



July 2003

Dear Friends, Colleagues, Supporters and Allies:

We are pleased to present to you a sample of the economics education curriculum of Just Economics. Just Economics was a collective of women activists, organizers, ethicists and economists who provided analysis and education tools for organizing campaigns. Our mission was to broaden the pool of people who could engage in the economic debates and policy fights that shape our lives, particularly those aimed at improving the wages and working conditions of low-income families. Our hope is that by placing this curriculum on the World Wide Web, the hard work and creativity of our organization can continue to benefit economic and social justice movements.

At this site, you will find our training scripts on the following topics:

- Child Care Workers Wages
- Federal Income Tax Policy
- Global Debt
- Land Development Policy
- Living Wage Ordinances
- Privatization

These training scripts were originally designed for specific situations and campaigns, but were often adapted for other geographic areas, issues, and audiences. It is important to note that the statistics and other points made in the scripts will need to be checked, updated, and localized before you use them.

We hope this sampling gives you an idea of the range of topics and methodologies we used. We tried to present it in a format that would allow others of you doing movement building and economics education work to incorporate it into your own efforts. Unfortunately, one cannot adequately substitute a good trainer with a script. Nevertheless, we hope that we are

presenting the material in such a way that a good trainer can use them and make them come alive again.

This introduction is just as important as the curriculum itself. It consists of three parts:

- **“Economics Education for Organizing”** tells how one can use economics education to support and strengthen organizing campaigns and provides examples of the organizing partnerships we had over the years.
- **“Especially for Trainers”** includes some important information for anyone who wants to use these materials, including insights into our unique methodology, tips for practicing, and suggestions for handling some common difficult situations.
- **“Economics is About Values”** is a piece about our core assumption about economics. A sample script is included for trainers and can be used as an introduction to all of the other materials here.

We would like to thank the University of California’s Center for Labor Research and Education for letting us use their website as a permanent virtual home for our work to live and prosper. We also thank the University of California’s Center for Labor Research and Education, The Women’s Foundation, GATX, and Eileen Raphael for the financial support to compile and archive our work for our members and the wider world.

Finally, thanks to all of you. It is through your efforts to make use of these materials that Just Economics will extend its influence beyond the life of the organization.

With gratitude,

The Women of Just Economics

ECONOMICS EDUCATION FOR ORGANIZING

Economics education can be useful on many different levels in an organization:

An economics education program strengthens ALLIANCE AND MOVEMENT BUILDING by:

- Developing a shared understanding of the economic issues, including each organization/constituencies perspective on the economy.
- Helping to advance a long-term process that allows groups to develop a shared economic analysis and from there, a shared agenda for economic justice in the region, or other given context.
- Fostering deeper investment in and ownership of the alliance and/or a joint campaign or other collaborative effort.
- Developing messages that connect different constituents' issues (i.e. jobs, housing, etc) d different groups' agendas.

Just Economics worked with Working Partnerships USA to infuse economics education into their leadership institute—helping labor, church, and community develop a shared analysis of the problems in the Silicon Valley economy. This joint analysis built a deep alliance between community leaders around a common policy agenda and led to the passage of a living wage ordinance.

An economics education program strengthens NEW OUTREACH TO TARGET CONSTITUENCIES by:

- Bringing people into the organization by connecting their economic struggles with a particular campaign.
- Involving constituents in a specific campaign by explaining the logic of the proposed economic policy.

Just Economics designed a workshop for DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality) in Rhode Island which illustrates the impact of a living wage ordinance can have on different parts of the community. DARE used the workshop to recruit new members and build community support before introducing their proposed living wage ordinance.

An economics education program strengthens
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT by:

- Building a shared vocabulary and analysis.
- Supporting members and leaders with a sophisticated understanding of the economic context of their organizing and campaign work.
- Strengthening members' and leaders' ability to participate effectively in decision-making around strategy by developing skills for choosing between different policy options.

Just Economics worked with AIWA (Asian Women Immigrant Advocates) in Oakland to create workshops on the garment industry, the electronics assembly industry and economic development in preparation for specific AIWA campaigns. The workshops supported AIWA members to make decisions about campaign targets, demands, and messages.

An economics education program strengthens
STAFF DEVELOPMENT by:

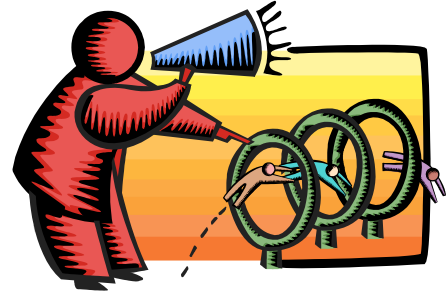
- Increasing organizers' capacity to utilize research, suggest policy solutions, and design campaigns based on current economic information and with a view to the "big picture."
- Supporting organizers with skills and tools for sharing an economic analysis with constituents, members, leaders, and allies.
- Increasing organizers' skills as popular educators.

Just Economics designed curriculum on the childcare industry and trained staff from the CCW (Center for the Childcare Workforce) to lead it. The curriculum helps CCW staff share their research with childcare workers around the country in a way that inspires strategic action at a local level.

An economics education program strengthens
MEDIA WORK by:

- Allowing organizers to shape the economic content of media messages so that each campaign adds to the public understanding of the issues and lays the groundwork for future campaigns.
- Opening the door to greater participation in economic policy debates by making the connection between values and economic policy—framing the debate so that our constituents feel that they are entitled to an opinion (because everyone has values) and that their opinion matters (because the economy is driven by policy, not statistics).

Just Economics worked with the Community Assets Campaign, SEIU Local 1985, and several public relations firms to launch an anti-privatization campaign for workers, consumers, and taxpayers.



ESPECIALLY FOR TRAINERS

Our Goals for Trainings

Just Economics was known for making economics “fun,” and inspiring people to action. We did this by:

- Helping people to reflect on their values,
- Placing personal stories in the context of our complex economic system, and
- Creating a space for people to find the words that express both their hearts and their heads.

The trainer’s role is to help the audience express what they know, add new factual information and teach the economic vocabulary necessary for a sophisticated debate. Above all, the trainers must inspire the confidence and passion to risk speaking out. Basically, the goal of the training is to have participants (1) learn something, and (2) feel inspired to do something.

General Training Tips

Practical Preparation

- Always send more than one trainer, and preferably trainers of mixed experience to back each other up.)
- Make your charts in advance. Make them visually “catchy” and use them to reinforce only the key concepts or points. There should be no more than four or five points on any given chart.
- If you want to provide people with lots of statistics and extra written materials, distribute it as a follow up sheet, after the training is complete. Let them know they will be receiving this information in a written form and they do not need to take heavy notes. This will allow them to concentrate on getting the concepts and arguments, and not just the stats.

How to Practice

Depending upon how you know you learn best, you might:

- Read the script several times.
- Rewrite the script to make the language flow more comfortably for you, but make sure you are making the same main points.
- Highlight your copy of the script.
- Talk with staff and or co-trainers with questions about the main arguments, content, etc.
- Read it through aloud. Pay attention to your pace. See where you get stuck, and figure out how to move through that section more easily. Do you fully understand the purpose of the section? Would it help you to draw a graphic or use a prop to help guide you and the audience through?
- Walk it through slowly, being sure to note when to use props, where you might need them to be placed in advance, where you are standing relative to your audience/participants, to whom are you addressing yourself (back to, front towards, eye contact etc).
- Isolate the 10 statistics you want to use and memorize them. Have a friend test you to make sure you have them cold.
- Know the 3-5 main points so that you can tick them off on your hand.
- Visualize yourself doing the training, including hand gestures and answering difficult questions, as a confidence booster (not a substitute for real practice).
- Try it out on different audiences – preferably people who might fall within the target group you are trying to reach.
- Have people ask you questions so that you are prepared to handle interruptions and difficult questions.
- Informally engage people in a discussion of the issues so you start to feel more comfortable with what comes up.
- Make a list of questions that you can use to prompt the participants' thinking, like "Doesn't taxing wealthy people a lot more punish them for their success?"
- Find out as much about your audience as you can beforehand.
- See if you've got it by trying it without the script.

Doing Live Illustrations

What is a live illustration? The trainer tells a story using people in the audience as characters.

By using the knowledge and experience of workshop participants to demonstrate and complement a story, live illustrations visually and kinetically depict the dynamics, policies, economic structures, values questions, underlying assumptions and statistics of a given issue. Live illustrations bring the core questions and issues of a campaign to life in the training context.

This methodology is helpful to:

- Provide background information about how a situation was created by illustrating the policy and historical context;
- Give concrete and animated form to complex systems and dynamics;
- Play out ethical or values choices that underlie policy;
- Reveal information about a situation that isn't immediately visible;
- Observe the sources of power in the scene.

Training tips for doing a live illustration:

- *Select the players* - Don't wait for people to volunteer as it slows momentum. Just tap shoulders or say something like, "Jose, and Judy and Joseph, why don't you three come up here and sit in these three chairs."
- *Try to mix up the roles* – If the role is for a woman, choose a man to play it. If you can get a person of color to represent a rich investor, the irony and inaccuracy of that will emerge in discussion or be easier to point out. Also, choose people who look engaging and energetic so as not to drag the piece down unnecessarily.
- *Don't get distracted by questions from participants.* – If they are simple to answer quickly, then do so. If they are irrelevant, then offer to discuss them afterward. If they are "central" questions that connect to the main arguments or themes of the illustration, then write it down and acknowledge it, and let them know that you hope some answers will emerge during the remainder of the illustration. Also let them know that a fuller discussion will be easier once everyone has experienced the illustration together. When you want to use the participant's question to make a point at that moment, you might say something like "tell me more about what you mean," or "why do you say that."

Things to be aware of when doing a live illustration:

- Pacing – you need to move quickly enough to keep people engaged, but slowly enough for them to absorb and process at least some of the information
- “Audience” – be clear about when you want to address those participants who are actively involved in the piece (i.e. “On stage” with you) and when you want to address those participants who comprise “the audience.”
- Prop placement – be sure that you set up the props so that they are easily integrated into the illustration, and do not become a distraction. Your training partner should be able to assist you with props.

Doing Small Groups with Debriefs

What is a small group with debrief? The trainer divides the audience into groups of 3-10 people that discuss a given question for 10-15 minutes. The groups come back together and the trainer listens to the groups’ responses and adds information along the way. The goal of a small group with debrief is to help participants develop their arguments.

This methodology is helpful because:

- It allows the audience to say things before you give the “expert” explanation.
- They remember it better if they say it, rather than if you do.
- It gives you a chance to hear their real opinions about an issue – their own biases or sense of fairness, their own conflicts.
- It gives the participants a chance to know all the arguments, not just the one(s) they agree with.
- It provides trainers with an opportunity to break down the rhetoric and to challenge or unpack buzz words like “choice” or “competition” or “efficiency,” “exploitation” or “oppression”.

Training tips for setting up and debriefing small group discussions

- Try to identify good people to facilitate and report back on the small groups. Look for diversity in your facilitators, and people who seem to be following the points being made but who are not likely to dominate conversation.
- The questions we ask people to discuss are intentionally controversial. You should challenge answers that are too much in line with some kind of orthodoxy. **MAKE PEOPLE DEFEND THEIR POSITION.** This doesn’t have to be adversarial, but it will help to sharpen their thinking, and the way they say what they are thinking.

How to Handle Common Hard Situations

1. You have less time than you thought.

Sometimes the host organization adds something else to the agenda, or starts late. You can try to prevent this by telling them in advance how much time you will need to do a good job. Find out if they usually start late and plan accordingly. Pad your agenda with extra time. Almost no meetings start exactly on time. Do wear a watch and try not to go over time.

2. You start running out of time in the middle of your section.

Take a minute to figure out what sections to axe. Don't try to cram it all in or you will talk too fast or eliminate participation.

3. People aren't participating.

You find yourself doing all the talking. The group could be low energy or not used to speaking out in meetings. You can ask a question that invites participation, and then be quiet and wait. They may have to see that you won't fill in the silence and continue to do all the talking. You can ask an open-ended question and call on someone by name, like, "Jose, what do you think?"

You can rearrange your agenda to put more active things, like small groups, first. Restructure away from the sections where you do most of the talking, until they get "warmed up." You can also call for a short break and get them to move around and stretch.

4. Some people are talking much more than others.

Sometimes the "isms" are at play in the room and you find that some people are not talking at all. You may notice that only men or only white people are talking. You can say, "Let's hear from someone who hasn't had a chance yet." Then don't call on the same people again for a while. Go ahead and interrupt someone who is talking too often, being long-winded, or going off the point. It is your role to make sure that no one dominates and everyone participates.

When you are setting up your small groups, make sure that you appoint plenty of women and people of color to the roles of facilitator and who will report out. Take affirmative action to ensure more diverse participation.

5. People don't seem to be following what you are saying.

People look glazed over or puzzled and don't seem to be following what you are saying. Use more concrete examples. Check in with people and ask them what they think about what you just said. Ask people if they have

any questions. If they ask a question that you've already covered, see if someone in the audience can answer it.

6. There are fewer people than you expected.

If there are fewer people than you expected, usually the host starts late, hoping more folks will show up. You can use that time to think about how to adjust. For example, you may not have enough people for all the roles in a live illustration. You can use objects, like pillows, and make a joke about it. Don't break into small groups and use the questions as a full group discussion.

7. There are more people than you expected.

Check with the audience to make sure that they can all see and hear. Remind the participants to speak up so that everyone can hear throughout the session. When you break into small groups, you can assign several groups the same question. Let people know that all the groups won't get a chance to give their whole report, but that you will give them each a chance to add anything different. If you have enough time, you can invite the groups to report back together, going back and forth. Notice what is similar, different or missing from their thinking.

8. Someone asks you a question you can't answer.

You can ask the audience if anyone "wants to take a crack at that one." You can ask your co-trainer if they have a response. Sometimes you can respond to the underlying values and assumptions of the question without knowing the specifics. You can also acknowledge that you don't know, and ask the audience if they have any ideas. If it is a good question, you can thank the person and say you'll look into it. Don't lose your confidence and authority, and don't make something up. It's OK. You are still in charge.

9. People are asking too many questions.

If people are taking up too much time asking questions, there are several things you can do. Answer the simple ones, then make note of the other questions on paper to acknowledge them and return to the session. Come back to questions at the end that still need to be answered. Or ask participants if they can help you answer them. If people continue to ask questions, ask them to join you for a full discussion after the session is over.



Economics is About Values

Our Signature Message

A unique and enduring feature of Just Economics' education is the centrality of values to our understanding and our teaching about economics. This has been our most powerful message, and our most effective tool at unlocking people's abilities to advocate for structural economic solutions to their problems.

Every session begins with the revelation that the foundation on which economic theories and policies is built sits on the authors' beliefs about human nature, their prejudices about people, and their own ideas about fairness. Since most Americans have been taught to think of economics as an objective math-based science or a mysterious, natural phenomenon, the values analysis of economics is a liberating light bulb. Once that realization is made, it is easy to get people to recognize and challenge the assumptions that prop up the system.

For example, we say that competition is always a powerful motivator, and get people to recognize policies that structure competition, notice between whom, and ask to what end. This allows us to get into cultural myths like the level playing field, the self-made man, and explore our ideas about whom we consider deserving of what. Is it possible that some groups of people are structured to be losers? Could those rules be changed?

Most of our audiences say that they are for economic justice, but we can quickly reveal how differently they define it. Exercises about fair systems for pay and for taxation show that people have often not thought more deeply than the slogan of fairness. In this collection of training session scripts, we have included a few that are highly effective in helping people develop more grounded visions of economic justice.

Often, we tailored specific values pieces to policy areas. For example, when training about money and banking, we would focus the values around the conflicting issues of bank secrecy, personal privacy and democratic access to information. We would also look at different faith-based traditions about how much is fair to charge for loaning money. And we would delve into the questions of what does make and what should make someone “creditworthy.” We would reflect on what is the same and what is different about banks and any other service in our economy.

What follows is a general piece on values. Items in bold are for emphasis.

The “Economics is About Values” Script

At Just Economics, we start from the assumption that **economics is not a neutral math-based science. The economy is a HUMAN creation.** Interest rates don't fall like rain. They are set. Unemployment doesn't just happen. It is the result of economic decisions made by people.

Our economic system is partly based on cultural myths. One of those is the **Myth of Scarcity**. Economics is sometimes described as the system by which we divide scarce resources among us. This is based on the idea that there is not enough to go around. For example, when we argue that something should be funded in the state or federal budget, we are told that there is no money. Yet we hear of billions of dollars being made by financiers trading currencies on the stock market. **Perhaps it is really a matter of who has it and who doesn't, rather than a matter of scarcity.**

Another assumption is that **competition brings out the best in us** by making us work harder. This is based on **assumptions about human nature**, like if there is enough we would become lazy. When we are made to compete, then we are more productive and improve quality. From this thinking we cut welfare programs, because we think that assistance might breed laziness.

Competition might be OK in some arenas but since it creates winners and losers you have to be thoughtful about who is in competition for what. **What makes you a winner? What are the costs?** Are healthcare companies in competition to provide the best quality affordable health care – or to make the most profit for their shareholders, even if it means less health accessible healthcare and lousy working conditions? **Who are the losers? What is the price to society for that?**

Still another myth is that of a **level playing field**. The American Dream is realizable. You can pull yourself up by your own bootstraps by working hard. Because of this belief, the winners are seen as **deserving** and the losers **undeserving**. Anyone in poverty must be lazy or have bad character. No mention is made of the fact that some people start at 3rd base while others aren't even given a chance to bat, or the fact that racism and sexism within our society affect one's chances of moving ahead.

We can see the mythology of deserving/undeserving play out in tax and budget policy. For example, how many here live in public housing? If you are a homeowner who deducts mortgage interest, you are receiving a federal housing subsidy. Why is a subsidy to poor people considered bad for them and undeserved, but giving a subsidy to homeowners is good?

Our economic policies are about what we believe is fair. **We pretend that fairness is an objective standard**. The justice symbol is a blindfolded woman with measuring scales. But fairness depends on how we define justice (something we are all for, right?). But when we talk about justice at the level of policy we find we often don't agree. Think about this in relationship to pay. Do we mean equality – everyone should be paid the same? Or do we think that justice means to take care of needs – so those with more children get paid more? Or should the people who do more of the work get paid more because they try harder or are faster? Justice isn't just about numbers and facts. It's a complex discussion.

We are talking about **systems** – about the rules of the game – not good or bad individuals. We want to think about economic policies that will foster a **healthy community**. Whose responsibility is it to make a healthy community?

We can think of the **responsibility collectively** by structuring economic policies to provide those things that we think make for a healthy community or we can think of the **responsibility individually**, letting each person fend for herself. In our individualistic society, high value is given to individual accomplishments. These are important, but so are our **relationships** to family, community, country, to God and nature important to a productive and meaningful life.

How we structure our economic systems is based on what we **value**. The economic policies and systems we have today were brought into motion by people and can be changed.