



A VISION FOR BLACK LIVES:

**POLICY DEMANDS FOR BLACK
POWER, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE**

**THE
MOVEMENT
FOR BLACK LIVES**

POLICY.M4BL.ORG



A VISION FOR BLACK LIVES: POLICY DEMANDS FOR BLACK POWER, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE

Black humanity and dignity requires Black political will and power. Despite constant exploitation and perpetual oppression, Black people have bravely and brilliantly been the driving force pushing the U.S. towards the ideals it articulates but has never achieved. In recent years we have taken to the streets, launched massive campaigns, and impacted elections, but our elected leaders have failed to address the legitimate demands of our Movement. We can no longer wait.

In response to the sustained and increasingly visible violence against Black communities in the U.S. and globally, a collective of more than 50 organizations representing thousands of Black people from across the country have come together with renewed energy and purpose to articulate a common vision and agenda. We are a collective that centers and is rooted in Black communities, but we recognize we have a shared struggle with all oppressed people; collective liberation will be a product of all of our work.

We believe in elevating the experiences and leadership of the most marginalized Black people, including but not limited to those who are women, queer, trans, femmes, gender nonconforming, Muslim, formerly and currently incarcerated, cash poor and working class, differently-abled, undocumented, and immigrant. We are intentional about amplifying the particular experience of state and gendered violence that Black queer, trans, gender nonconforming, women and intersex people face. There can be no liberation for all Black people if we do not center and fight for those who have been marginalized. It is our hope that by working together to create and amplify a shared agenda, we can continue

to move towards a world in which the full humanity and dignity of all people is recognized.

While this platform is focused on domestic policies, we know that patriarchy, exploitative capitalism, militarism, and white supremacy know no borders. We stand in solidarity with our international family against the ravages of global capitalism and anti-Black racism, human-made climate change, war, and exploitation. We also stand with descendants of African people all over the world in an ongoing call and struggle for reparations for the historic and continuing harms of colonialism and slavery. We also recognize and honor the rights and struggle of our Indigenous family for land and self-determination.

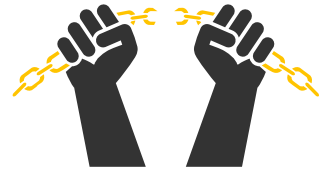
We have created this platform to articulate and support the ambitions and work of Black people. We also seek to intervene in the current political climate and assert a clear vision, particularly for those who claim to be our allies, of the world we want them to help us create. We reject false solutions and believe we can achieve a complete transformation of the current systems, which place profit over people and make it impossible for many of us to breathe.

Together, we demand an end to the wars against Black people. We demand that the government repair the harms that have been done to Black communities in the form of reparations and targeted long-term investments. We also demand a defunding of the systems and institutions that criminalize and cage us. This document articulates our vision of a fundamentally different world. However, we recognize the need to include policies that address the immediate suffering of Black people. These policies, while less transformational, are necessary to address the current material conditions of our people and will better equip us to win the world we demand and deserve.

We recognize that not all of our collective needs and visions can be translated into policy, but we understand that policy change is one of many tactics necessary to move us towards the world we envision. We have come together now because we believe it is time to forge a new covenant. We are dreamers and doers and this platform is meant to articulate some of our vision. The links throughout the document provide the stepping-stones and roadmaps of how to get there. The policy briefs also elevate the brave and transformative work our people are already engaged in, and build on some of the best thinking in our history of struggle. This agenda continues the legacy of our ancestors who pushed for reparations, Black self-determination and community control; and also propels new iterations of movements such as efforts for reproductive justice, holistic healing and reconciliation, and ending violence against Black cis, queer, and trans people.

END THE WAR ON BLACK PEOPLE

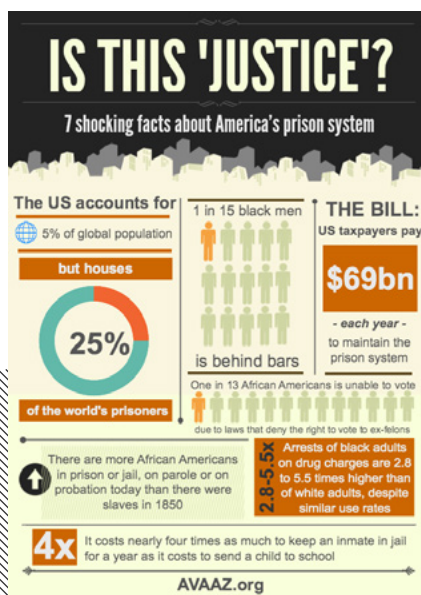
We demand an end to the war against Black people. Since this country's inception there have been named and unnamed wars on our communities. We demand an end to the criminalization, incarceration, and killing of our people.



This includes:

- 1** An immediate end to the criminalization and dehumanization of Black youth across all areas of society including, but not limited to; our nation's justice and education systems, social service agencies, and media and pop culture. This includes an end to zero-tolerance school policies and arrests of students, the removal of police from schools, and the reallocation of funds from police and punitive school discipline practices to restorative services.
- 2** An end to capital punishment.
- 3** An end to money bail, mandatory fines, fees, court surcharges and "defendant funded" court proceedings.
- 4** An end to the use of past criminal history to determine eligibility for housing, education, licenses, voting, loans, employment, and other services and needs.
- 5** An end to the war on Black immigrants including the repeal of the 1996 crime and immigration bills, an end to all deportations, immigrant detention, and Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) raids, and mandated legal representation in immigration court.

- 6 An end to the war on Black trans, queer and gender nonconforming people including their addition to anti-discrimination civil rights protections to ensure they have full access to employment, health, housing and education.
- 7 An end to the mass surveillance of Black communities, and the end to the use of technologies that criminalize and target our communities (including IMSI catchers, drones, body cameras, and predictive policing software).
- 8 The demilitarization of law enforcement, including law enforcement in schools and on college campuses.
- 9 An immediate end to the privatization of police, prisons, jails, probation, parole, food, phone and all other criminal justice related services.
- 10 Until we achieve a world where cages are no longer used against our people we demand an immediate change in conditions and an end to public jails, detention centers, youth facilities and prisons as we know them. This includes the end of solitary confinement, the end of shackling of pregnant people, access to quality healthcare, and effective measures to address the needs of our youth, queer, gender nonconforming and trans families.



REPARATIONS

We demand reparations for past and continuing harms. The government, responsible corporations and other institutions that have profited off of the harm they have inflicted on Black people — from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance — must repair the harm done.



This includes:

- 1 Reparations for the systemic denial of access to high quality educational opportunities in the form of full and free access for all Black people (including undocumented and currently and formerly incarcerated people) to lifetime education including: free access and open admissions to public community colleges and universities, technical education (technology, trade and agricultural), educational support programs, retroactive forgiveness of student loans, and support for lifetime learning programs.
- 2 Reparations for the continued divestment from, discrimination toward and exploitation of our communities in the form of a guaranteed minimum livable income for all Black people, with clearly articulated corporate regulations.

- 3 Reparations for the wealth extracted from our communities through environmental racism, slavery, food apartheid, housing discrimination and racialized capitalism in the form of corporate and government reparations focused on healing ongoing physical and mental trauma, and ensuring our access and control of food sources, housing and land.
- 4 Reparations for the cultural and educational exploitation, erasure, and extraction of our communities in the form of mandated public school curriculums that critically examine the political, economic, and social impacts of colonialism and slavery, and funding to support, build, preserve, and restore cultural assets and sacred sites to ensure the recognition and honoring of our collective struggles and triumphs.
- 5 Legislation at the federal and state level that requires the United States to acknowledge the lasting impacts of slavery, establish and execute a plan to address those impacts. This includes the immediate passage of H.R.40, the "Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act" or subsequent versions which call for reparations remedies.



DIVEST-INVEST

We demand investments in the education, health and safety of Black people, instead of investments in the criminalizing, caging, and harming of Black people. We want investments in Black communities, determined by Black communities, and divestment from exploitative forces including prisons, fossil fuels, police, surveillance and exploitative corporations.



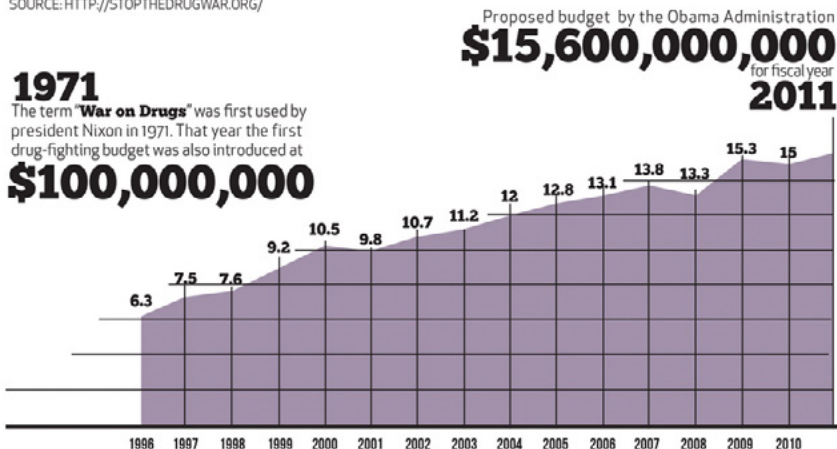
This includes:

- 1 A reallocation of funds at the federal, state and local level from policing and incarceration (JAG, COPS, VOCA) to long-term safety strategies such as education, local restorative justice services, and employment programs.
- 2 The retroactive decriminalization, immediate release and record expungement of all drug related offenses and prostitution, and reparations for the devastating impact of the “war on drugs” and criminalization of prostitution, including a reinvestment of the resulting savings and revenue into restorative services, mental health services, job programs and other programs supporting those impacted by the sex and drug trade.

- 3 Real, meaningful, and equitable universal health care that guarantees: proximity to nearby comprehensive health centers, culturally competent services for all people, specific services for queer, gender nonconforming, and trans people, full bodily autonomy, full reproductive services, mental health services, paid parental leave, and comprehensive quality child and elder care.
- 4 A constitutional right at the state and federal level to a fully-funded education which includes a clear articulation of the right to: a free education for all, special protections for queer and trans students, wrap around services, social workers, free health services (including reproductive body autonomy), a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses students' material and cultural needs, physical activity and recreation, high quality food, free daycare, and freedom from unwarranted search, seizure or arrest.
- 5 A divestment from industrial multinational use of fossil fuels and investment in community- based sustainable energy solutions.
- 6 A cut in military expenditures and a reallocation of those funds to invest in domestic infrastructure and community well-being.
- 7 Financial support of Black alternative institutions including, but not limited to: cooperatives, land trusts, and a culturally responsive health infrastructure.

AMOUNT OF MONEY SPENT BY THE U.S. ON THE 'WAR ON DRUGS'

SOURCE: [HTTP://STOPTHEDRUGWAR.ORG/](http://stopthedrugwar.org/)





ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We demand economic justice for all and a reconstruction of the economy to ensure Black communities have collective ownership, not merely access.



This includes:

- 1** A progressive restructuring of tax codes at the local, state, and federal level to ensure a radical and sustainable redistribution of wealth.
- 2** Federal and state job programs that specifically target the most economically marginalized Black people, and compensation for those involved in the care economy. Job programs must provide a living wage and encourage support for local workers centers, unions, and Black-owned businesses which are accountable to the community.
- 3** A right to restored land, clean air, clean water and housing and an end to the exploitative privatization of natural resources — including land and water. We seek democratic control over how resources are preserved, used and distributed and do so while honoring and respecting the rights of our Indigenous family.
- 4** The right for workers to organize in public and private sectors, especially in “On Demand Economy” jobs.
- 5** Restore the Glass-Steagall Act to break up the large banks, and call for the National Credit Union Administration and the US Department of the Treasury to change policies and practices around

regulation, reporting and consolidation to allow for the continuation and creation of black banks, small and community development credit unions, insurance companies and other financial institutions.

- 6 An end to the Trans-Pacific Partnership and a renegotiation of all trade agreements to prioritize the interests of workers and communities.
- 7 Through tax incentives, loans and other government directed resources, support the development of cooperative or social economy networks to help facilitate trade across and in Black communities globally. All aid in the form of grants, loans or contracts to help facilitate this must go to Black led or Black supported networks and organizations as defined by the communities.
- 8 Financial support of Black alternative institutions including policy that subsidizes and offers low-interest, interest-free or federally guaranteed low-interest loans to promote the development of cooperatives (food, residential, etc.), land trusts and culturally responsive health infrastructures that serve the collective needs of our communities.
- 9 Protections for workers in industries that are not appropriately regulated including domestic workers, farm workers, and tipped workers, and for workers — many of whom are Black women and incarcerated people— who have been exploited and remain unprotected. This includes the immediate passage at the Federal and state level of the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights and extension of worker protections to incarcerated people.



THE FLEETING DREAM OF HOMEOWNERSHIP

In American Households **under 18**
WITH CHILDREN

WHITES
PURCHASE HOMES

at a
RATE
of nearly **80%**



BLACKS
PURCHASE HOMES

at a
RATE
of nearly **35%**



WHITES with **JUST** a **HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA** 
are **MORE** likely to become **HOMEOWNERS**
than **BLACKS** with a **COLLEGE DEGREE**

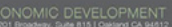
WHITE
HOMEOWNERSHIP

has stayed consistent
AROUND 80%



BLACK
HOMEOWNERSHIP

DROPPED NEARLY
5%



INSIGHT CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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Released by the Insight Center for Community Economic Development in partnership with Tenet's Research and Strategy Services. Photo: iStockphoto.com

COMMUNITY CONTROL

We demand a world where those most impacted in our communities control the laws, institutions, and policies that are meant to serve us – from our schools to our local budgets, economies, police departments, and our land – while recognizing that the rights and histories of our Indigenous family must also be respected.



This includes:

- 1 Direct democratic community control of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, ensuring that communities most harmed by destructive policing have the power to hire and fire officers, determine disciplinary action, control budgets and policies, and subpoena relevant agency information.
- 2 An end to the privatization of education and real community control by parents, students and community members of schools including democratic school boards and community control of curriculum, hiring, firing and discipline policies.
- 3 Participatory budgeting at the local, state and federal level.

POLITICAL POWER



We demand independent Black political power and Black self-determination in all areas of society. We envision a remaking of the current U.S. political system in order to create a real democracy where Black people and all marginalized people can effectively exercise full political power.

This includes:

- 1** An end to the criminalization of Black political activity including the immediate release of all political prisoners and an end to the repression of political parties.
- 2** Public financing of elections and the end of money controlling politics through ending super PACs and unchecked corporate donations.
- 3** Election protection, electoral expansion and the right to vote for all people including: full access, guarantees, and protections of the right to vote for all people through universal voter registration, automatic voter registration, pre-registration for 16-year-olds, same day voter registration, voting day holidays, enfranchisement of formerly and presently incarcerated people, local and state resident voting for undocumented people, and a ban on any disenfranchisement laws.
- 4** Full access to technology—including net neutrality and universal access to the internet without discrimination—and full representation for all.
- 5** Protection and increased funding for Black institutions: including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's), Black media, and cultural, political and social formations.



GLOSSARY

ANTI-BLACK The Council for Democratizing Education defines anti-Blackness as being a two-part formation that both voids Blackness of value, while systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues. The first form of anti-Blackness is overt racism. Society also associates unpolitically correct comments with the overt nature of anti-Black racism. Beneath this anti-black racism is the covert structural and systemic racism which categorically predetermines the socioeconomic status of Blacks in this country. The structure is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies.

The second form of anti-Blackness is the unethical disregard for anti-Black institutions and policies. This disregard is the product of class, race, and/or gender privilege certain individuals experience due to anti-Black institutions and policies. This form of anti-Blackness is protected by the first form of overt racism.

ANTI-BLACK RACISM A term used to specifically describe the unique discrimination, violence and harms imposed on and impacting Black people specifically.

BLACK Black is defined as a person who identifies as Black AND has African indigenous ancestry that predates colonization (be located anywhere in the diaspora—excluding generic claims of Dinknesh (also known as Lucy) descendants)

**CAPITALISM/
ANTI-CAPITALISM** An economic system in which products are produced and distributed for profit using privately owned capital goods and wage labor. Many feminists assert that a critique of capitalism is essential for understanding the full nature of inequality, as global economic restructuring based on capitalism reflects a particular ideology that celebrates individual wealth and accumulation at the lowest cost to the investor, with little regard for the societal costs and exploitation

CARE ECONOMY An unpaid economy sometimes called the “domestic” or “reproductive” sector or “social reproduction” in which women do most of the work of maintaining the labor force and keeping the social framework in good order—both vital services for government and the commercial economy. The care economy produces and reproduces family and provides community-oriented goods and services such as healthcare, childcare, education and the like as a part of the process of caring for people and often outside the money economy. The care economy overwhelmingly depends on women’s labor. The value of the care economy is usually excluded from official economic statistics, making it hard to assess the gender impact of budget and policy decisions that touch on this sector. Work in the care economy is often not paid, though it may be supported by payments from the government. Conversely, government cutbacks on social programs or funding inadequacies in the provision of basic social services and essential utilities in infrastructure and other areas of basic needs can add substantially to women’s burden of unpaid work in the care economy. *Feminist Movement Builder’s Dictionary*

COLONIALISM Colonialism is a power relationship in which an external nation state (colonizer, in this case Europe and the U.S.) directly controls the political and economic system of another nation state and/or people (in our platform we’ll be focused on Black people). It normally involves the presence of a military force to crush dissent and the migration of people from the colony to the nation state of the colonizer (in this case, stopping African migrants from moving to the U.S.). Colonialism can also occur within geographic boundaries of a colonizer nation state. For example, Black people exist as a domestic colony within the U.S.

COMMUNITY CONTROL Community control occurs when a community, whether community be defined by geographical boundaries, culturally, or otherwise, directs the institutions and businesses that affect their lives, on how they will meet the community’s needs.

It is in essence the the local community having control of issues that directly affect their lives, land and security. Implicit in this definition is the clear statement that Black people must determine and control the pace, shape and manner of change and decision-making at local, regional, state and national levels.” *Adopted from* <http://www.bullinahahs.org.au/about-us/aboriginal-community-control/>

DECOLONIZATION The active resistance against colonial powers and a shifting of power towards acquisition of our own political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence and power. This process occurs politically and also applies to personal and societal psychic, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression.

FOOD APARTHEID The systematic destruction of Black self determination to control our food (including land, resource theft and discrimination), a hyper-saturation of destructive foods and predatory marketing, and a blatantly discriminatory corporate controlled food system that results in our communities suffering from some of the highest rates of heart disease and diabetes of all times. Many tend to use the term "food desert," however food apartheid is a much more accurate representation of the structural racialized inequities perpetuated through our current system.

FOOD JUSTICE A process whereby communities most impacted and exploited by our current corporate controlled, extractive agricultural system shift power to re-shape, re-define and provide indigenous, community based solutions to accessing and controlling food that are humanizing, fair, healthy, accessible, racially equitable, environmentally sound and just.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY A framework going beyond access to ensure that our communities have not only the right, but the ability to have community control of our food including the means of production and distribution. Food sovereignty entails a shift away from corporate agricultural system and towards our own governance of our own food systems. It is about our right to healthy food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, with the right to define and ultimately control our own food and agriculture systems. Shifting from an exclusively rights based framework to one of governance puts the needs of those who work and consume at all points of the food chain at the center rather than the demands of corporations and markets.

NON-BLACK PEOPLE OF COLOR A non-black person of color is defined as a person of color (non-white person) that does not identify as Black and does not have African indigenous ancestry that predates colonization. The term was developed to provide greater context to the distinct and unique oppression imposed on Black people, while recognizing the struggles of other people of color.

**OTHER
INSTITUTIONS**

When we refer to “other institutions” in the reparations demand we are speaking about the major institutions, like churches, universities and philanthropic institutions, who have also profited off of Black labor and are culpable. *Note the most recent Georgetown U. scandal: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/us/georgetown-university-search-for-slave-descendants.html>*

PATRIARCHY

A form of social stratification and power-relationships in society that favors men, mainly White men, and grants them more rights and privileges over women and oppresses women’s social, political, financial, sexual and human rights. It has a connection with a social economic system such as capitalism. *Agenda to Build Black Futures*
A sex/gender system of authoritarian male dominance and reinforced female dependency, characterized within capitalist society by certain characteristics. *Manning Marable*

**POLITICAL
ACTIVITY**

Is defined as activity directed towards the establishment and/or control of local, national or international governance.

**POLITICAL
PRISONERS**

A political prisoner is defined as someone imprisoned because they have opposed, criticized or participated in activities that oppose or are in direct contradiction to the established government’s exertion of power and control over a land and people.

REPARATIONS

The making of amends for a wrong that has been done—whether by individuals, corporations, government or other major institutions—by paying money, control of land, housing, jobs, health care, transportation and even finance and trade. *Agenda to Build Black Futures and UN Working Group of Experts: Mississippi Mission, US South Human Rights Abuses, Workers Rights and Economic Justice Testimony*

**RESPONSIBLE
BUSINESS/
ACCOUNTABLE
BUSINESS**

Responsible Business/Accountable Business is a position by which a business will be held in check or account for their decisions and actions. An accountable business requires a commitment to the vision of Black and other oppressed peoples to assume self-determination over those areas deemed by Black and other oppressed people to directly affect their lives. “Responsible” or “Accountable” businesses must meet three basic criteria: provide living wage jobs for community residents; adhere to ethical labor and investment standards; treat workers and consumers/clients with dignity and respect; and make regular charitable contributions that support Black communities.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime and conflict. It places decisions in the hands of those who have been most affected by a wrongdoing, and gives equal concern to the victim, the offender, and the surrounding community. Restorative responses are meant to repair harm, heal broken relationships, and address the underlying reasons for the offense. It emphasizes individual and collective accountability. Crime and conflict generate opportunities to build community and increase grassroots power when restorative practices are employed.

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

“Transformative justice [is] a theory and approach to violence...[which] seeks safety and accountability without relying on alienation, punishment, or State or systemic violence, including incarceration or policing. Three core beliefs: 1) Individual justice and collective liberation are equally important, mutually supportive, and fundamentally intertwined—the achievement of one is impossible without the achievement of the other; 2) The conditions that allow violence to occur must be transformed in order to achieve justice in individual instances of violence. Therefore, Transformative Justice is both a liberating politic and an approach for securing justice. 3) State and systemic responses to violence, including the criminal legal system and child welfare agencies, not only fail to advance individual and collective justice but also condone and perpetuate cycles of violence.

Transformative Justice seeks to provide people who experience violence with immediate safety and long-term healing and reparations while holding people who commit violence accountable within and by their communities. This accountability includes stopping immediate abuse, making a commitment to not engage in future abuse, and offering reparations for past abuse. Such accountability requires on-going support and transformative healing for people who sexually abuse.” *Generation 5*

The main goal of transformative justice is to repair the harm done as much as possible. Ideally, transformative justice seeks the transformation of individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Also, transformative justice at its best places the power to respond to harm back into the hands of the people most affected by harm. The institutions of the state and of white supremacy would no longer control and dictate responses to acts of harm. *Critical Resistance*

