

# The Broader U.S. Movement for Peace, Economic Justice, Civil Rights and the Environment

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*There will be important opportunities in the next few years to advance the movement for economic, racial and environmental justice as well as peace. This article will focus on three opportunities: the 2020 elections, the decline of US empire and an economic slowdown.*

The movement is in a stronger position than it has been in for years. The current movement took off during Occupy in 2011. Occupy's headline was "We Are The 99%," which emphasized inequality and money corrupting government. Occupy included every major front of struggle, e.g., economic insecurity, racial injustice, climate change, massive debt, never-ending wars, the crisis of capitalism and more.

Since then, the movement has grown and matured. We have majority support on many issues, have more experience and are organized to take advantage of upcoming opportunities.



The 2020 Elections: Focus On The Issues

Although the movement is independent of elections, the 2020 elections will present

numerous opportunities to build a national consensus on issues. Our actions over the next two years can shape the election narrative.

The movement has already impacted the electoral process. Senator Sanders ran a more successful campaign than expected by focusing on movement issues, e.g., inequality, improved Medicare for all and free college. The movement created an environment where new Members of Congress such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY), Ayanna Pressley (Mass.), Rashida Tlaib (Mich.) and Ilhan Omar (Minn.), won campaigning on our issues.

The media and political parties will make the elections a beauty contest about personalities to avoid the issues. We must keep issues front and center, including confronting candidates, even seeming allies, to demand they represent us. Doing so will build national consensus so our issues cannot be ignored no matter who is elected.

The movement should not be limited by ‘political realities.’ We need to demand what is necessary, [a People’s Agenda](#), to solve the crises the nation and planet face.

Since the 2016 election, our issues have grown in popularity. Democratic candidates must support improved Medicare for all if they want to be the nominee as 85% of Democrats support it. Support is strong among independent voters, the largest bloc, and now a majority of Republican voters support Medicare for all.

Take action: [Demand transparency for the new National Improved Medicare for All bill](#).

Similarly, the Green New Deal, which has been raised by Greens since 2006, has now entered the Democratic Party dialogue, although Democratic leadership is fighting it. The [Green Party version](#) of the proposal requires a rapid transition to a clean energy economy, living wage jobs, public ownership, cutting the budget of the biggest polluter, the military, and building the social safety net. The Democratic Party version will not push for these system-wide changes.

Dramatic changes are needed in multiple federal agencies to confront climate change. Thanks to [Beyond Extreme Energy](#), the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is being forced to consider the climate impact of new energy infrastructure. The FERC must prioritize wind, solar, tidal and other clean energy sources while restricting oil and gas, coal and nuclear. FERC either needs to be part of the energy transformation or be disbanded.

Likewise, the corporate take-over of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Interior Department needs to be reversed. [Recent reports](#) indicate urgent and aggressive action is needed. Obama’s “all of the above” approach and business as usual won’t suffice. People who have taken action on climate change should lead those agencies.

The economy is a deciding factor in elections. Do people feel economically secure, are their salaries increasing, do their children have opportunities? A popular position for candidates to take is ending corporate trade. Candidates need to pledge to remake trade so it puts people and planet before big business.

Take action: [An opportunity to remake trade is stopping Trump’s NAFTA II](#).

Workers have been under attack for decades by both Wall Street-funded parties. The movement should use the coming elections to push for a national jobs program, a living wage higher than \$15 an hour, and a basic income for all. The right to organize unions must

be restored and laws are needed to encourage worker-ownership through cooperatives so workers share in the profits they create and participate in decision-making for their workplace.



### Demand A Responsible End to US Empire

Current US foreign policy is expensive, destructive and creates chaos around the world. Movement building to end US militarism and never-ending war are needed.

The national security strategy of the US is great power conflict, i.e. conflict with Russia and China. Obama's Asian Pivot has evolved into [aggressive actions](#) under Trump, along with counterproductive tariffs that threaten the global economy. Russia has become the scapegoat for many problems in the US, such as Clinton's failed election. The US is lining Russia's border with [NATO military bases](#) while threatening to [escalate the conflict in Ukraine](#) and starting a nuclear arms race.

A radical shift is needed with Russia and China. Detente with Russia is needed in order to end the arms race, stop military belligerence and remove bases from their border. The US should develop a win-win relationship with China. If the two largest economies can work together, they can ameliorate many global problems, e.g. poverty, the climate crisis and economic insecurity.

The [withdrawal of troops from Syria](#) and Afghanistan needs to be pushed. The movement should demand a full withdrawal including ground troops, Air Force, contractors, and the CIA and a stop to the funding of proxy forces. This should be followed by a full withdrawal from Iraq. Rather than war with Iran, the US should end the Middle East quagmire, which has trapped the US this entire century.

In Latin America, the US has been very destructive. Central American governments in the US orbit are wracked with poverty, misery, and violence [causing many to flee](#) north toward the



US. Brazil, which had been moving in a positive direction, now has an [extreme right-wing government](#) supported by the US.

The economic war, attempted coups and assassinations and military threats on Venezuela [are destructive](#). Russia has sent troops to Venezuela and is considering [sending more](#) to counter US threats. The US should be seeking a partnership with Venezuela, not domination.

Economic sanctions are [now being used against Nicaragua](#), one of the poorest countries in our hemisphere, after a violent [US-supported uprising](#) organized with oligarchs, US-funded NGOs and the Catholic Church. The attack on Nicaragua [reignites the Contra War](#) of the Reagan era, targeting a government that resists US domination.

The US is expanding militarism in Latin America by [bringing NATO to Colombia](#). Under their right-wing government, there is extreme violence against labor, environmentalists and Afro-Colombians as well as constant threats to its neighbor, Venezuela. The US relationship with Colombia is a source of instability in the region and needs to transform into a relationship of stability and de-militarization.

Africa is becoming a 21st Century battleground. The US is militarizing Africa through [AFRICOM](#) while China is pursuing a win-win economic strategy in Africa. US-China competition in Africa could become [another quagmire](#), i.e. draining US resources while causing destruction and chaos for Africa.

Take action: [Support Black Alliance for Peace's call for US out of Africa](#).

Closing US and NATO foreign bases is a key step to ending empire. On April 4, when NATO holds its 70th-anniversary meeting in Washington, DC, on the same day as the anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death and his Beyond Vietnam speech, [people are organizing in response](#). There will be a major march on the Saturday before and events throughout the week calling for an end to NATO, as well as highlighting the triple evils King emphasized: militarism, racism and consumerism caused by capitalism. We can create a movement of movements event and change the political dialogue in the US.

These issues show a failing empire. They are opportunities to change the course of US foreign policy. Working with people across the country, Popular Resistance will help build the peace movement through regional Peace Congresses in 2019 and a national Peace Congress in 2020. Contact us at [info@popularresistance.org](mailto:info@popularresistance.org) if you want to participate in these.



## Opportunities For Economic Transformation

The [weak stock market in December](#) portends an economic slowdown or collapse worse than 2008. There are other troubling signs, e.g. high government, business, and personal, [including student](#), debt, a fragile international economy, tariff wars and sanctions that create international economic confusion, among others. Further, the US is overdue for a “correction,” recession or worse. Even with the Republican tax cut that caused large buy-backs of stock to grow the stock market, the market is now faltering.

The fundamentals of the US economy have been flawed for years. The wealth divide has been expanding, leaving most people in the US economically insecure, since ‘trickle down economics’ began under Reagan. Corporate trade agreements since Clinton have hollowed out the Midwest economy leaving fly-over states insecure. Urban areas have been neglected leaving primarily communities of color impoverished. Abusive police and mass incarceration have been used to prevent justified uprisings. Military spending takes more than 60% of federal discretionary spending while the social safety net has been shredded.

Unlike 2008, the movement is positioned to push for changes in the economy. An economic downturn will weaken those in power as they will be justifiably blamed. The president, who campaigned on the economic insecurity of workers and the middle class, has governed on behalf of the wealthy. The economic downturn will impact him more than Mueller or the 16 other Trump investigations.

An economic slump will be an opportunity for the movement to push for a new economy. Our [It's Our Economy](#) project puts forward a vision for a new economy based on economic democracy that empowers people through worker-owned businesses, a national jobs program, guaranteed basic income and more.

Economic democracy includes public programs that serve the public interest, e.g., public banks that work with community banks and credit unions to meet the necessities of the

people, not serve investors. It includes public utilities and democratized energy production so every home and business is an energy producer spreading the profits, rather than funneling them to concentrated corporations.

Economic democracy also includes confronting [issues of communication](#), equal access to a free and open internet, i.e., net neutrality and high-speed Internet in rural and poor communities. The expanding censorship of social media must be confronted through extending freedom of speech and press along with privacy protections.

If the movement continues to build power and put forward transformational programs such as those outlined above, the next two years will be the beginning of a decade of positive change. We need to prepare now. Over this holiday, we encourage you to listen to [this interview with Kali Akuno](#) for more wisdom on how to make transformation a reality.

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