Anarchist-Utopian Manifesto for the SF East Bay Bioregion

A proposal for direct democracy, economic equality, and ecological restoration organized through local watersheds

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In *The Ohlone Way* the East Bay Bioregion - before the arrival of colonialism and capitalism - is described as a landscape of remarkable abundance: salmon-bearing streams, vast wetlands, oak woodlands, grasslands, and thriving human communities. The East Bay once demonstrated that human communities can exist within a thriving ecological system. Remembering this inspires us to build a new egalitarian future.

Today, the SF East Bay contains enormous suffering caused by brutal inequality and entrenched hierarchies. A small number of people enjoy luxurious wealth, while tens of thousands dwell dangerously in tents, vehicles and makeshift shelters. Life expectancy varies by up to 25 years due to crippling injustice. Non-human species are stripped of habitat and threatened with extinction. Two hundred years ago indigenous villages in this area treated land, water, and food as common property, but today, every basic necessity is only available if you can pay the accelerating price. The laws that govern our communities are often formulated by distant bureaucracies far removed from our everyday lives, and non-human animals are defenseless in their ravaged and polluted homeland.

The alienation is not accidental. The disempowerment is structural. The concentration of wealth and power is not a failure of the system—it is one of its primary outcomes. Inequity is designed by capitalists, corporations, and the dominant elite at the apex of the authoritarian pyramid.

Radical democracy needs to begin here, in the SF East Bay Bioregion. We believe artificial state and county lines need to be abandoned. Political communities need to be structured inside ecological geography. This manifesto proposes the creation of a federation of watershed democracies organized around direct participation, economic equality, and ecological restoration.

TRUE DEMOCRACY

This manifesto calls for the annihilation of hierarchy in all its forms—economic, political, social, cultural.

At the smallest local level we want Neighborhood Assemblies of 5,000 to 10,000 people, who enjoy direct decision-making. There are no "representatives" - the people directly decide for themselves, determining housing policies, local infrastructure, community life, and ecological care. No issue is delegated upwards unless it is absolutely necessary.

Above the Neighborhood Assemblies are the Ward Councils representing approximately 100,000 people (10-20 confederated assemblies). This political body is responsible for education systems, transportation, and infrastructure shared between the neighborhood districts. Delegates from the Neighborhood Assemblies are sent to the Ward Councils - they are not rogue free agents; they are the messengers of decisions made in Neighborhood Assemblies. The delegates are strictly bound to carry out the decisions of their communities; delegates are recallable, and rotated quickly. The delegates do not speak for themselves; they transmit exactly what their Neighborhood Assembly has already decided.

Above the Ward Council confederations is the Bioregional Council, representing 7-10 Ward Councils (700,000 - 1,000,000 people). This council coordinates the decisions of the lower government bodies, and reaches decisions that impact the entire SF East Bay Bioregion.

CREATING THE COMMONS

Land reform is needed in the SF East Bay Bioregion. We seek a transition from private ownership of land toward a system of shared Common Land. We want land in our bioregion to NOT be owned in the way that capital owns commodities. Our Common Land will be shared, and extraction of resources from our bioregion will be replaced by stewardship. Factories and workplaces will also become common property, controlled by worker cooperatives. All production will be reorganized around social public need / community welfare - rather than individual capitalist profit.

There will be no landlord class, no rentier class, no vast accumulations of wealth, and no poverty. Our new economy will be organized to provide everything for everyone, "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs

GIFT ECONOMY TRANSITION

Our eventual goal is to move from exchange to "gifting." From currency costs to free access, from greedy competitive aquisition to free circulation. The Gift Economy we want is not barter, or vouchers, or hidden accounting. It is social life organized around generosity, reciprocity, and mutual aid. People giving and receiving based on need, capacity, and solidarity. We want a moneyless society, replaced by relationships and care.

ECOLOGICAL GOALS

Watersheds are geographical systems that deliver networks of life. We want our human communities to exist in respectful collaboration with our environment, nurturing and restoring it. The health of the watershed will be a major measure of our social success. To accomplish this, we require the following:

Restore Every Creek and Stream - East Bay creeks are buried in culverts, channelized in concrete, diverted underground, or treated as storm drains. Our goal is to daylight and restore Temescal Creek, Sausal Creek, Glen Echo Creek, Alameda Creek, San Leandro Creek, Codornices Creek, and Cerrito Creek. We want our local waterways to be ecological corridors.

Reforestation - we will plant millions of trees, prioritizing Coast Live Oak, Valley Oak, California Black Oak, Redwood, Bay Laurel, Buckeye, Alder, California Sycamore, Willow, and Cottonwood. This will reduce urban heat, increase biodiversity, stabilize hillsides, capture carbon, and improve air quality.

Food Sovereignty - Our bioregion needs to produce its own food. We will encourage community farms, rooftop gardens, edible streetscapes, food forests, neighborhood orchards, cooperative greenhouses. Every resident will live within walking distance of food production.

Rewild Habitat Corridors - Wildlife will move safely across our landscape, especially deer, coyote, raccoon, river otter, beaver, fox, bobcat, mountain lion, owls, hawks, and native pollinators. To assist them we will connect shoreline habitat, creek corridors, and hill ecosystems.

Restoration of Shoreline - For over a century the Bay has been filled, industrialized, armored with concrete. Our goal is to restore wetlands, marshes, shorelines, and habitat for fish and migra-

tory birds. Salmon runs can return here if we daylight streams, remove barriers, improve water quality, and restore spawning habitat.

Eliminate Fossil Fuel Dependence - Our bioregion enjoys abundant sunlight. Utilizing this, we will establish neighborhood solar cooperatives, rooftop solar everywhere, micro-grids, battery cooperatives, electrified transit

Greenway Network - People will be able to walk or cycle throughout our East Bay bioregion via creek corridors, food forests, parks, and restored habitats.

Replace Lawns with Living Landscapes - Lawns consume water, fertilizer, and labor without producing food or habitat. We will replace lawns with food-producing landscapes, native gardens, orchards, and pollinator habitat.

In our East Bay Bioregion every creek will run clean, every neighborhood will be shaded by trees, every resident will have access to fresh food, and wildlife will be able to moves freely from hills to the shoreline - even salmon and steelhead trout will once again migrate through East Bay waters! In our bioregion, human flourishing and ecological flourishing will be seen as identical goals.

JUSTICE

Punishment is not rehabilitation. Today's prisons rarely repair the harms they claim to address. In our new society we will not outsource conflict to violent, private institutions. Instead, we will address harm directly, offering mediation instead of coercion. Our goal of justice will not emphasis punishment. Instead, we will promote restoration, accountability, and reintegration into community life.

OUR STRATEGY

Systems supporting the ideas in this manifesto will emerge and grow inside the present destructive system. The hierarchical forms will be displaced by our egalitarian alternative, at first slowly, then rapidly. Ideal organizations - assemblies, cooperatives, and mutual aid groups - will organize and multiply. Power will gradually shift from authoritarian administrations to horizontally-led institutions. Representative democracy, increasingly dominated by concentrated wealth and elite influence, will be replaced by direct participatory institutions. All hierarchies will dissolve into structures without domination.

This transformation will occur through democratic participation, cooperative development, and the gradual expansion of commons-based institutions.

SUMMARY

In the SF East Bay bioregion that emerges: No one is homeless. No one is a billionaire. Wealth is no longer concentrated. Poverty is no longer structural. Life is no longer divided between those desperate-for-survival and the excessively wealthy. Governance becomes coordination among equals. Economy becomes the shared provision of life's necessities. Hierarchy steadily disappears, replaced by egalitarian relations among equals. People live in a beautiful, restored landscape, sharing the region with thriving forests, clean waterways, returning wildlife, and one another.

REFERENCES

Rojava, northeast Syria — democratic confederalism, communal assemblies, gender-parity governance, decentralized federations

Kerala, India— decentralized local governance and bottom-up development planning.

Peter Kropotkin — mutual aid, anarcho-communism, decentralized coordination

Murray Bookchin — social ecology, anti-hierarchy, municipal confederalism

Bioregionalism — ecological governance organized by watersheds and living systems

The Ohlone Way by Malcolm Margolin

Contemporary anarcho-communist theory — commons-based production and abolition of capitalist hierarchy

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