the general pattern of divisiveness running rampant in our society at the present time.

Let us commit to staying united as we resolve any differences. Let us continue to work on any differences that cannot be resolved quickly. Let us commit to solidifying our connections, strengthening our movement, and ensuring that mistakes are not repeated. We have much to learn from one another.

How can we best come together to do this work, while moving forward together? We offer some possibilities:

- Use every opportunity to speak up—in our homes, our workplaces, our social places, the political sphere, and more—about the importance of including all people and developing unity among all our peoples
- Find and create opportunities to oppose division and separation
- Find and create opportunities to meet separately in caucus groups of separate

identities and then together across identity groups (there is no contradiction between being for our own people and at the same time being for each other's people)

- Organize and sponsor listening sessions and listening circles in our communities, and train people to listen

We can challenge

- feelings of discouragement, despair, and hopelessness
- fears of speaking up
- fears of listening to viewpoints that we disagree with
- difficulties in being fully for our own people and fully for other people
- all that would keep us from building broad-based communities
- where we are still vulnerable to being confused about each other's peoples
- where we made a decision to "go it alone," to be separate; feelings about being divided

In the coming period, we can each choose a perspective of hope, courage, and unity.





The Work of *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism*

It is possible to limit the effects of human-caused climate change and restore the environment—if we make some very large changes in our economy, our energy systems, and our lives in the next five to ten years. *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* believe the environmental crisis can be resolved only if we simultaneously address racism, genocide of Indigenous peoples, classism, sexism, and other oppressions. The impact of environmental destruction and climate change falls most heavily on the groups targeted by these oppressions, and on other vulnerable populations (including populations of people who are elderly, disabled, and very young). Making the changes needed will require a massive movement, spanning the globe, of people of every background fighting the effects of climate change, racism, and exploitation.

In *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* we believe that the barriers to building a sufficiently large and powerful movement include (1) longstanding divisions (usually caused by oppression, and especially racism and classism) between nations and between groups of people, (2) widespread feelings that it's too late and any actions will be ineffective, (3) denial of or failure to engage with the climate emergency, and (4) difficulties in effectively addressing the connections between the environmental crisis and the failures of our economic system. *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* work to address these and other issues.

The role of oppression

The economic and political forms of our societies demand growth and profit with little regard for people, other life forms, or the earth. This results in exploitation and oppression. Oppressions (such as racism, classism, sexism, and the oppression of young people) target everyone, inflicting tremendous injustices, limiting access to resources, and damaging the lives of billions of people. Once targeted by oppression, we tend to act toward others in ways that repeat the hurts that we have experienced. Much of the mental and emotional harm we experience is the result of this passing on of hurt. Our experience is that though people are vulnerable

to acting in oppressive ways, oppressive behavior is not inherent, but arises only when a person has been hurt emotionally. Oppressive societies manipulate this vulnerability to establish and maintain economic exploitation.

The importance of healing personal harm

The mental and emotional harm done to us by oppression and other hurtful experiences interferes with our ability to think clearly and sets groups of people against each other. This makes it difficult for us to think about and respond effectively to the climate emergency.

Healing from the hurts that help to hold oppression in place and lead to other harmful behavior is neither quick nor easy work. Many of us resist this personal healing work. We may have survived by numbing ourselves to the harm done to us by oppression. Some of us assume that we will never be free of this harm. In *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* we have learned that it is possible to free ourselves from these hurts and address barriers to effective organizing. We can heal from hurtful experiences if someone listens to us attentively and allows and encourages us to release the grief, fear, and other painful emotions. This happens by means of our natural healing processes—talking, crying, trembling, expressing anger, and laughing.

By releasing emotional pain in a supportive network, we can stay united, hopeful, thoughtful, joyful, and committed. This in turn strengthens us in building our movements to stop the effects of climate change and racism.



Sustaining All Life



For more information, see:

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