



Creating a New Social Contract

Sam Jacobs, Resource Generation
New York City

☀ Call to Action

Join Sam in using philanthropy to fight systemic inequalities. Visit resourcegeneration.org

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☀ Values

- Altruistic
- Generous
- Curious
- Idealistic
- Courageous
- Humble

☀ Lessons Learned

Sam searches for the root causes of poverty and works with others to find ways to fight income inequality and promote social justice.

In order to galvanize others into action, it's important to set a good example yourself first.

It's important to create social safety nets, ensuring people's basic needs for food and housing are met—and that everyone is given an equal chance to succeed.

James Ellsmoor is a renewable energy advocate, digital nomad, and serial green entrepreneur.

He is cofounder of Solar Head of State (SHOS), a nonprofit organization whose mission is “To help world leaders become green leaders.” SHOS installed solar panels on the White House during Barack Obama’s presidency to raise awareness about renewable energy alternatives. They have also completed solar installations for the President of the Maldives, the Office of the Prime Minister of Jamaica, and the Government House in St. Lucia.

James went on to create Island Innovation, a green consultancy and advisory firm focused on small island developing states (SIDS). Out of this, the Virtual Island Summit, a free online event aimed at connecting global island communities on a common digital platform, was created. More than a hundred island communities were involved in the 2019 Summit. In 2017, James was recognized on Forbes Magazine’s 30 Under 30 List.

☀ Language Arts

Drawing inspiration from Sam’s story, write a mission statement for a charity that is dedicated to a cause close to your own heart.

Now imagine someone gave you a million dollars to invest in that cause. How would you spend it?

Write five questions you would ask Sam in an interview.

Then explain why you chose to ask him those questions. How would his answers help people better understand his work?

Write an essay explaining what gentrification means and how it impacts communities. If you have personal experiences with gentrification, housing scarcity, or housing rights, you can

incorporate them into your essay.

Explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the housing crisis in large cities like New York. Then research how climate change has affected the housing crisis (for example, through fires in California, and/or coastal areas affected by hurricanes). How do these two challenges compare to each other? How are they similar—or different—in developing countries than they are in industrial countries?

STEM Activities

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include one focused on making “cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable¹.” Among the goals are ensuring access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrading slums by 2030; and providing universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons, and persons with disabilities.

- **Investigate the number of “slums” there are in the U.S. and worldwide.** Is the world on track with “upgrading slums”? What factors are helping to achieve this? What factors are inhibiting it? Think of up to three policies that might help improve the situation of slum dwellers, and write a few paragraphs on the most promising ones.
- **Using available data, research the amount of green space available per person in various cities with various types of climate and other geographical factors, in both developing and industrial countries.** Compare this data to per capita income, health indicators, and education. What effects does access to green space have on people’s physical and mental health?
- **Sam has partnered with the NBA and law enforcement to help hold police officers accountable for their actions.** Today, police officers are often required to wear body cameras that record their actions in the event of a conflict. What are some other technologies that could be used to make communities safer for everyone? List three of them and then write a five-sentence paragraph about how one of these technologies could be successfully implemented.

Sustainability Innovations

Philanthropy is an important component that contributes to our democracy even as it addresses inequalities in racial, societal, economic, and environmental conditions. Sam’s grandfather was wise to educate his family to become strategic philanthropists. Private family foundations represent 85 percent of all U.S. philanthropy. Find out about one that provides support in your community. What are their priorities? Who is involved with this foundation?

Resource Generation and the Tides Foundation are good examples of sustainability innovations. Do you know of others?

Sustainability Career Pathways

Housing Reformer and Organizer. Housing and urban activism to prevent gentrification and make housing affordable for all is an essential realm to engage in—especially in the time of COVID, when many are threatened with eviction and foreclosure. For those who want to learn more about this area, [read this introduction²](#). If you are really inspired, here is a [journal introduction to the field of Housing Activism³](#).

Manager in a Nonprofit Organization. Many people work for nonprofits, but very few have any formal management training. There are programs to train managers specifically for nonprofit organizations. While many of these are masters' level programs ([such as these leading programs⁴](#)), there are informal and undergraduate opportunities to learn essential management skills as well.

Foundation Officer. Sam's experience shows the importance of not just having access to resources to distribute, but the importance of sharing those funds justly and wisely. There are more than 119,000 foundations in the United States distributing funding to organizations working toward social change. Many of these rely on program officers to vet organizations, and then to engage with and mentor them. These jobs offer an important career path and lever for social change.

1 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-11>

2 <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/the-way-home/>

3 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02673037.2019.1658721>

4 <https://www.collegechoice.net/business/non-profit-management/best-masters-degrees/>

