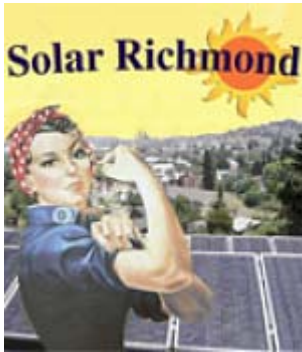


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Do Green Jobs Create Greener Americans?

By *Liz Galst*

Most “green job” training programs aim to teach low-income workers the job skills necessary to join the nascent clean-tech economy: energy-efficiency retrofitting, wind turbine maintenance, brownfield remediation and so forth.



Solar Richmond “I’m getting greener,” declared one recent graduate of a San Francisco-area program that trains solar-panel technicians.

But do these programs train low-income people to become environmentalists, too?

At present, there seems to be no academic research addressing that question, though anecdotal evidence gathered while reporting [my story in today’s New York Times](#) suggests that, at least in some cases, they do.

Consider, for example, Wayne Gatlin, who graduated in the spring of 2008 from [Solar Richmond](#), a San Francisco-area group that prepares low-income adults for jobs in California’s burgeoning solar industry.

“I’m getting greener,” said Mr. Gatlin, who earns far more as a photovoltaics installer for the Berkeley-based [Sun Light & Power](#) than he did working security or selling shoes at an Adidas retail store.

“I recycle now,” Mr. Gatlin said. “I ride my bike. This was stuff I wouldn’t do before.”

That doesn’t surprise Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, the chief executive of [Green for All](#), a national organization working to give low-income people access to the opportunities represented by the green economy.

“These programs provide participants with a different understanding of what’s happening in their own back yard,” Ms. Ellis-Lamkins said in an e-mail message. Green-job training programs allow “people to feel connected with something larger than themselves, and to directly change the face and future of their neighborhoods,” she said.

In that sense, green-job training programs might well serve as a bridge between environmentalists and a constituency they've sometimes struggled to reach.

While surveys reveal little difference between, say, working-class Americans and their middle-class counterparts when it comes to concern for the environment, low-income people are less well-educated about environmental issues than higher-income groups, according to Anthony Leiserowitz, a researcher at the **Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies**.

People who earn less than \$25,000 a year, for example, tend to be much less informed about issues like climate change, Mr. Leiserowitz said.

"I'm trying to get everybody involved in solar," Mr. Gatlin said, noting the technology's environmental benefits. "I'm saying solar is where things should go."

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