

Welcome! In the chat, share:

1. Your name
2. Where you are calling in from
3. Organization name, if you're here with one

# Community Ownership of Solar with Cleveland Owns

## A Case Study on the Founding of the Cleveland Solar Cooperative

Jonathan Welle, Cleveland Owns

Rebecca Tamiru, Climate Advocacy Lab

Brought to you by

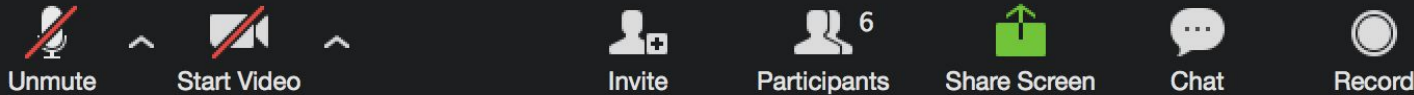
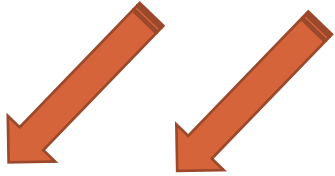


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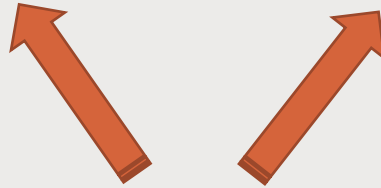


# Set Up

Click unmute and Start Video to say hello



Leave Meeting



Click Participants  
and Chat

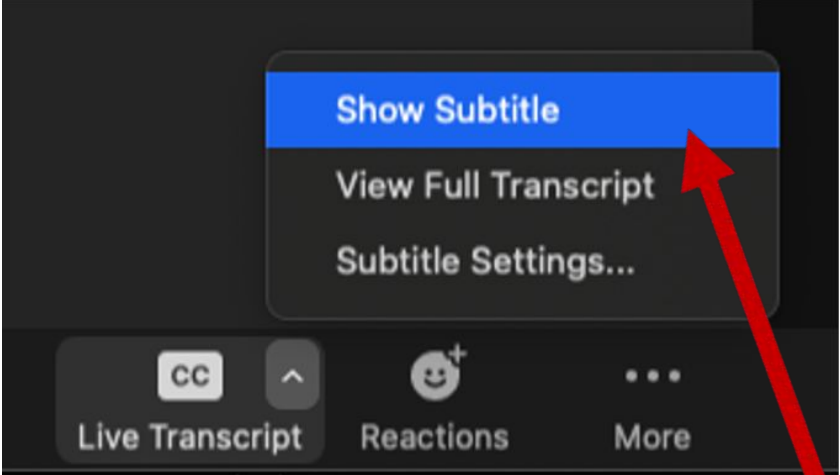
**Rename yourself:** Find your name at the top of the Participants list, click “More” then “Rename”. Add your pronouns & organization.

The image shows a Google Meet interface. On the left, a presentation slide is displayed with the following text: "Cleveland Owns and CSC are fighting for Energy Democracy - community-controlled energy that meets the needs of all". Below the text is an illustration of a community garden with solar panels on the roofs of nearby buildings. To the right of the illustration is the logo for "COOPERATIVE ENERGY FUTURES COMMUNITY POWERED ENERGY" and the text "PEOPLE POWER SOLAR COOPERATIVE".

On the right side of the interface, the "Participants (2)" list is visible. It shows two participants: "Your Name (me)" and "Nicole (she/her) @ the... (Co-host, me)". A red arrow points to the "More" button next to "Your Name (me)", which has a dropdown menu open showing the "Rename" option.

At the bottom of the screen, the Google Meet control bar is visible, including buttons for Unmute, Start Video, Participants, Chat, Share Screen, Record, Reactions, and Leave.

# Closed Captioning



Click arrow next to **Live Transcript** and click **Show Subtitle**

# Be Present



- Choose how you want to be in this space to support your learning
- Remove distractions
- Get drink/food
- Get note-taking stuff

# What we're going to cover today



## Agenda

- Welcome & Overview
- Case Study on the Founding of the Cleveland Solar Cooperative with Jonathan Welle
- Discussion and Q&A!
- Closing

# About the Climate Advocacy Lab

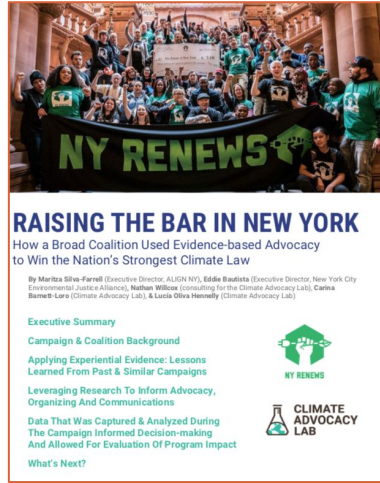
We equip the US climate movement with the ***evidence-based* insights, skills, and connections** needed to build durable power and win equitable solutions.



# The Climate Advocacy Lab is here for you!



Community



Research



Insights



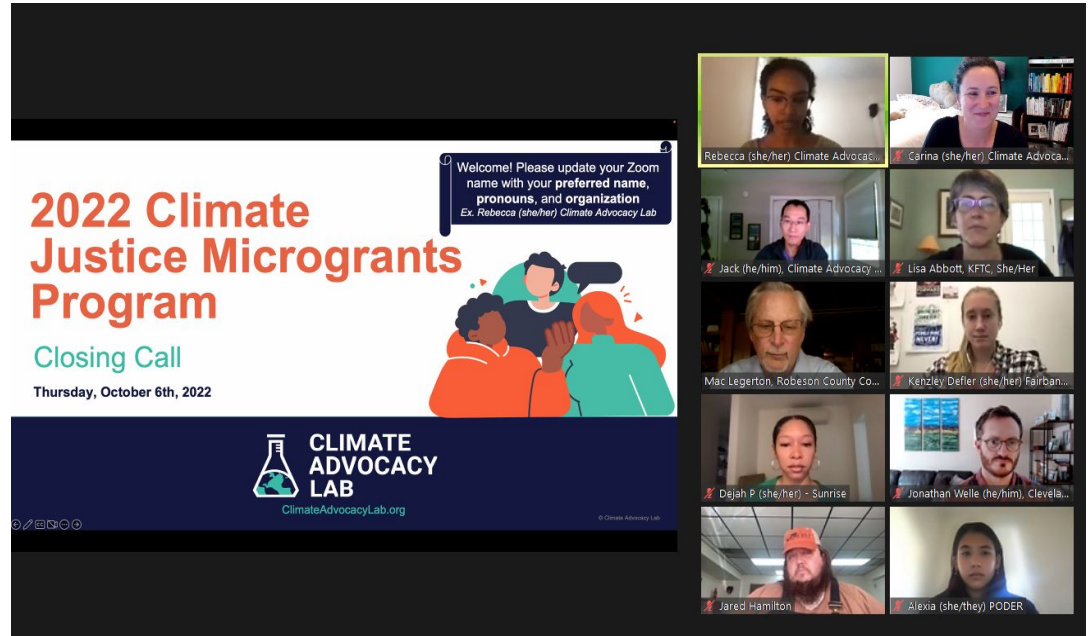
Trainings

Want to become a (free) member? Join at [climateadvocacylab.org/become-a-member](https://climateadvocacylab.org/become-a-member)



# The Climate Justice Microgrant Program

- Documenting and amplifying “lessons learned”
- Building a greater body of knowledge that provides actionable insights
- Sparks opportunities for cross-organizational learning



# Cleveland Solar Cooperative - An experiment in community ownership of solar



**Jonathan Welle**  
**March 2023**

**Big thank you to the Climate Advocacy Lab for being a supporter of our work!**



# Cleveland Owns and CSC are fighting for Energy Democracy - community-controlled energy that meets the needs of all



COOPERATIVE ENERGY FUTURES  
COMMUNITY POWERED ENERGY

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PEOPLE POWER  
SOLAR COOPERATIVE

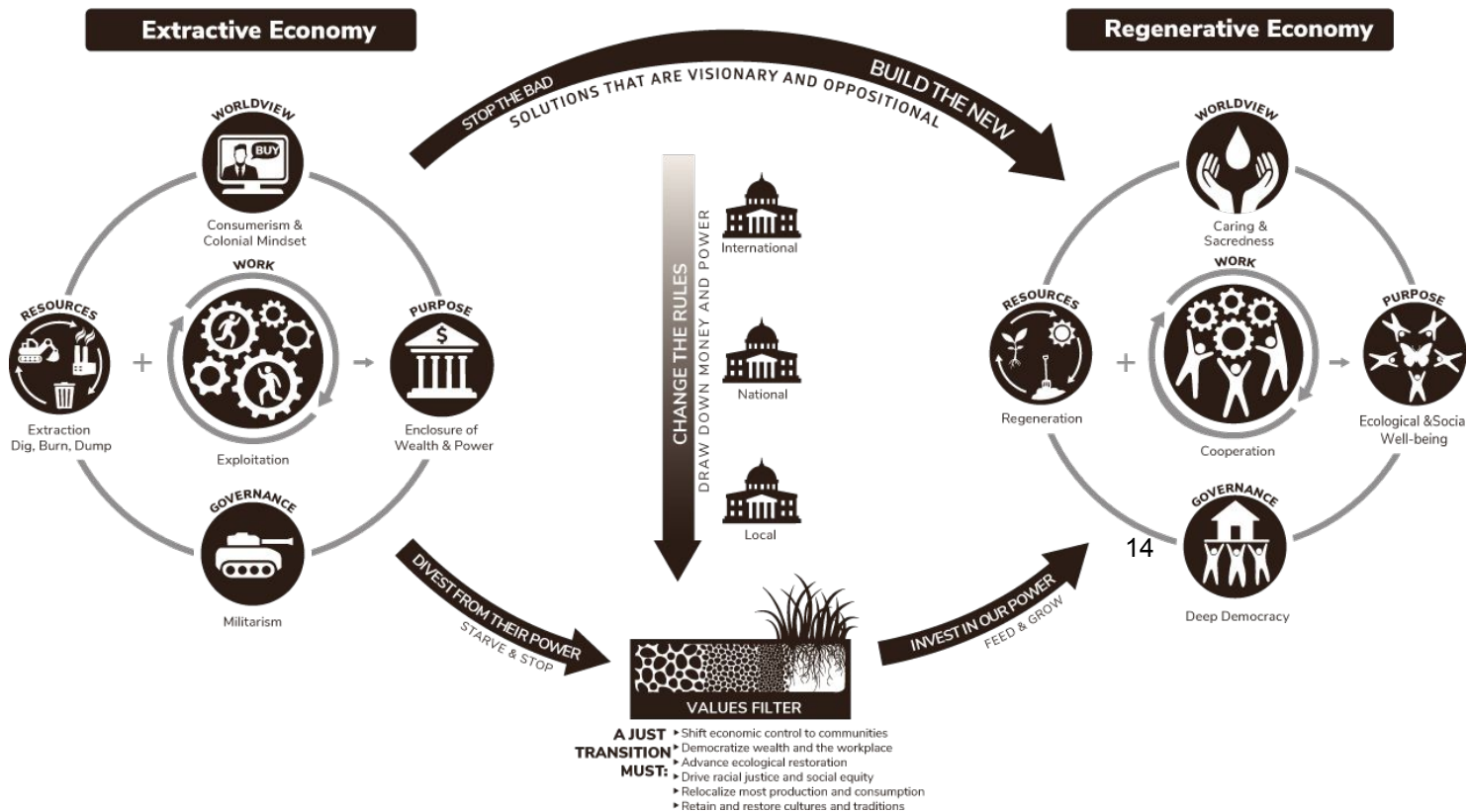
# Building Ohio's first community-owned solar array builds power for other progress on Energy Democracy



**Build Ohio's first  
community-owned  
solar array**

**Build the economic  
and political power  
necessary shift our  
energy system  
towards Energy<sup>13</sup>  
Democracy**

# The Just Transition framework from the Climate Justice Alliance puts Energy Democracy in context





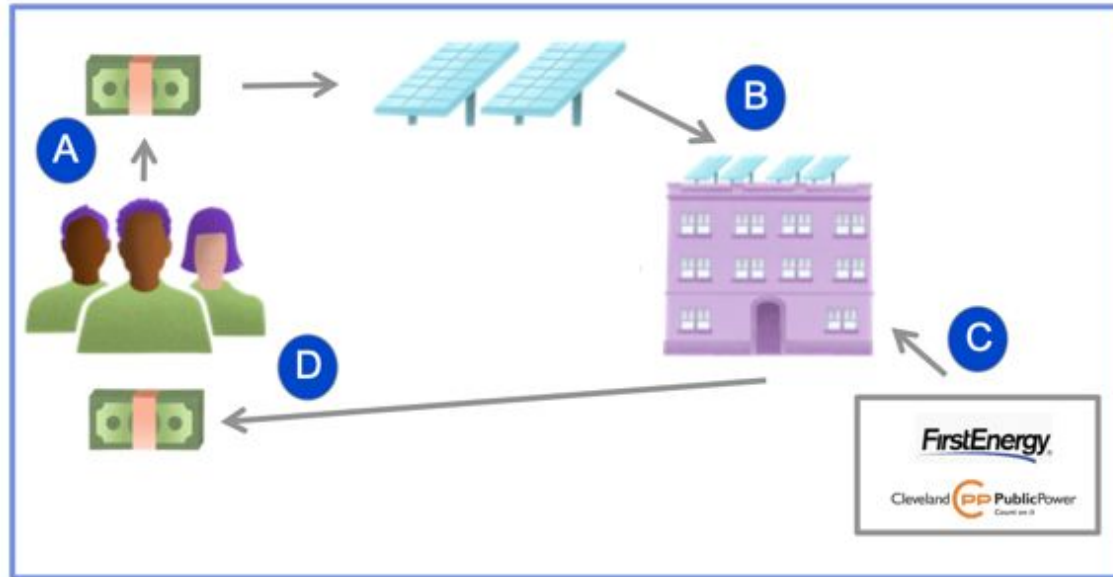
# Cleveland Owns began incubating Cleveland Solar Cooperative in 2019

- Cleveland Solar Cooperative ([www.clevelandsolar.org](http://www.clevelandsolar.org)) is a member-owned solar developer
- Today CSC has 35 member owners and an active board of 5
- Our goal is to grow to 200 member-owners and build our first project: a 91-kilowatt solar array on the roof of a large nonprofit



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# Cleveland Solar Cooperative's financing model



- A** CSC Member Owners pool their money
- B** CSC purchases and installs solar panels on the roof of a host
- C** The host receive bill credits via net metering by the utility
- D** The host returns some of their savings to CSC, where Member Owners decide how to spend that revenue



# We've faced four primary challenges

- Organizing
- Making the legal and financial model work
- Finding a host
- Funding to hire good people

# Challenge #1: Organizing

- Who are my people?
- What do my people want?
- What resources do we need to get what we want?
- How are we going to get and use those resources?
- How does our strategy develop leadership?



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## Challenge #2: Making the legal model work

- We needed a way to make decisions that is highly democratic and effective
  - Ohio's cooperative law was best of several options
- We wanted to raise money from large numbers of residents without triggering securities regulations
  - Ohio's co-op law enables us to invite member-owners to lend money to CSC for specific projects
- Pro bono legal support from Legal Aid has been \*critical\*

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## Challenge #2: Making the financial model work

- Starting PPA rate 9 - 10 cents
- Average per kilowatt hour savings for host of 10 - 25%
- Estimated annual savings to host of \$2,500 - \$7,000, as utility rates rise
- Fair market value for the host to purchase complete array starts around \$200,000

## Challenge #3: Finding a host

- This was the hardest one, since it's most out of our control
- We've tried hard to go big for the first one - questionable decision
- One potential host dragged on negotiations for 18 months before backing out (!)
- Currently have Letter of Intent signed with second potential host, moving towards writing power purchase agreement (PPA)

## Challenge #4: Funding to hire good people

- Took us 18 months to get funding from a single local funder
- Second local funder and one national funder took just six months
- So far, Cleveland Owns has raised ~\$160,000 to fund this project
- Our new Energy Democracy Organizer, Craig, starts today  
- yay!!!

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# Closing: Additional resources

- People's Solar Energy Fund
- Energy Democracy Project
- RE-AMP's Energy Democracy working group
  - Convening in CLE in early May
- Sustainable Economies Law Center
- Institute for Local Self-Reliance
- *Revolutionary Power* by Shalanda Baker (Initiative for Energy Justice - book club!)



# Discussion and Q&A



**CLIMATE  
ADVOCACY  
LAB**

[ClimateAdvocacyLab.org](https://ClimateAdvocacyLab.org)



# Thank you!

## A Case Study on the Founding of the Cleveland Solar Cooperative

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