

GRASSROOTS RISING

Volume 2: February 13, 2025

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"The founding fathers gave the free press the protection it must have to fulfill its essential role in our democracy. The press was to serve the governed, not the governors."

Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black's opinion June 31, 1971 on publication of the Pentagon Report.

Bioregionalism: Try it, you might like it. And it may just save the world.

By Matt Orsagh

Degrowth is the Answer, Substack
February 6, 2025

Bioregionalism is a philosophy that suggests that political, cultural, and economic systems are more sustainable and just if they are organized around naturally-defined areas called bioregions.

Bioregions are geographical areas defined by distinct ecological systems, plant and animal species, soils and landforms, human settlements and cultures, and topographic features such as watersheds. Bioregions can of course spill across political boundaries.

If you think about it, human societies were arranged around bioregions for most of human history, it is in the relatively recent history of humanity that we started dividing into states, and even then, many of our borders respect bioregion lines of rivers, mountains, oceans, and lakes.

Bioregionalism is a growing movement to again organize in bioregions in order to protect them and regenerate them, thereby protecting ourselves and addressing the issues of climate change and overshoot that are coming

The appeal of bioregionalism – at least to me – is that it focuses on the familiar and the local and is there-



The Amazon. Throughout human history we had to take care of these resources, because they took care of us. Photo: Dan Meyers, Unsplash

fore more likely to spur action than a global problem that is abstract to most people, such as climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, or any other planetary boundaries. If more people knew about and cared for their bioregions, those that spoil our rivers, lakes, mountains, and oceans would have a harder time doing so.

Throughout human history we had to take care of these resources, because they took care of us. Now, most

of us live in cities and suburbs where we have separated ourselves from nature, so we don't feel the need to take care of it.

Most of us go into nature every once in a while, but we don't feel ownership of it, so we don't protect it.

How do I get involved?

The first step is to know where the hell you are. The good folks at One

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Earth have a great Navigator that helps you find your bioregion. Give it a test-drive: Navigator | One Earth at <https://www.oneearth.org/navigator/>

There are 185 bioregions around the Earth. I found out that I live in – the Appalachia & Allegheny Interior Forests (NA24) bioregion.

You can take it a step further and learn what watershed you live in. The entire world is made up of [watersheds]. A watershed is a drainage basin. Your watershed could be pretty small, making it easier to get involved in cleaning up and regenerating. I could only find watershed information in the U.S., but here is an easy tool. Find Watersheds at <http://www.fishmap.org/watershed.html>.

I'm in the Rivanna watershed.

Once you know your bioregion and your watershed, you can look up local groups looking to protect your bioregion and watershed or start one yourself.

If you are looking for a place to learn more about bioregioning and find people and events, go to r3.0 [r3.0 | Redesign for Resilience & Regeneration for a green, inclusive and open

economie) at <https://www.r3-0.org/>].

Here's what they say they do in their own words:

r3.0 promotes Redesign for Resilience and Regeneration. As a global common good not-for-profit platform, r3.0 crowdsources open recommendations for necessary transformations across diverse fields and sectors, in response to the ecological and social collapses humanity is experiencing, in order to achieve a thriving, regenerative, and distributive economy and society.

Go where the money is.

Some smart folks are trying to marry the money with the message of bioregioning, and have started The BioFi Project: Bioregional Finance for Planetary Regeneration. These folks are trying to establish more BFFs – not Best Friends Forever – but Bioregional Financing Facilities. They want to help create bioregioning banks, funds, venture capital, and other resources to help bioregionalism thrive. Yes, the people at BioFi are already BFFs with the r3.0 people.

If you want to find out more, you

can read the book *Bioregional Financing Facilities* by Samantha Power and Leona Seefeld. The link is on the BioFi project link.

It's a great gift for that person in finance or business who wants to save the world, but doesn't know how to do it.

There is a BioFi community you can join at Hylo if interested. Go to <https://www.hylo.com/groups/biofi>

Here's the plan.

Start local. Get involved in protecting your bioregion and your watershed, and invite friends, family, and mortal enemies to do the same. Once enough of us know the link between our bioregions and our survival, it gets harder to ignore the problems in our bioregions and assume someone else will take care of them.

A good analogy is renting vs. owning. If you own something, you take better care of it. If you just rent it, you don't. How well did you look after that first apartment you rented? How well do you take care of the home you own now (if you own a home ... essay for

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How to Subscribe

Dear Friends,

If you'd like to receive future issues of my newspaper, please email me at grassroots-coalition@pa.net. Also, email me if you have stories and photos you'd like me to consider publishing in future issues. I publish a Messages page similar to Letters to the Editor, so if you want to share your thoughts, please do so.

I'd like this to be a team effort as it has been in

the past, but we need time to develop this project and figure out ways to work together.

This is a labor of love but I always appreciate donations, which you can send to: Iona Conner, 157 Chambersbridge Road 4A, Brick, NJ 08723. If you use Zelle or PayPal, money goes directly to my bank account via dosomething@pa.net. Cash is OK, too. Thank you!

For the Earth,

Iona



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(1) Purpose and character of the use, including whether the use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes. . . .

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another day)? Collectively we act like renters of nature because we assume someone else is taking care of it.

They aren't.

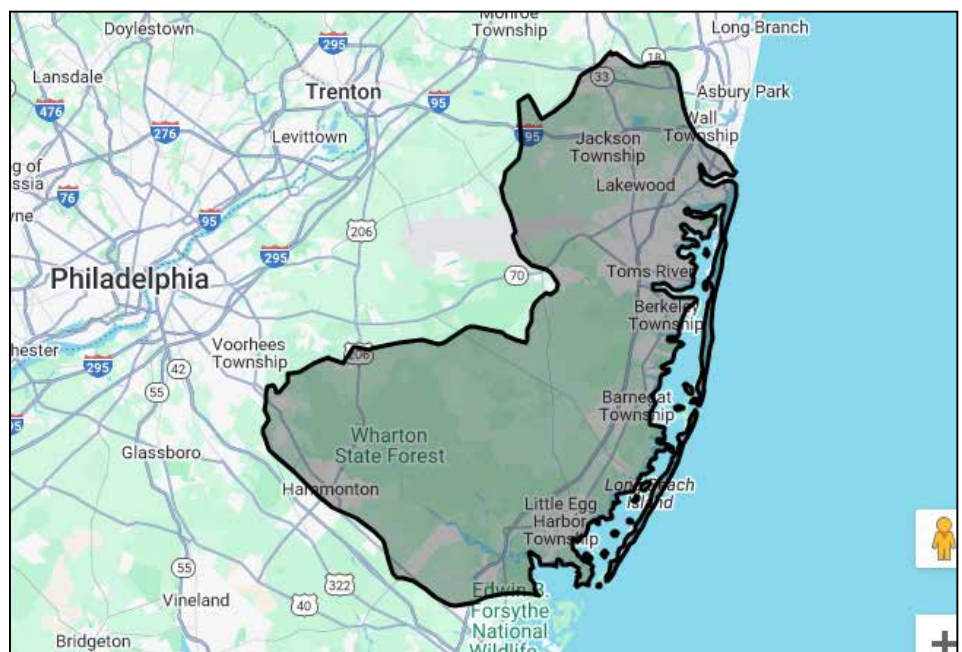
If enough people own their bioregion, they will fight like hell to protect it.

So go out and own your bioregion.

Note from Iona: I did not know what my bioregion was until I followed Matt's instructions and learned what bioregion I'm in – it's the Mullica-Toms Watershed! I learned this by going to fishnet.org and found the photo to the right.

Now the question is: What do I do about it?

Source: <https://degrowthisthe-answer.substack.com/>



Mullica-Toms River Watershed



The North Atlantic Right Whale is now ranked as Critically Endangered. A safe migration corridor along the East Coast is essential for the critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whale. Photo worldanimalnews.com

Victory: Wind Project Threatening Endangered Whales Stopped

By Bob Stern

Email received February 5, 2025

Dear Supporters,

I am glad to announce that the Atlantic Shores South wind project off of Long Beach Island (LBI) and Brigantine, New Jersey has been sunk. Shell New Energies, a 50 percent owner, is stepping away from it – notably 20 days after Save LBI filed a comprehensive federal lawsuit against the project. The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) has decided not to make a new enabling subsidy award to it. The existing BPU award that it had for project 1 will be terminated without penalty.

Our sincere thanks to all of you who have made this possible.

Save LBI is gratified that the Atlantic Shores South project has been tabled. This is a major victory for shore values, communities, others, and common sense. But there is also unfinished business here to ensure that this project, or a similar one, never reappears, and that the flawed federal and state processes and impact assessment methods that carried such a costly and damaging project this far are fundamentally changed.

There are a number of ways to do that.

1. Federal Legislation. The removal of the investment tax credits

and other incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act would ensure that these companies will not make sufficient return on their investment here.

2. Cancelling the Lease Area. An effective way to permanently end this project – and prevent future projects in the same area – is to cancel the lease area itself. Only the Interior Department can do that. We have written to Secretary Burgum suggesting that and will be filing a formal petition asking for cancellation. Our recent federal lawsuit provides ample justification for such a cancellation, but we do not yet know whether the Interior Department will do that or how long it will take.

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3. Overturning Prior Project

Approvals. The prior Atlantic Shores project approvals can be overturned. Atlantic Shores or any new project would then have to start over with a new environmental impact statement, and other applications. This requires a Court judgement so we must continue our lawsuits. It is possible now that Justice Department lawyers may agree with some or all of our claims. A Court judgement that the Atlantic Shores approvals were not lawful and overturning them would set a precedent for other cases because the methods used elsewhere were similar.

4. Protecting the North Atlantic Right Whale.

A safe migration corridor along the East Coast is essential for the critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whale. We will soon be filing a petition with NOAA (the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration) to designate a migration corridor for the Right Whale as critical habitat. That petition will demonstrate that offshore wind projects in that corridor would seriously impede or block the whales migration. So, we will ask that all wind projects

be excluded from that critical habitat corridor. The Atlantic Shores lease area is entirely within the migration corridor we will propose.

5. Doing Things Right. The Administration is conducting a welcome review of the leasing and permitting practices for these projects. We too should reflect on how a project with virtually no benefit, high cost, and significant environmental damage got so far. Our work on this over the last few years showed that the entire process of site selection and project review was fundamentally flawed. The public was excluded from the selection of the lease area, the most important decision. Alternatives to the company's proposal were excluded from the environmental impact statement rendering it essentially worthless in terms of fostering wise environmental decisions. Opposition groups were excluded from the preparation of documents prepared under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Noise-related impacts to marine mammals have been systematically and significantly underestimated, and changing those methods is

paramount to protecting these animals for any offshore project.

Save LBI will do what it can to correct these defects. We will continue and expand our efforts to inform the public, the media, and our elected representatives as to the true costs and impacts of these projects on the leasing, environmental review, and financing practices used and how they should be changed, and provide constructive energy supply options to keep the lights on.

Join us on February 16th, World Whale Day. We will be marking our progress and committing to the work ahead on the Seaside Park boardwalk at the Funtown Beach Pavilion (Stockton Avenue) at 1 PM on February 16th. We welcome your presence there, your continuing support, and any suggestions.

Thank you again for standing with us in this fight.

Bob Stern

Save Long Beach Island, Inc.

P.O. Box 2087

Long Beach Township, NJ, 08008

www.SaveLBI.org

Just as cultivating a garden requires turning over the ground, pulling weeds, planting, and watering, doing the work of love is all about taking action.

~ bell hooks ~

These 28 NJ Animals Are Now Considered Endangered

State wildlife officials have reclassified 28 species of animals found in the state as endangered or threatened, including five species of freshwater mussels, six dragonflies, two butterflies, three amphibians, two reptiles, and 10 birds.

By Megan VerHelst 

Brick Patch: January 31, 2025

NEW JERSEY – State wildlife officials have reclassified 28 species of animals found in the state as endangered or threatened, part of a series of amendments recently adopted into the New Jersey Administrative Code.

The new additions to New Jersey's list of endangered animals include five species of freshwater mussels, six dragonflies, two butterflies, three amphibians, two reptiles, and 10 birds.

Animals on the list include the barred owl, wood turtle, Pine Barrens tree frog, and northern pine snake.

Before the change, which went into effect on January 6, the animals moved to the endangered list were considered "threatened" but were kept on the state's non-game list. An animal on the non-game list is placed into three categories, including "special concern," "stable-secure," or "undetermined-unknown."

As part of the change, animals on the endangered list are now considered "threatened" or "endangered," a classification that includes the most at-risk species.

Here's a look at the animals affected by the reclassification:

Freshwater Mussels

- Eastern Lampmussel
- Eastern Pondmussel
- Tidewater Mucket



Wood Turtle. Photo: <https://images.search.yahoo.com/>

- Triangle Floater
- Yellow Lampmussel

Dragonflies & Damselflies

- Banner Clubtail
- Brook Snaketail
- Harpoon Clubtail
- Kennedy's Emerald
- Robust Baskettail
- Superb Jewelwing

Butterflies

- Checkered White
- Frosted Elfin

Amphibians

- Eastern Long-tailed Salamander
- Eastern Mud Salamander
- Pine Barrens Treefrog

Reptiles

- Northern Pinesnake
- Wood Turtle

Birds

- American Kestrel
- Barred Owl
- Black-Crowned Night Heron
- Bobolink
- Grasshopper Sparrow
- Horned Lark
- Long-Eared Owl
- Red-Headed Woodpecker
- Savannah Sparrow
- Yellow-Crowned Night Heron

The changes included the removal of four animals from the endangered list, including the bald eagle and the osprey. The animals were moved to a list of regulated non-game species after their populations increased.

Source: <https://patch.com/new-jersey/brick/s/j4rsj/these-28-nj-animals-are-now-considered-endangeredw>

The Trump Crime Spree

This is a particularly hard moment to live through, but it is not the last word on what will happen.

By Matt Kerbel

Wolves and Sheep Substack

February 5, 2025

Photo: David von Diemar, Unsplash

Elect a criminal and get someone who commits crimes. Elect an insurrectionist criminal and get someone who commits crimes against the government he pledged to serve.

That's where we are in the third week of the Trump sequel, during what we knew would be a chaotic and overwhelming start to the administration.

At its core, what Trump is doing should not be surprising. We knew we would have to brace for an unprecedented flurry of attacks on the political process. But that doesn't make it easier to experience. Something can be predictable and shocking at the same time.

Because you follow the news, you don't need me to recount all the things Trump is doing in his effort to grab power, so I will focus on two of his most egregious and unprecedented actions. He has permitted Elon Musk access to Treasury Department computers – essentially the nation's checkbook – which gives Musk proximity to the sensitive personal information of hundreds of millions of Americans.

Meanwhile, Musk has moved to shutter the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), while Trump ordered a freeze on international foreign assistance. An act of Congress is required for the former, while the president does not have the authority to do the latter.

None of this is constitutional and none of it is legal.

But Trump, as expected, is doing it



anyway, daring anyone to make him stop.

In a functioning democracy, impeachment hearings would already be underway, and they would have bipartisan support. But in the degraded democracy Trump inherited, there was never any chance of this happening. We knew congressional Republicans would not provide a guardrail against his actions, and we are seeing this play out.

We also knew coming into the new administration that the courts and federalism would likely be the only remaining institutional obstacles to Trump's lawlessness. And we are seeing this happen as well, although it may not feel like it is effective because legal action takes time while Trump and Musk are destroying things at a dizzying pace.

Three federal workers' unions have sued to block Musk's access to the Treasury database. The dismantling of USAID will inevitably face court challenges. A federal judge has blocked all vestiges of a spending freeze Trump ordered then reversed course last week. On the political front, House

and Senate Democrats rallied in front of USAID offices yesterday to draw attention to the extra-legal efforts of the Trump administration. Said Rep. Jamie Raskin, "We don't have a fourth branch of government called Elon Musk, and that's going to become real clear."

Given the imbalance between the swift execution of illegal executive authority and the slower judicial response, it should not be surprising that Trump holds the offensive initiative right now. And real damage is being done as a consequence. But we also need to give the forces pushing back time to get established.

It can also be helpful to remember that Trump will fold when challenged. Just look at how quickly he gave in on his tariff threats against Canada and Mexico when the market and some investors registered their concerns. Or, as the *Wall Street Journal* put it, Trump blinked.

It is also the case that the unhinged start to the second Trump presidency isn't helping his public standing. And he didn't have much standing to begin with.

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Like the courts, public opinion can move at less than lightening speed. It takes time for people to notice what's happening and form an opinion. Sometimes their personal situation has to get really bad before they do. But Most Americans already have an unfavorable view of Musk and his DOGE project. It's unlikely to comfort them when they learn that he's rummaging around in their personal data.

* * *

If the person who swore to uphold the law wasn't the one violating it, we would have avenues for swift action that could halt this crime wave in its tracks. Instead, we are forced to rely on the slower mechanisms that remain available to us. It can be hard to feel good about this when so much dam-

age is being done, although it is also the case that the destruction we're seeing was baked into the results of the election. We knew this – and more – would happen back in November. We're just living through it now.

How things develop will depend on how effectively the opposition can come together and leverage legal and political tools to push back on the bully. Trump is determined to upend the global order and our national stability, but there are plenty of people invested in the status quo who will not stand by and let him have his way without a fight.

Trump has an enormous advantage right now in the executive power he wields, and in his willingness to abuse his office knowing his party will not stop him. But we are not without tools.

This is an exceedingly challenging moment, and it can feel like all is lost, but the opposition is not helpless.

If you want to do something now – and even taking a small action can feel better than sitting around waiting for others – consider signing this petition supporting Hakeem Jeffries' vow to use the upcoming government funding negotiations to stop Trump's illegal funding freezes. <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/please-add-your-name-to-the-petition-supporting-hakeem-jeffries-for-his-vow-to-use-the-upcoming-government-funding-negotiations-to-stop-donald-trumps-illegal-funding-freezes/>

Source: <https://wolvesandsheep.substack.com/p/the-trump-crime-spree>

Ocasio-Cortez says Trump Admin Trying to 'Overwhelm' with 'Constant' Developments

By Ashleigh Fields 
The Hill: February 7, 2025

Submitted by Bill Boteler, Maryland USA with this comment: *"Advice on overwhelm. This is essential advice about how Trump is using psychological tactics to demoralize us. That a national leader would do this is unprecedented."*

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) said the Trump administration is aiming to "overwhelm" the public with "constant" developments in a Tuesday livestream on Instagram.

"I want you all to understand that if you are watching the news right now, and you are feeling overwhelmed by all of the constant headlines and developments and what is happening," Ocasio-Cortez said. "First of all, know that you are not alone. And second of

all, know that that is exactly what this administration is trying to get you to feel."

President Trump has signed a flood of executive orders that focus on stripping birthright citizenship, deportations, and wiping out diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, among others.

Ocasio-Cortez compared Trump's actions to that of a budding authoritarian regime.

"What authoritarian regimes try to do is that they often try to, what is known as 'flood the zone,'" she told her followers, noting the goal is to do "so much at once ... that you feel overwhelmed and paralyzed."

The New York lawmaker accused Republicans of trying to usher in a "state of passivity."

Instead of being bogged down by new developments and rapid changes, Ocasio-Cortez urged viewers to rise up

against the nation's leaders.

"We need to try. I don't want to hear, 'Oh, we can't do that. That's impossible.' That's called consenting in advance," she stated.

"So, when your mind says, 'It's all over, we might as well' – no, no, no.... Do not be discouraged by temporary defeats. We keep going anyway. When we are relentless, they will fatigue. They can only hold this up for so long."

Ocasio-Cortez has been vocally critical of Trump and his aim to restructure the federal government and corresponding agencies following his inauguration, targeting top officials including Elon Musk and others, in social media posts.

Source: <https://thehill.com/home-news/house/5132931-ocasio-cortez-trump-administration/>

‘A Disgrace’: Trump Admin Targets Multiple Environmental Justice Offices

“Donald Trump has decided that we do not deserve clean air or water, and our right to a livable and safe planet comes second to further enriching his fossil fuel friends and donors,” said one environmentalist.

By *Eloise Goldsmith*
Common Dreams: February 6, 2025

The Trump administration plans to place over 100 workers who are employed with the Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights on administrative leave, according to Wednesday reporting from *The Wall Street Journal*, which cited unnamed sources.

Other outlets have since reported on the development, including *The Washington Post*, which wrote Thursday that Trump appointees at the EPA told staff that they plan to close the office.

This move targeting the EPA, one of the latest efforts by the Trump administration to drastically reshape federal agencies, was panned by multiple environmental organizations, who accused the White House of turning its back on vulnerable communities.

“The EPA’s environmental justice office was created to challenge the historic pattern of pollution disproportionately affecting low-income communities and communities of color,” said Chitra Kumar, managing director of the Climate and Energy Program

at the Union of Concerned Scientists. Kumar was also formerly an official with the EPA Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights. Once again, the Trump administration is sidelining both science and the nation’s most overburdened people.”

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is also reportedly working to “remake” the Justice Department’s Environment and Natural Resources Division, which defends the U.S. government’s environmental actions in court and brings cases against individuals who violate federal environmental law. *The Washington Post* reported that Trump appointees at the Department of Justice said they plan to fire roughly 20 workers at the division, “among other actions that have sent morale there plummeting.”

The Office of Environmental Justice within the division has already “been eliminated,” and the five people working in that office have already been put on administrative leave, according to the outlet.

And in one of her first acts as U.S. Attorney General, Pam Bondi undid a Biden-era directive ordering the Department of Justice to emphasize enforcement of environmental laws in disadvantaged and low-income communities.

Trump administration attacks on what the White House deems “diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility” (DEIA) initiatives were expected. On his first day in office, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive

order mandating the end of all federal DEI programs, goals, mandates, and plans. The order also specifically called for the termination, “to the maximum extent allowed by law, all DEI, DEIA, and ‘environmental justice’ offices and positions.”

“By shuttering these offices, Donald Trump has decided that we do not deserve clean air or water, and our right to a livable and safe planet comes second to further enriching his fossil fuel friends and donors,” said Sierra Club executive director Ben Jealous in a Thursday statement. “Trump has been on the job for less than a month, but every single day he is making our communities less safe.”

Like Kumar at the Union of Concerned Scientists, senior VP of environmental health at the Natural Resources Defense Council Matthew Tejada (also an alum of the EPA’s environmental justice office) said that the country’s most vulnerable communities would lose out.

“Shuttering the environmental justice office [at the EPA] will mean more toxic contaminants, dangerous air, and unsafe water in communities across the nation that have been most harmed by pollution in the past,” said Tejada. “Trump EPA is turning its back on those who need a cleaner environment more than anyone. This is a disgrace.”

Source: <https://www.common-dreams.org/news/trump-environmental-justice-offices>

The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.

~ L.R. Knost ~

‘No One Is Above the Law’: Judge Blocks Musk Wrecking Crew from Treasury Payment System

New York Attorney General Letitia James, who led 19 state AGs in filing a suit, said the emergency order will keep ‘the world’s richest man... from accessing Americans’ private data.’”

By Jon Queally

Common Dreams: February 8, 2025

Photo: projects.propublica.org

A federal judge early Saturday morning blocked Elon Musk’s highly controversial Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, from further access to a sensitive and closely guarded Treasury Department payment system, warning of “irreparable harm” presented by the threat to the personal and financial data of millions of Americans.

In an emergency order that followed from a lawsuit filed by 19 state attorneys general on Friday, U.S. District Judge Paul A. Engelmayer said the Treasury Dept., in addition to suspending Musk and his team from access, must “immediately destroy any and all copies of material downloaded from the Treasury Department’s records and systems, if any.”

In the coalition’s lawsuit, led by New York Attorney General Letitia James, the states argued that allowing DOGE personnel – who have been characterized as far-right libertar-

ian “goons” and a “demolition crew” intent on gutting federal agencies from the inside out – access to the Treasury system was unlawful in the first place and could give them the ability “to block federal funds to states and programs providing health care, childcare, and other critical services” – none of which they are authorized to do.

Judge Engelmayer, in his decision, said the named defendants in the suit – President Donald Trump, his Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, and the Treasury Department – will be compelled to show cause at a hearing on February 14 before a separate judge presiding over an existing challenge to DOGE’s access to the system.

In a statement following the ruling, James said, “This morning, we won a court order blocking Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, from accessing Americans’ private data. Musk and his DOGE employees must destroy all records they’ve obtained. I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it again: no one is above the law.”

Under the order, as *The Washington Post* reports, “The Trump administration is prohibited from giving access to political appointees, special government employees, or government employees that are not assigned to the Treasury Department.”

On Friday, *Wired* reported that an internal agency at Treasury had assessed the DOGE personnel place inside the department as “an insider threat.”

“There is ongoing litigation, congressional legislation, and widespread protests relating to DOGE’s access to Treasury and the Bureau of the Fiscal Service,” reads a section of an email from the internal agency reviewed by the news outlet.

“If DOGE members have any access to payment systems,” the email continued, “we recommend suspending that access immediately and conducting a comprehensive review of all actions they may have taken on these systems.”

Source: <https://www.common-dreams.org/news/doge-treasury-payment-system>





16 Ways Trump Has Been Defeated, Blocked, or Forced to Back Down Since He Won the November Elections

By Chris Bowers

Wolves and Sheep Substack

February 8, 2025

Photo: Mitchell Luo on Unsplash

In these early days of the second Trump administration, many folks, especially Democrats, are expressing astonishment and exasperation that Trump is seemingly getting away with everything and doing whatever he wants without any checks on his power.

Except, well, it isn't actually true that Trump is getting away with everything, or that no one is checking his power. As I intend to show with this article, since his victory in the November 2024 elections, Trump has actually been stopped, slowed, or forced to back down on at least 16 occasions.

As a followup to my Thursday article, "All the Lawsuits Against the Trump Administration, Listed," allow me to present to you a list of 16 ways that Trump has been slowed, blocked,

or forced to back down since November 5, 2024:

1. Matt Gaetz withdraws. In November 2024, Donald Trump's first choice for Attorney General, former Rep. Matt Gaetz, withdrew from consideration after it quickly became clear he could not be confirmed by the Senate.

2. House Democrats and Republicans joined together to vote down Trump's attempt to raise the debt ceiling. In December 2024, over three dozen Republicans and nearly all House Democrats joined together to resoundingly defeat Donald Trump's attempt to raise the debt ceiling. Democratic votes will eventually be needed to raise the debt ceiling later this year, since dozens of Republicans will once again oppose it. Expect more concessions from Trump at that time.

3. Trump's threat to adjourn Congress dismissed. Also in November of

2024, Trump had threatened to adjourn Congress indefinitely and install whoever he wanted in whatever position in government he wanted. Congress quickly rejected this idea.

4. Birthright Citizenship executive order blocked. Trump's attempt to block birthright citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants has been blocked, in very harsh language, by multiple judges, including an appointee of Ronald Reagan.

5. Funding freezes blocked. Multiple judges have also blocked Trump's funding freezes, once again with very harsh language.

6. DOGE access to Treasury system blocked. In consultation with a federal judge, the Department of Justice has limited the so-called Department of Government Efficiency's access to the Treasury payment system to a single employee, Tom Krause. Further, this

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employee has read-only access to data.

7. Buyout offer for federal employees blocked. A federal judge has blocked the infamous Donald Trump/Elon Musk buyout plan to all federal employees.

8. Trump backed down from tariffs on Canada and Mexico. Trump reversed his threats to hit Canada and Mexico with tariffs after minimal to no concessions from the two nations.

9. The White House backed away from some parts of Trump’s “plan” for Gaza. The White House quickly walked back several elements of Trump’s “plan” to turn post-war Gaza into a resort community.

10. Trump’s legislative agenda hasn’t gone anywhere. Two days ago, *Politico* described Speaker Mike Johnson’s plans to pass Trump’s agenda as being “at risk of collapse.”

11. Government funding talks are going nowhere. With a March 14 deadline to fund the government approaching, Trump’s many unilateral, illegal freezes of funding approved by Congress have resulted in the collapse of talks to fund the government. A government shutdown this early in Trump’s term is going to look really bad for him, but Democrats aren’t negotiating until Trump stops impounding money. And, yes, Democratic votes are needed in both the House and the Senate to pass a government funding bill, even now.

See Axios, *Politico*, *The Hill*, and NBC News for more on this.

12. Concessions from Pete Hegseth. I admit that this is pretty small potatoes, but Sen. Joni Ernst did win some small concessions from Pete Hegseth before voting to confirm him.

13. Concessions from RFK Jr. In what looks like more than small potatoes, Sen. Bill Cassidy appears to have won significant concessions from RFK Jr. in exchange for voting his nomination out of committee earlier this week.

14. Legal aid to migrants restored. In a complete reversal, the Department of Justice has resumed allowing legal aid to be provided to immigrants in federal detention centers and immigration courts.

15. Transfer of transgender inmates blocked. A federal judge has temporarily blocked the Trump administration from transferring three transgender inmates to a men’s prison.

16. Special election disaster for GOP. On January 28, in a special election for an Iowa state Senate seat, the Democratic candidate – a former public school principal – won by 4 points in a district that Trump won by 21 points, flipping a red seat blue. Notably, Democrats have outperformed Kamala Harris’s November 2024 vote share in every special election held so far in 2025.

This is only a partial list, as of 1:45 PM ET on Friday, February 7. By the

time you read this article on Saturday, I would not be surprised if there have been more ways that Trump has been stopped, delayed, or been forced to back down. If so, please add what happened in the comments in link below.


While it can be tempting to just throw your hands up in the air and say things like, “Trump is getting away with everything,” or “No one is doing anything to stop him,” a more attentive, more determined, and calmer response shows that Trump actually has been meeting quite a lot of resistance, and occasional defeat, over these past three months.

I urge you not to engage in fatalism, to look closer, to remain calm, remember that this Trumpian moment is fleeting, and to stay engaged in the fight for democracy.

From Chris Bowers: Part of my purpose here at Bowers News Media is to share what I have learned with you so as to assist you in getting rid of your political anxiety without disengaging or turning a blind eye to the dangers we face. This is why my colleague Matt Kerbel over at Wolves and Sheep, the Substack associated with Bowers News Media, has given me a weekly column where I share my insights, gleaned from 20 years of political activism, on how to be a political activist while also being free of fear and anxiety.

Source: <https://wolvesandsheep.substack.com/p/sixteen-ways-trump-has-been-defeated>

Trump’s Administration Seems Chaotic, But He’s Drawing Directly from Project 2025 Playbook

By Zachary Albert, excerpt 
The Conversation via MS.: February 5, 2025

In his first few days back in office, President Donald Trump engaged in a whirlwind of executive actions, from exiting the World Health Organization to deploying military personnel and National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border.

Many of these actions are unprecedented. Some appear to be illegal and unconstitutional, according to legal experts and judges. But none of them should come as a surprise – nearly all of them were outlined in 2022 in a plan called Project 2025. . . .

Source: <https://theconversation.com/trumps-administration-seems-chaotic-but-hes-drawing-directly-from-project-2025-playbook-248821>

Momentous Victory for Climate Justice: Rosebank, Jackdaw Oilfields Ruled Unlawful

By Julia Conley, excerpt

Common Dreams: January 30, 2025

Photo: Protest against the Rosebank oil field in Westminster: greenpeace.org.uk

After winning a landmark lawsuit to stop oil and gas production at two North Sea fossil fuel projects in the United Kingdom Thursday, the global climate action group Greenpeace called for applause for the campaigners who have spent years demanding no new pollution-causing developments.

“This is game-changing,” said Greenpeace U.K. “And it’s ONLY been possible thanks to YEARS of fighting by THOUSANDS of climate campaigners! Power to the people.”

The comments came after Judge Andrew Stewart of Scotland’s Court of Session ruled that Equinor and Shell, the fossil fuel giants behind the Rosebank oil and gas field and the Jackdaw gas project, respectively, cannot move ahead with extraction because the government did not take into account the emissions that would result from the projects.

The companies have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into Rosebank and Jackdaw, with Equinor saying it had lined up \$2.7 billion in contracts for the former field, with an estimated 300 million barrels of oil and gas expected to be extracted beginning in 2026 or 2027.

The Stop Rosebank coalition, made up of grassroots campaigners and organizations, said the climate pollution from Rosebank “would be more than the combined annual CO2 emissions of all 28 low-income countries in the world, including Uganda, Ethiopia, and Mozambique.”

“In other words, emissions from this one U.K. field would be more than those created by the 700 million people in the world’s poorest countries in a year,” said the coalition. “These are among the same countries that have



contributed the least to the climate crisis but are already experiencing the worst impacts of a warming planet.”

Stewart said in his ruling that, “The public interest in authorities acting lawfully and the private interest of members of the public in climate change outweigh the private interest of the developers.”

The campaign group Fossil Free London promptly organized a rally outside the Norwegian embassy in the U.K. capital to celebrate the verdict and call on Norway-based Equinor not to appeal the ruling.

“There can be victories in the world of climate protest,” said one organizer. “This is a big one.”

The ruling was in line with a decision handed down by the U.K. Supreme Court last year, which said local authorities must consider the full environmental impact of all new fossil fuel projects before they are approved.

Thursday’s ruling is the latest evidence, said Freya Aitchison, oil and gas campaigner at Friends of the Earth Scotland, that “new oil is over.”

“This signals the beginning of the end for fossil fuel production in the U.K.,” said Aitchison. “Political attention must immediately turn to develop-

ing an urgent and fair transition plan for workers.”

“This is a momentous victory for climate justice. It shows the power of the hundreds of thousands of people who have fought against the climate-wrecking Rosebank and Jackdaw oil fields for years. The U.K. Government must now end this disastrous project, rule out all new oil fields and fossil fuel developments and focus on delivering a planned, funded transition for oil workers,” added Aitchison. “This ruling is a turning point, we can and must choose a better future.”

Carla Denyer, a Member of Parliament for the Green Party, called on the U.K. government, now led by the Labour Party, to “refuse consent for the 13 other oil and gas drilling projects licensed by the previous government.”

Global Justice Now said the government should also turn its attention to the entire planet and support calls for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

“This is a huge milestone towards a livable planet and away from polluting fossil fuels,” said Liz Murray, head of the group’s Scottish campaigns. . . .

Source: <https://www.common-dreams.org/news/north-sea-oil-rig>



Wildlife in the deep sea consists mainly of polychaete worms that live down in the soft seabed. The majority of species are still unknown to science. Photo: Helena Wiklund, Thomas Dahlgren, and Adrian Glover.

Urgent Need to Map Deep-Sea Biodiversity

By Susanne Liljenström
University of Gothenburg
October 2, 2023

Submitted by Bill Boteler with this note: *The rush to exploit minerals for EVs and similar technology is itself a threat to the planet. Of course, doing the science is important but there will still be a political struggle.*

Note from Iona: *Bill and I have been following this crucial issue for a few years. This article is dated but still relevant and I have never published it before.*

In the search for battery metals, attention is now turning to the deepest parts of the world's oceans. But life in these areas is virtually unexplored and the effects of mining are therefore difficult to predict. The few inventories made so far reveal a large but unknown biodiversity – nine out of 10 species are new to science.

Ongoing electrification means that the demand for various minerals is growing at record speed. The search is now focusing on the deepest parts of the world's oceans, as the soft and dark seabed contains large deposits of cobalt,

nickel, copper, and manganese. But we know almost nothing about what life is like on the really deep seabed and how it will be affected by mining.

“It is a big problem that these areas are so unexplored. We don't even know which species and ecosystems are there, so how can we describe what will happen?” says Helena Wiklund, researcher at the Department of Marine Sciences.

Companies are Lining Up

Together with researchers at the Natural History Museum in London, Helena Wiklund and fellow researcher Thomas Dahlgren have examined seafloor samples from a large, mineral-rich area in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the so-called Clarion-Clipperton zone between Mexico and Hawaii. Here, companies are currently queuing up to start mining operations. As the area is in international waters, the UN's International Seabed Authority issues mining licenses. This has not yet been done, but it is probably only a matter of time, according to Helena Wiklund.

One characteristic of the wildlife in the zone is that it is very species-rich. In shallower seas, such as the North

Sea, many individuals of the same species are often found in the samples. However, in the Clarion-Clipperton samples, the researchers found many different species, but few individuals of each species.

Of 339 annelids collected, mainly polychaetes, 129 were of different species – most of them completely new to science. Previous studies indicate that more than 90 percent of the fauna in the deep sea is undescribed, says Helena Wiklund.

Species at Risk of Extinction

A further characteristic is that the species composition varies greatly from one site to another. Some species have so far only been found in a single location. If that area is mined and the whole seabed is stirred up, species may become extinct.

“This is why it is important to know how widespread different species are. If a species is only found in a limited area, it is of course more likely to become extinct”, says Helena Wiklund.

In order to start mining, an environmental impact assessment is required, which assesses how species and

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Helena Wiklund (right) sifts through bottom samples during a deep-sea expedition in the Pacific Ocean. Research colleague Diva Amon can also be seen in the picture. Photo: Leon Moodley

ecosystems will be affected. Knowing which species are present in the area is fundamental to such an assessment. And when it comes to deep seabeds in international waters, there is very little or no such information.

“There are no species lists for these deep areas, instead taxonomic literature from other areas is used, which often leads to incorrect identification. How can one then be able to predict how species and ecosystems will react? It is very important to know the true diversity, says Helena Wiklund.

Field Guides are Needed

The lack of information is due, among other things, to the fact that it is difficult and expensive to examine seabeds that are several thousand meters deep. Collecting a single sample

from the seafloor can take hours, and once the animals come to the surface, they can be tattered and difficult to identify. Often you need to use DNA technology to be able to determine their species. In addition, many species are completely new to science.

“Describing new species takes a very long time. Therefore, we want to publish our results as soon as possible, so that other researchers can help. Partly by using photographs and DNA sequences from our investigations, and partly by gaining access to our collected samples that we have deposited at the Natural History Museum in London”, says Helena Wiklund.

“We hope it can be a first step in producing the field guides that are so badly needed for these areas.”

Global Treaty Opens Up New Opportunities

After 15 years of negotiations at the UN, a global agreement to protect marine areas in international waters was signed this spring. The agreement includes rules to limit environmental impacts and create marine protected areas.

“The agreement opens up opportunities to protect the deep sea in a way that did not exist before. But it also introduces a new layer of bureaucracy that risks hampering research if authorization processes don’t work, and in the worst case scenario provides incentives for corruption,” says Thomas Dahlgren, researcher at the Department of Marine Sciences.

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Continuation from previous page**Relevant Scientific Publications**

- How many metazoan species live in the world's largest mineral exploration region? [https://www.cell.com/current-biology/pdfExtended/S0960-9822\(23\)00534-1](https://www.cell.com/current-biology/pdfExtended/S0960-9822(23)00534-1)
- Checklist of newly-vouchered annelid taxa from the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, central Pacific Ocean, based on morphology and genetic delimitation https://bdj.pensoft.net/articles.php?id=86921&journal_name=bdj

Global Treaty to Protect the Ocean

Almost half of the Earth's surface

consists of marine areas in international waters that no country owns or controls. In March, 67 countries, including Sweden, signed the UN High Seas Treaty to protect marine biodiversity in such areas. The agreement has four parts: rules for area-based management tools including marine protected areas, environmental impact assessments, marine genetic resources, and capacity building and technology transfer.

The treaty will enter into force once 60 countries have ratified it. It then remains for individual countries to take the necessary measures in their national legislation to fully implement the agreement.

Contacts

Helena Wiklund at the Department of Marine Sciences is doing research on the deep sea wildlife.

Principal Research Engineer
helena.wiklund@marine.gu.se

Thomas Dahlgren, Researcher
+46 766-18 32 87
+46 31-786 32 87
thomas.dahlgren@marine.gu.se

Source: <https://www.gu.se/en/news/urgent-need-to-map-deep-sea-biodiversity>

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD: QUEEN

Note from Iona February 12, 2025: I heard this in the car today and thought of us, all of us, our Global Family, each one of us is a Champion doing our best to create a better future.

I've paid my dues
Time after time
I've done my sentence
But committed no crime
And bad mistakes
I've made a few

[Pre-Chorus]
I've had my share of sand kicked in my face
But I've come through (And I mean to go on and on, and on, and on)

[Chorus]
We are the champions, my friends
And we'll keep on fighting till the end
We are the champions
We are the champions
No time for losers
'Cause we are the champions
Of the world

[Verse 2]
I've taken my bows
And my curtain calls
You brought me fame and fortune and everything that goes with it

I thank you all
But it's been no bed of roses
No pleasure cruise

[Pre-Chorus]
I consider it a challenge before the whole human race
And I ain't gonna lose (And I mean to go on and on, and on, and on)

[Chorus]
We are the champions, my friends
And we'll keep on fighting till the end
We are the champions
We are the champions
No time for losers
'Cause we are the champions
Of the world

[Outro]
We are the champions, my friends
And we'll keep on fighting till the end, oh
We are the champions
We are the champions
No time for losers
'Cause we are the champions

Source of lyrics: <https://genius.com/Queen-we-are-the-champions-lyrics>

Official music video: Taken from News Of The World, 1977 and Greatest Video Hits 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04854XqcfCYW>

The Elders Call for Dialogue, Accountability to End Worsening Conflict in DR Congo

Email received February 4, 2025

Note from Iona: Kabi Wycliffe was beaten to death by rebels near the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) last year. That prompted me to write my book on violence titled *Why Was Wycliffe Beaten to Death? So Many Reasons for Violence, How Many Reasons for Love?* You can see it at www.ionaconner.com.

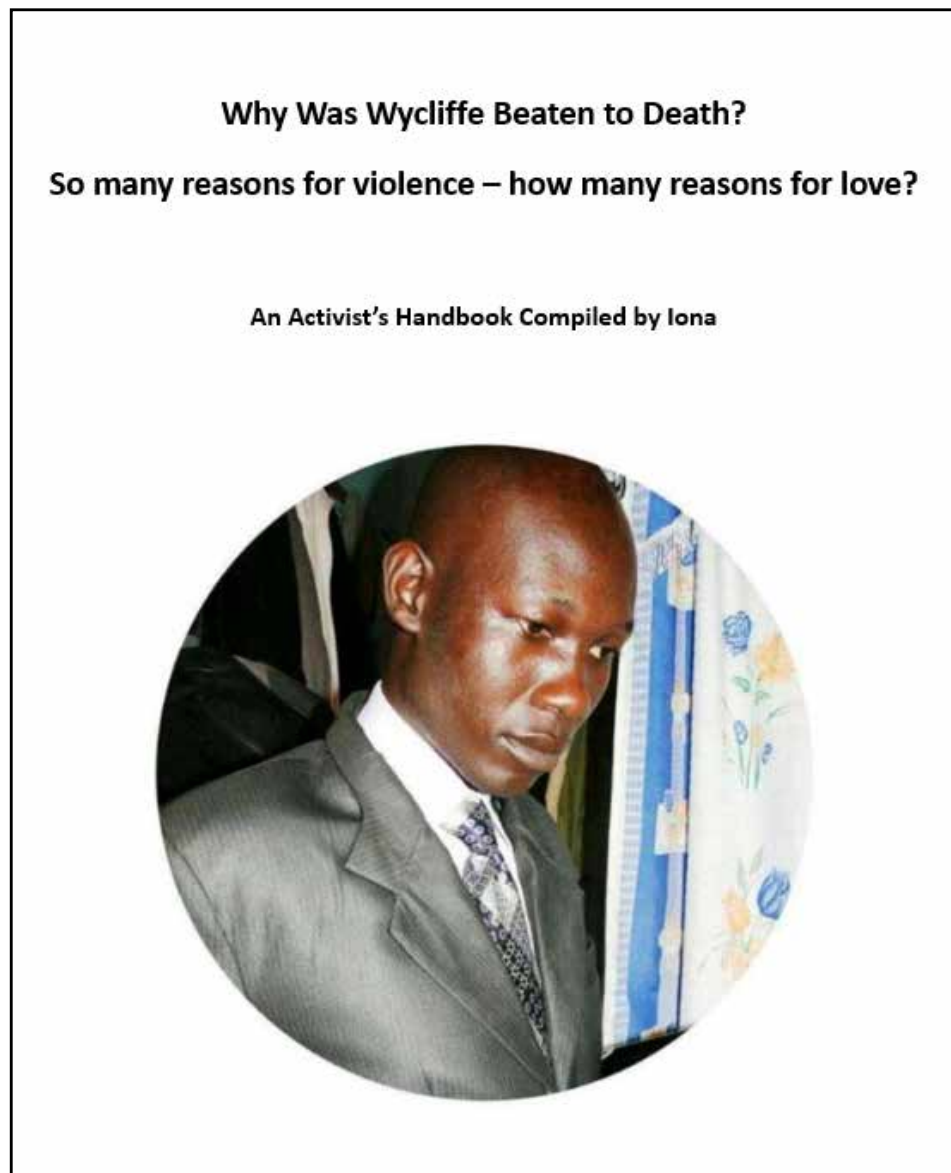
Statement: The Elders today voice our alarm at the rapid advances made by M23 rebels and Rwandan forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which risk escalating into an even bloodier regional conflict.

We call for effective dialogue to extend the M23 rebels' unilateral cease-fire into a full and lasting cessation of hostilities. This must include the immediate withdrawal of all Rwandan troops, accountability for atrocity crimes against civilians, and the DRC government taking more action to protect its civilians and ensure the rule of law.

The international community has neglected this conflict for too long. It has not been vocal enough in calling for the immediate withdrawal of Rwandan troops, and an end to its long-standing support for the M23 rebel movement.

The Elders echo the call by UN Secretary-General António Guterres for the immediate withdrawal of Rwandan forces. All parties must respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The DRC government bears ultimate responsibility for the security of its citizens and must make this its top priority.

We urge President Tshisekedi of the DRC and President Kagame of Rwanda to participate constructively



in dialogue, and prioritize saving lives. Regional initiatives such as the Nairobi and Luanda negotiation processes, sponsored by the East African Community and the African Union respectively, can only succeed with a commitment by all parties to a pathway to peace. Full engagement from African leaders is essential for any lasting progress.

This is more likely if the international community applies serious pressure – as the USA did to Rwanda in 2012,

when M23 forces first occupied Goma, leading to a temporary de-escalation. At that time, the international community also engaged in dialogue under the Addis Ababa Framework. Similar comprehensive and coordinated efforts are needed again now.

The Elders are appalled at the human cost of this conflict. We call for the protection of humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel. Over 25 million people are in need of humani-

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tarian assistance and over 9 million are displaced, while women and girls continue to experience horrific levels of conflict-related sexual violence.

There must be an end to impunity for such crimes, both for the perpetrators and their political and military sponsors. We welcome the decision by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in late 2024 to renew investigations in the DRC and call on all parties to support the Court's vital work.

The conflict has been fueled by the desire to control critical minerals, now increasingly needed across the world for mobile telecommunications and the green energy transition.

Businesses and consumers also have a responsibility to ensure global prosperity does not come on the back of conflict, exploitation, and human rights abuses.

Civilians in eastern DRC have paid a terrible price over the last three decades for this devastating conflict. It must be brought to an end.

Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Colombia, Nobel Peace Laureate and Chair of The Elders

Ban Ki-moon, former UN Secretary-General and Deputy Chair of The Elders

Graça Machel, Founder of the Graça Machel Trust, Co-founder and Deputy Chair of The Elders

Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director-General of the WHO

Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former head of the UN Development Programme

Elbegdorj Tsakhia, former President and Prime Minister of Mongolia

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and co-chair of the Taskforce on Justice

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia and Nobel Peace Laureate

Denis Mukwege, physician and human rights advocate, Nobel Peace wLaureate

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Ernesto Zedillo, former President of Mexico

Sign up to receive The Elders' press releases at <https://theelders.org/contactus/media-request>

About The Elders

The Elders are independent global leaders working for peace, justice, human rights, and a sustainable planet. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

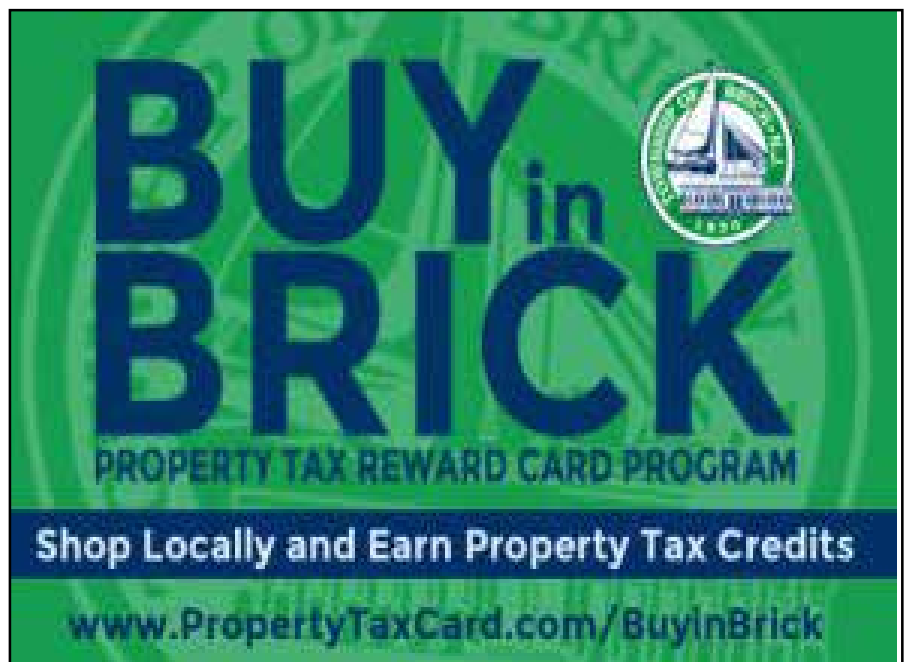
Desmond Tutu (1931-2021) and Kofi Annan (1938-2018) were founding members of The Elders and served as Chairs from 2007 to 2013 and 2013 to 2018 respectively. Ela Bhatt (1933 - 2022) and Martti Ahtisaari (1937 - 2023) were members of The wElders from 2007 to 2016 and 2009 to 2018 respectively. **Jimmy Carter** (1924-2024) was also a founding member between 2007 and 2016.

Source: theelders.cmail20.com/t/y-

HOW BUY IN BRICK WORKS

The Buy In Brick Program is easy – use your card and you earn credits towards your property taxes. The first step is GETTING A CARD. Buy In Brick cards are available at Town Hall during work hours. They are free to receive. If you would like to get one through the mail, please email us your address at dsirota@twp.brick.nj.us. Once you have a card, register it online at <https://www.propertytaxcard.com/BuyInBrick/register>. When you have successfully registered your card, follow these steps:

1. Visit a participating business.
2. Present card to cashier/waitress.
3. Earn credits towards your property taxes.
4. See the total credits you've earned on your 3rd Quarter tax bill!



OUR FRIENDS IN ACTION

Ramblings from Your Local Farmers: Corporate vs. Organic Farming

By Hannah Conner, Ramblin' Sol Farm

Piled under a thousand blankets and sweaters as we make some final tweaks to our crop plan, we feel the hum of anticipation to get started in the greenhouse. While we wait, we thought we'd share some of the keys to our planning for the year.

So what do we actually do here and why? How does it all work? What makes food from this farm different?

Corporate agriculture has a problem: it tries to fit the natural world and the humans that live in it into a rigid, factory-style bottom line. The natural world, however, has been around a bit longer, been through more changes and catastrophes, and frankly knows a thing or two about how to keep things going.

Our corporate food system pumps out sub-par food, while thinking little of future food growing, growers, or eaters for that matter. In response, many of us small farms are looking at supporting the natural systems for long-term security.

For example, rather than putting tons of money into chemicals that damage soil-building microorganisms and predator organisms (while also risking human lives) to kill a pest or weed, we focus on soil health and a flourishing, balanced soil and farm biodiversity that would prevent the pest from becoming a serious problem. Does this work 100% of the time? No, but we'd rather suffer a temporary loss than guarantee that our land will be unproductive in the long term.

Everything we do is to maintain balance on the farm so that we achieve a resilient supply of food. If there is a particular weather pattern, for ex-

ample, a farm only producing a single crop using only chemical methods may have a complete loss for the year. Because we grow over 50 crops and build soil to help plants buffer against weather extremes, it is unlikely that all of our crops would be affected.

How do we do this? It takes lots of planning and observation. We continue to learn the nuances of our land and match plants appropriate to the microclimates on the farm. We consciously leave areas unmanaged to create habitats. We focus on caring for the soil through soil building plants, compost, and careful tillage practices.

It is slow food and even slower money. Many of the things we do now won't make a difference for 10 years... but we think it is worth looking a few steps ahead. In the process we build a simple life, but one worth living. Thanks for listening folks, stay warm!

Want to learn more?
Join us in the greenhouse next month!
Peace and Carrots
from your farmers,
Hannah, Joey & Crew

Events

Farm events are open to everyone!

Want to volunteer?
Send us an email to join in on Spring seeding and farm clean up in February!
Sunday, March 23rd
11-12pm Garden Class
Pop-up!

Our first gardening class of 2025 covering seasonal planning and planting + make a seed bomb for your garden! Very limited space.

Coming Soon!

Register for the next event at <https://ramblinsolfarm.com/events/>

Where else you can find us?

The Brick Farmer's Market
Windward Beach

May through September

Ready to join our local movement?

Sign up for your CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) or get on the mailing list at <https://ramblinsolfarm.com/csa-registration/>

Ramblin' Sol Farm

79 Arneytown-Hornerstown Rd.,
Cream Ridge, United States of America



OUR FRIENDS IN ACTION



Transforming New Jersey's Food Deserts: A Vision for Urban Agriculture

*By Stephen N. Zielinski, Sr.
February 3, 2025
Photos Courtesy of Author*

New Jersey is home to 50 food desert communities, impacting approximately 1.5 million residents across all 21 counties. For these residents, daily life is marked by limited access to nutritious food, transportation challenges, economic constraints, and the resulting health risks.

But we cannot allow this to define us. I see an opportunity – a chance to transform our communities, to empower individuals, and reignite hope and purpose for every resident of our great state. By addressing these challenges through urban agriculture, we can also reduce our taxes in the State of New

Jersey. Healthier communities mean less strain on public health resources, leading to cost savings at the state level. Additionally, revitalized neighborhoods will strengthen local economies and broaden the tax base, allowing for reduced property tax rates while maintaining essential public services.

Urban agriculture isn't just about growing food; it's about growing opportunities, reducing costs, and strengthening our communities. By transforming food deserts into vibrant urban agriculture hubs, we can directly impact the cost of healthcare and property taxes for New Jersey residents. Improved access to fresh, nutritious food means healthier communities with lower rates of diet-related illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, and

obesity. This will significantly reduce the strain on our healthcare system, leading to lower healthcare costs for families and the state as a whole.

Moreover, thriving urban agriculture initiatives will stimulate local economies, increase property values, and reduce municipal expenses related to food insecurity and public health crises. As property values rise due to revitalized neighborhoods, the tax base will broaden, enabling municipalities to lower property tax rates without compromising public services.

This holistic approach to community development not only tackles food insecurity but also paves the way for economic stability and financial relief for New Jersey families.

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OUR FRIENDS IN ACTION

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Transforming New Jersey's Food Deserts: A Vision for Urban Agriculture

The Challenges of Food Deserts in New Jersey

Limited Access to Healthy Food: Many communities lack supermarkets, leaving residents reliant on fast food or corner stores with scarce fresh produce. This lack of options often leads to poor dietary choices.

Transportation Barriers: Poor public transit and long distances to grocery stores create significant obstacles for residents trying to access healthier food options.

Economic Constraints: High poverty rates and low incomes limit the ability of residents to afford nutritious food, even when available.

Nutritional Impact: These systemic issues result in diets heavy in processed foods, contributing to higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

The Cost to New Jersey

Food deserts impose a heavy burden on New Jersey's residents and economy. Poor nutrition drives up health-care costs due to the prevalence of diet-related conditions. Residents also face increased living expenses, such as higher transportation costs to access distant grocery stores. Additionally, food swamps – areas oversaturated with unhealthy fast food and convenience store options – complicate matters further, reinforcing poor dietary habits.

A Bold Solution: Urban Agriculture Hubs

As candidate for Governor of New Jersey, I want to do more than address food insecurity – I want to lead us toward a future where every New

Jerseyan feels empowered, valued, and proud. I am looking to spearhead a major program across the state to transform these food deserts into thriving Urban Agriculture hubs. This isn't just about providing fresh produce. It's about giving people the tools to take control of their lives. It's about fostering independence, nurturing small businesses, and rebuilding our communities from the ground up.

Why This Matters to Me – And to Us All

I grew up believing in the power of community. My vision is deeply personal because I've seen what happens when people are given a chance to take control of their lives. It's not just about food; it's about dignity. It's

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OUR FRIENDS IN ACTION

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about showing people that they have the power to change their circumstances, to lift each other up, and to contribute to something greater than themselves.

When I look at these food deserts, I don't just see challenges – I see untapped potential. I see children learning to grow their own food, families starting small businesses, and neighbors working together to build something lasting. I see hope.

Empowering Communities for Lasting Change

This initiative is rooted in the belief that food security is only the beginning. By transforming food deserts into thriving urban agriculture hubs, we can:

- **Inspire Self-Sufficiency:** Equip residents with the skills and resources to grow their own food, start small businesses, and become self-reliant.
- **Foster Entrepreneurship:** Create opportunities for individuals to launch small businesses centered around urban farming, food production, and sustainable practices – the lifeblood of New Jersey's economy.
- **Build Community Connections:** Encourage residents to collaborate, support one another, and invest in their local neighborhoods, strengthening the social fabric of our state.
- **Reignite Purpose:** Empower people to feel proud of what they do, knowing they're contributing to the well-being and progress of their community and the entire state.

Key Features of Urban Agriculture Programs

Urban Farms: Establish farms and greenhouses within food desert communities to produce fresh, affordable food locally.

Sustainable Agriculture Practices: Utilize cutting-edge techniques such as

aquaponics, vermiculture, and large-scale composting to promote sustainability and maximize productivity.

Community Engagement: Involve local residents in planning and development to ensure programs address their needs and gain their full support.

Education and Training: Offer workshops and hands-on training in urban farming, aquaponics, and nutrition to empower residents with new skills.

Cooperative Ownership: Develop community-owned grocery stores or food co-ops to ensure long-term investment and access to nutritious foods.

Partnerships: Collaborate with local nonprofits, schools, and organizations to expand resources and reach.

Job Creation: Prioritize local hiring, providing living wages, and contributing to economic development.

Food Distribution: Create food hubs and distribution networks to supply fresh produce to schools, restaurants, and community markets.

Nutrition Education: Promote healthy eating habits through cooking classes and food preparation workshops.

A Vision for New Jersey's Future

Imagine a New Jersey where thriving urban farms are the centerpiece of our communities, where residents actively participate in sustainable agriculture, and where food insecurity is replaced by empowerment and opportunity. Picture a state where small businesses are flourishing, individuals are taking pride in their contributions, and communities are united by shared purpose.

A Future Rooted in Health, Prosperity, and Community

Urban agriculture isn't just about growing food; it's about growing opportunities, reducing costs, and

strengthening our communities. By transforming food deserts into vibrant urban agriculture hubs, we can directly impact the cost of healthcare and property taxes for New Jersey residents. Improved access to fresh, nutritious food means healthier communities with lower rates of diet-related illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. This will significantly reduce the strain on our healthcare system, leading to lower healthcare costs for families and the state as a whole.

Moreover, thriving urban agriculture initiatives will stimulate local economies, increase property values, and reduce municipal expenses related to food insecurity and public health crises. As property values rise due to revitalized neighborhoods, the tax base will broaden, enabling municipalities to lower property tax rates without compromising public services. This holistic approach to community development not only tackles food insecurity but also paves the way for economic stability and financial relief for New Jersey families.

Together, we can cultivate a future where health, economic growth, and community pride are within reach for every New Jerseyan. This is our chance to plant the seeds of lasting change, reduce the financial burdens on our residents, and harvest a stronger, healthier, and more prosperous New Jersey.

We need to get back to small businesses, the true backbone of New Jersey's economy. Urban agriculture hubs can be a catalyst for this transformation, creating new economic opportunities while addressing food insecurity, all by investing in these programs.

Source: <https://zielinski-4green2025.com/post/transforming-new-jerseys-food-deserts-a-vision-for-urban-agriculture>

OUR FRIENDS IN ACTION



Dear Iona,

Greetings from SCOPE Kenya. I hope you are well, at this time when a lot of changes are taking place globally. On this end, we are well and still promoting permaculture in schools to alleviate food and nutrition security and conserve nature. Please open the link, to get updates on our work, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hzRML27jGccMIZZ8V_oJhpN0r-DiKrg7G/view?usp=sharing

Many thanks for your contribution in serving humanity and nature.

Warm wishes and with kind Regards,

John Macharia, National Coordinator, SCOPE KENYA

Promoting Practical Agroecology Education in Schools to reconnect children with Nature, healthy lifestyle & environmental stewardship.



SCOPE Kenya is a capacity building and networking organization that was established in 2014. SCOPE Kenya works with school communities to empower young people and transform degraded school lands into food forests through agro-ecology/permaculture practices.

It was started to strengthen and connect the ongoing initiatives of working with schools on sustainable land use and production of nutritious food.

All the members of SCOPE Kenya share a common vision of making schools across Kenya good learning examples of teacher-parent-student collaboration towards sustainable land use which would lead to significant improvements in the environment, food security, and livelihoods in the surrounding communities.

Entire school grounds are designed by the stakeholders as well as the implementation of permaculture/sustainable ecological agricultural activities. This addresses social, economic

and environmental community needs. This has proved to be a very powerful and effective development tool that enhances inclusiveness, participation, ownership, and sustainability of the initiated projects in schools and at the community level.

SCOPE also takes part in capacity building activities with the school communities which enable them to transform their degraded school land into productive landscapes that have supported a diverse variety of food crops.

Capacity building occurs during workshops where the stakeholders or representatives of the school communities are thoroughly trained on the Integrated Land Use Design approach that is used to enhance participation of communities in sustainable land use, in turn supporting community development.

Note from Iona: The video mentioned above is something the whole

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OUR FRIENDS IN ACTION

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world needs to see, learn from, and implement. SCOPE holds the answer to most of the world's problems! Photos: screenshots during the video.

Contact

Address: P.O BOX 746 0232 RUIRU - St Francis Catholic Church hall, 2nd floor

Telephone: +254 724 628 386

Website: www.scopekenya.net

Face Book: <https://www.facebook.com/scopekenya2/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/scopekenya1>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/scopekenya/?hl=en>

Messages from Our Friends

Iona, thanks, impressive production!!! So sad about the African guy with wounded leg. So many of us like you and me just have no surplus funds to spare to give donations to help. The one on Coral thriving I brought to attention of Dr. Marty Rowland just now. Thanks for including my “O Say Can You See”!

Regarding question about Antarctica, there are maps showing how it is divided into claims by five or six countries. Regarding how to environmentally protect it, this calls to the need for a Global Resource Agency. Regarding deep ocean mineral mining, Law of the Seas said that 50% of the value of those resources should fund the Global Resource Agency and UN peace keeping efforts.

Good that you covered land rights wins. Remember that the current lack of affordable housing in the U.S. and elsewhere is because of the land problem, essentially a land rights issue calling for the end of land hoarding and speculation via shift of taxes from labor and production to the commons rent. So important to connect the indigenous land rights struggles to the housing affordability problem.

About 500 feet from my house now is a sign of 35 acres of land for sale by non other than Warren Buffet’s company Berkshire Hathaway. What is he doing in my rural county population of about 140,000 people only? He is “mining” extracting, stealing the commons rent and adding it to his huge fortune while our homeless population grows. This is the land problem under our nose!

Thanks again, great edition, soooo much to it and beautifully presented!

Alanna Hartzok, Pennsylvania USA

Above all thanks for the great work being done in composing together the interesting and informative stories for

the world to know what they can do to conserve for the future generations.

Amos Mugarura, Uganda

Very good name [*Grassroots Rising*]...allow me to share it with friends?

Duke Ajuma, Nigeria

Hi Iona,

I have an essay idea. It’s complicated but I think someone needs to write it.

The title might read: “What’s Your Information to Action Ratio?”

The current information climate is toxic. Most people (I’m guessing) are spending a huge amount of time consuming information online without taking action. Or maybe, they are engaged in low effectiveness action like signing petitions sent to them by email.

So the idea is that we should figure out actions that are more impactful and rate them. The old days involved more face-to-face actions.

I’m guessing that getting very involved with your community or a single issue is more effective. I’m guessing physical actions like meeting people at events or cleaning beaches or planting pollinator gardens are more effective than slactivism (don’t know). Maybe I should interview an expert?

Bottom line – people are getting depressed and demotivated by toxic news from mainstream media and even progressive sources while failing to maximize their personal power.

What do you think?

This touches on a lot of my frustration.

1. There is too much information now for anyone to read.

2. I want to get out and make changes – pick up trash, plant a tree, visit a Congressional office. I don’t need endless information to do that.

The purpose of information is to do something with it.

3. People are sitting around reading stuff on phones all day while the world is burning. This is a waste of time.

4. Media in capitalist countries is negative, disempowering, sensationalist, and blind to important issues. People get depressed by it.

5. There is now so much fake information online it’s almost impossible to counteract it.

This was my reaction to the article below.

<https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-nonfiction/what-is-the-purpose-of-journalism-in-this-age-of-information-overload>

Bill Boteler, Maryland USA

Thanks for all you are doing for my African brother. It’s so amazing. And the new name is a reflection of Passion.

I am writing from Faith Orphanage Home Liberia. All the kids are here doing well.

I am currently building new boys housing.

Lawrence Bomah, Liberia

Hello Mom,

How are you doing and regards to everyone that made Denis came out of hospital. Mom, it was my surprise to find Denis out of the hospital and then I realized myself bedridden on drips. What I last know was the time when I paid \$150 and there after I was called by a team which accused me of not fulfilling my pledge as agreed.

I don’t know anything/an idea on how Denis was discharged other than the stories my wife has told me today morning with how I went into a coma that I don’t even know. But all my wife Akamushaba told me was “all the power that made Denis out of hospital

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Messages from Our Friends

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was the power of two different individuals from your line of your beloved humanitarian friends that showed us love for all lives matters.” I will also be out of hospital lately today and I can’t wait to meet Denis because he is also worried of me.

Yes, am going to share with you most of Denis’ pictures since his day of discharge and the state I will find him.

His first review is this coming weekend as told by Akamushaba and he is currently relying on antibiotics that was offered in the hospital after a pay of \$700. But to be sincere God has been faithful to him.

He is indeed loved by the whole world like he last told me some days when he was receiving crutches and wheelchair.

My prayers too are for me to be able to get a new job because my salaries have been a heaven to many.

Amos Mugarura, Uganda

Hello Iona and everyone friendly love.

It’s a great honour to see you all again because I took a long period of time without being in contact with you. It was made possible through a lot of challenges I have faced during the miserable situation. I’m sorry for that happened. I hope you are doing well.

Therefore, I take this opportunity to thank our Almighty God for strengthening all of us to reach this happy and prosperous new year 2025. I wish you all the best way to succeed and make sure we create a better and stronger society for the brighter future together.

Additionally, I am just praying to God for those who are still suffering from sickness, etc. May God bless them and do a quick recovery.

Thank you Madam Iona Conner for the information. We really appreciate

your hard-working efforts, and your continued support.

I’m looking forward to hearing from you, the good work and news. Together we can make a lasting difference.

Thank you for your kindness, generosity, and continued support! May God bless you abundantly in your great work you are doing as well.

Best regards.

Feruzi Juma Kikuni, Kenya

Executive Director and Founder of Refugee Alliance for Development and Innovation (RADI) a Refugee Led Organization (RLO/CBO)

You are doing well, Iona. You are truly a mother to so many.

Blessings,

Udeme Lyaknse Udoaka, Nigeria

Note from Iona: *Apparently, I did not describe something clearly. Have a good laugh with this one:*

You said something very weird and strange to me and I wondered if it was a typo..... you poured salt on your windshield??? I have never heard of such a thing. And you can fill it up at 7-11??? Why would you do that? Is that what people do back east? How very very odd. Is this to melt the ice? How about an ice scraper? We all have ice scrapers here.

I’m going to mention this to my husband to see if he’s ever heard of such a thing. In California, they used to put salt on the roads where it is snowy to melt the snow and it is so bad on the car. The underneath parts.

Here they put a liquid that is salt base chlorine, and it is what melts the snow on the main big highways in the freeway, but it also kills everything in the environment all the trees along the edges and all in Colorado they have outlawed most of it in many places in California now. But I don’t know if

they’ve found anything else that works better.

Anyway just wondering about this!

Linda L., Idaho USA

Hi Iona.

Good on you for persevering with your newspapers: clearly something you enjoy doing!

Given the horrendous setbacks our environmental efforts are going to face as the Elite’s technocratic program advances, things are only going to get worse, too.

Anyway, some tough years ahead. (Not that this will be a change, hey?)

Thanks for the mention, by the way!

Love,

Robert Burrowes & Anita McKone, Australia

To share with your readership.

“Unbreaking America: Solving the Corruption Crisis”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfQij4aQq1k>

K.S., Maryland USA

Wonderful news! Bless you Iona for all you do! My funds are limited and I am only able to donate to local environmental organizations or for research for prevention of early onset Alzheimer’s disease.

If you are interested, I can send a u-tube of my explanation of my book for adults to prepare children for a visit to a grandparent with Alzheimer’s or other dementia.

Sending lots of LOVE!

“G” Dylan Weiss

Hi Iona,

I have to admit the Trump/Musk barrage of power grabs is overwhelming and getting me down – hasn’t all the stress since the pandemic already been

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Messages from Our Friends

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enough?

I think the one thing he didn't talk enough about is self-care and mutual support for dealing with tyranny in your own country.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jan/24/trump-fascism-what-to-do>

Bill Boteler, Maryland USA

At your age it amazes me how meticulous you still are. You pay attention to everything you do. That's impressive.

I don't know if it will interest you to know what I'm doing now even though I'm not able to do too much of climate change volunteering, I still engage with other areas of the Sustainable Development Goal.

In December I joined a group of people Amici du Amici Foundation on a WASH Project (SDG6) to do City cleanup and to donate sanitation materials to support them in Ibom Plaza in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

(photos at right)

Beyond that, I do affiliate marketing, in other words, I promote Java Burn, a popular dietary supplement that helps with weight loss metabolism and energy. It's a powdered formula that you can mix with coffee. It's very effective with a money-back guarantee. As with every other supplement, individual results vary but it's very effective overall.

I would appreciate it if it's worth mentioning in your email broadcast business advertising section for people looking to lose weight. If anyone makes a purchase through my link, I make a commission. It is very difficult to make money legitimately these days, especially living in Nigeria where the economy of the country is getting worse by the day. I had to look for a means of survival. This is the

link to the sales page: <https://tinyurl.com/JavaBurn-offering>.

Oh, ok...it's expensive, right! I'm just seeing this before I responded to the other email. Actually it is not sold in Africa regions. It's the work of a U.S.-based research doctor. I think the only African country that it is shipped to is South Africa. It's ok if your audience won't like to try it out. Yes, it's for the U.S. market, developed by a

U.S. doctor but it is sold in Europe, where people can afford it and where there are a lot of people who are overweight.

Thanks for staying consistent with what you are doing even though we're not communicating as much since your presence on Facebook is limited.

Thank you and stay blessed.

Udeme Lykanse Udoaka, Nigeria

