



Activity #3 GREEN JOBS, NOT JAILS!

BACKGROUND

“The path to true community safety is not through more police and prisons, but through ecologically sound economic investment.” – *Reclaim The Future*

The United States is locked into an inefficient, pollution-based economy that is undermining public health and the natural environment, aggravating inequality and incarceration, and destabilizing the planet. Our country is the world leader in both pollution and incarceration. The US throws too many precious resources into landfills and incinerators—and too many precious people into jails and prisons. The “grey,” pollution-based economy is also a gulag economy. But there are no throwaway species, children, resources, neighborhoods or nations.

GREEN JOBS NOT JAILS! is the strategic concept underlying Reclaim The Future, and stands for the principle that zero pollution, living wage jobs provide the most logical, humane and cost-effective pathway to safe, healthy and peaceful cities. It asserts that the surest path to safe streets and peaceful communities is not more police and prisons, but ecologically sound economic development. Two powerful concepts are at the heart of this approach: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE and RESTORATIVE ECONOMICS.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

In this activity, students examine their personal experiences with the dominant justice and economic systems in their communities. After exploring and testing their understanding of restorative economics and restorative justice, they investigate the strategic concept of GREEN JOBS, NOT JAILS!

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- * Students understand the difference between RETRIBUTIVE and RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
- * Students understand the difference between a gulag economy and a restorative economic system
- * Students explore their personal relationship to the justice and economic systems
- * Students examine the GREEN JOBS, NOT JAILS concept

KEY CONCEPTS

- * Retributive Justice
- * Restorative Justice
- * Grey/Gulag Economy
- * Green Economy

TIME

2.5 class periods

MATERIALS

- * Butcher paper/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- * OVERVIEW HANDOUT
- * STUDENT WORKSHEET
- * RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, RESTORATIVE ECONOMICS, and SYNTHESIS HANDOUTS

EXTENSIONS

- 1 Students research cases where restorative justice has been employed (i.e. South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission), and create 5-10 minute presentations to share with their class.
- 2 Students are divided into teams. Each group is made up of “eco-friendly entrepreneurs,” committed to the principle of restorative economics. Their task is to come up with an entrepreneurial idea that would employ at least five people and create a product or service that does not harm the environment (and ideally helps the environment). They should write a proposal and be prepared to answer detailed questions about their plan. Presentations are made to classmates (five minute presentations, plus two minutes for questions and answers). Class votes, selecting their favorite three proposals.

RESOURCES

www.booksnotbars.org

www.restorativejustice.org

www.restorativejustice.org.uk

www.reclaimthefuture.org

PROCESS**Day One**

- 1 Have a group memory (butcher paper/chalkboard) prepared to capture student’s brainstormed ideas. Ask your group: What is the justice system made up of? What are your first thoughts when thinking about that system? Record answers on the visual group memory. (7)
- 2 Have students take out a piece of paper and a writing utensil. Instruct them to briefly reflect on their own personal experience with the justice system. Have they or people they know interacted with the system? Was the experience largely positive or negative? Why or why not? (8)
- 3 Return focus to the large group and group memory. Ask students to describe their experiences in a few words and record these experiences on the group memory. Debrief: What do they notice about these experiences? Do people have similar experiences? What does that mean about our justice system? Do you think there is a better way? (15)
- 4 Pass out the HANDOUT on Restorative Justice and have students read. (10)
- 5 Assign homework: Do additional research using the online resources provided. Then write a 1-page biography on someone who was within a restorative justice system vs. a retributive justice system. Students can choose to write alternative histories for people they know or make someone up. Make sure that the stories include why the person was involved in the system in the first place and what they did when they got out.

Day Two

- 1 Ask a few students to volunteer to share their biographies. Reflect on the differences between those biographies and the real histories that some people might have experienced. What do the students think of the concept of restorative justice? (10)
 - 2 Go back to the original group memory and ask what (both in the biographies and in other people's experiences) was the cause of the person being involved with the justice system in the first place? Capture these ideas on the group memory. Will the original cause have changed when that person comes back into their community after their time in the justice system? What other system must be addressed to truly heal people and communities? (10)
 - 3 Distribute the RESTORATIVE ECONOMICS HANDOUT for students to read. (10)
 - 4 Return focus to the large group and discuss what they just read. What would it be like if people in our communities had opportunities for meaningful work in places that weren't hurting them or the environment? (5)
 - 5 Divide the room into 4 sections (one section for each system: retributive justice, restorative justice, gulag/grey economics, and restorative economics). Read aloud select characteristics from the OVERVIEW HANDOUT and have students physically move to the section (system) they think the characteristic is part of. (8)
 - 6 Distribute the OVERVIEW HANDOUT, the STUDENT WORKSHEET, and the GREEN JOBS, NOT JAILS SYNTHESIS OVERVIEW. Homework assignment: Fill out worksheet, Read GJNJ synthesis.
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Day Three

- 1 Have students read aloud their answers to the worksheet. Correct answers if needed. [Worksheet key: 1) Restorative Justice, 2) Gulag Economy, 3) Restorative Justice, 4) Retributive Justice, 5) Green Economy, 6) Gulag Economy, 7) Green Economy, 8) Restorative Justice, 9) Green Economy, 10) Retributive Justice] (10)
- 2 Discuss the GREEN JOBS, NOT JAILS concept. What do students think would make it work? Have they heard of Green Jobs before? Do they know anyone with a green job? Have they heard of any city or government policy that sounds like it supports restorative economics? (15)

Restorative Justice: A Path to True Community Safety

The United States currently has a “retributive” (retribution-based or “revenge”-based) system of justice whose motto is: “Justice has been done when the wrong-doer has been sufficiently punished.” In addition to the damage that is inflicted on already damaged people within the system, incarcerating thousands of people every year is costly – and represents a very poor investment, judging from the results. Outside of prison there are now 12 million formerly incarcerated people whose number grows by half a million a year. The failures and costs of retributive justice become clear when we consider that 40 percent of formerly incarcerated people are returned to prison within three years of release.

Restorative justice is a low-cost approach to criminal trespasses and wrongdoing pioneered in New Zealand. This approach embodies wisdom opposite to that of the present U.S. system. Restorative justice programs are not based on the idea of “retribution” against wrong doers. Restorative approaches encompass more than the notion of “rehabilitation.” Within a restorative justice framework, justice has been served when the victim has been made whole, when the transgressor has been redeemed and when some measure of balance has been restored in the community. This approach allows for a range of responses to a criminal offense, including compensation, apology, counseling and community service. This approach is not appropriate for all criminal acts. But it is much more empowering for victims of crime, costs less and has a better record of turning around those convicted of crimes (especially younger ones), thereby simultaneously improving public safety and saving money in the long term.

ONLINE RESOURCES

www.booksnotbars.org

www.restorativejustice.org

www.restorativejustice.org.uk

Restorative Economics: Creating Healthy Communities

The US currently has a “gulag economy” – a pollution, “prison-industrial complex” and mass incarceration-based economic system. In a gulag economy, corporations profit by destroying the environment and by incarcerating people who end up as cheap labor behind bars. If this remains as the US’s dominant economic model, we will continue losing irreplaceable resources and human beings.

We know that the safest neighborhoods are not the ones with the most police and prisons. They are the ones with the most jobs, best schools, strongest tax base and the most opportunities for young people. The surest strategy to stabilize a community is not to over-police it, but to properly invest in it. To create safe and healthy communities, there is a fundamental need for job creation and a renewal of the urban tax base.

That’s where the new “green economy” comes in. Right now there are billions of dollars being invested in alternative fuels, green building construction, and new green technologies. And that means the creation of new jobs – Green jobs. The model for creating jobs and wealth without relying on pollution-based economic models that have already damaged so many communities is called “restorative economics.” This movement is based on the desire to evolve an economy that renews, supports and co-exists with the natural world, rather than degrading it. This idea goes a step beyond “sustainability,” acknowledging that economic activity must be re-imagined and re-designed so that production activities actually help restore the environment. And restorative economics is not just about restoring the environment – it’s also about restoring community health. Creating a just, restorative green economy that includes urban areas has the potential to transform the country.

Imagine if our government invested in: alternative solutions, eco-entrepreneurs, solar energy, hydrogen research, bio-diesel, permaculture, organic agriculture, high performance buildings and other clean and green technologies. Imagine if the government gave tax incentives to industries that adopt “restorative economics” protocols, or created financial incentives for industry to switch from highly destructive to highly restorative production processes. Imagine there being tax credits and other incentives for attracting “green industry” to the urban core areas.

What is a Green Job? A paid position providing environmentally-friendly products or services; term suggests high standards regarding fair wages, equal opportunity and healthy working conditions; employer may be a private business, government, non-profit or cooperative. For example: organic farmer, sustainable forestry worker, recycling technician or solar panel manufacturer.

Synthesis: Green Jobs, Not Jails!

Restorative justice and restorative economics at first might seem unrelated. But taken together and to their logical conclusions, these twin developments open up the possibility of an exciting new solution oriented politics of coalition-building for social change. This solution is summarized by the slogan: Green Jobs, Not Jails!

The time has come to take on the related ills of economic deprivation, over-incarceration and environmental degradation in a more comprehensive and vision-driven way. Working in tandem, restorative justice and restorative economics could help transition the United States from being the world leader in waste and in prison-based “gulag economics” – to being the world leader in a humane and sustainable “green economy.”

Green Jobs, Not Jails! WORKSHEET

INSTRUCTIONS

Read each statement. Determine if you think it represents restorative justice, retributive justice, the green economy, or the grey “gulag” economy. Write your answer on the line provided.

- 1** After learning how to repair boats in Florida’s community-based Juvenile Alternative Services Program, Cesar finds employment at a local boat repair company.



- 2** A well-known wetland is covered up and destroyed to put in a new upscale condominium block.



- 3** Angel talks to her counselor at her session in one of Missouri’s regional youth rehabilitation centers.



- 4** Bianca returns from doing time at a women’s correctional facility but can’t find a job because having committed a felony makes her undesirable to most employers.



- 5** An organic grocery store opens in a “low-income” neighborhood.



- 6** The South Central Farm in Los Angeles (feeding 134 families) is bulldozed because the owner decides to sell the land to Walmart.



- 7** A major solar company decides to open its new plant in a heavily populated urban environment, and commits to employing community residents and formerly incarcerated people.



- 8** After 11 months in a Colorado youth offender residential facility, Sean is released with his GED and reunited with his father, who (at the encouragement of the site’s counselors) was “heavily involved” during Sean’s time at the facility.



- 9** Local businesses decide to meet “green business” requirements and consequently reduce their energy consumption by 20%.



- 10** Jay is caught with drugs at age 13. He is placed in the California Youth Authority facility known as Chad where he will stay for at least 2 years.



Characteristics of Retributive Justice

“Justice has been done when the wrong-doer has been sufficiently punished.”

- * Lack of community safety
- * Underinvestment in schools
- * Overinvestment in prisons
- * Focus on “enforcement” (increase in police as representatives of safety)
- * More super jails and increased rates of incarceration
- * Incarceration and punishment as industry
- * High rates of recidivism
- * Young people and people of color are targeted and locked into the system
- * The prison industry extracts people from community, ensuring that they cannot participate in the economy
- * Formerly incarcerated people are unable to reenter society in a meaningful way

Characteristics of Pollution- based, Gulag Economics

- * Young people and people of color locked out of system
- * Lack of meaningful work
- * Lack of living wage jobs in healthy, non-polluting industries
- * A prevalence of jobs and industry that destroy personal, community, and environmental health
- * Sense of powerlessness and alienation from the “system”
- * Only a few people benefit, but there is a cost for all
- * Power is based on privilege (primarily white privilege)
- * Planned obsolescence, throw away design

Characteristics of Restorative Justice

“Justice has been served when the victim has been made whole, when the transgressor has been redeemed and when some measure of balance has been restored in the community.”

- * There is a prevention of crime through community involvement, engagement
- * The community is the primary “enforcer” and plays a role in decision-making regarding appropriate disciplinary measures
- * Allows for a range of responses to a criminal offense, including compensation, apology, counseling and community service
- * Emphasizes providing the youth in the most trouble with intensive counseling and supervision by trained youth specialists in small residential centers built for rehabilitation
- * There is a focus on individual and community health, not on the incarceration industry
- * There are lower rates of recidivism, less jails, and more investment in education and rehabilitation centers
- * Focuses on creating positive, community-based alternatives to the incarceration industry

Characteristics of Restorative Economics

- * There is meaningful work available in a vibrant “Green” economy
- * Young people and people of color are locked into the system
- * Urban residents have the tools and opportunities to participate in decision making
- * Green business means the inclusion of disenfranchised people as well as eco-friendly industry
- * The economy renews, supports and co-exists with the natural world, rather than degrading it