

ADVERSITY TO **Advancement**

15 Climate Impacts
& 45 Black-Led
Pathways to
Climate Justice

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THE
CHISHOLM
LEGACY
PROJECT



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Across the United States—from Anchorage, Alaska to Miami, Florida—Black Communities are at the forefront of climate change impacts and are leading climate justice solutions. Per the old adage, “Those who are closest to the problem are best positioned to design the solution.”

Black communities are more likely to breathe polluted air, drink contaminated water, live in homes on contaminated soil, have compromised access to food and reliable energy, and feel the impacts of disasters, a sea level rise and shifts in agricultural yields as well as the myriad false solutions, from carbon offsets to biomass and nuclear. At the same time, Black communities are leading local food projects, community-owned energy, democracy initiatives, community-driven resilience planning, workers’ rights and so many more of the key components in the transition to a regenerative economy.

Ultimately, to achieve liberty and justice for all, we must dismantle the extractive economy that has stolen lands from Indigenous people, forced Black people from their homelands to become the enslaved labor that has built the infrastructure of this nation, and scoured the earth with greedy intent and reckless lack of regard or restraint.

This paper lays out the myriad ways that Black communities are differentially impacted by the perpetrators of climate change, while also demonstrating that Black communities are leading holistic, comprehensive areas of focus and approaches necessary to advance a Just Transition. By laying out the content in categories reflecting issue areas, as well as diverse approaches, this lengthy yet merely illustrative list demonstrates that it’s not just what we do; it is also how we do it.

This is just a representational sliver of the vast force of people, organizations, and communities who are leading the march to a Just Transition! Not even close to every Black American person or organization is included here. We invite you to visit the [TCLP Resource Hub Database](#) and the [TCLP BIPOC in ECJ Directory](#) to see more people doing this work!

This analysis, review, and inventory reflect the fact that, in the interwoven tapestry of intersectionality, for every problem there are three solutions that are already in motion. And for every solution, there are multiple entities leading change from different perches.

All the solutions are inextricably interconnected components in the overarching drive toward total system transformation from an extractive economy into a regenerative economy that embodies cooperation, caring for the sacred, and deep democracy. The models do exist and the leadership is there. What’s needed is for these exemplars to be robustly and directly supported to scale and for all to get behind frontline led solutions.

Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth... these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women’s empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.

Ban Ki Moon

15 Differential Impacts of Climate Change on Black Communities in the United States

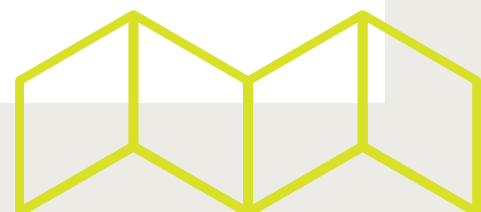
For the vast majority of Black people in these “United States,” our history on this land began with our identity and existence as enslaved chattel, i.e., property. We were stolen from our homelands, families, heritage, and wealth. We were brought to this land – stolen from its original inhabitants – to be the enslaved labor that built much of the infrastructure of what became the occupied lands renamed the United States. Our identity and existence still hold the vestiges of our beginnings, rich in cultural tradition, alongside the ravages of the post emancipation system of oppression.

Labor laws, land and housing legislation, our political and financial systems, and our military and policing systems—alongside a pervasive culture of white supremacy—all combine to perpetuate an overall set of circumstances that render Black communities politically, socially and economically marginalized/disenfranchised. While resistance, resilience, innovation, ingenuity, and strength of spirit and community have enabled us to survive as a people given that we keep striving for transformation and self-determination.

In the context of climate change, these systemically-derived conditions mean that Black Americans are more likely to face multiple forms of discrimination, live in toxic conditions, lack access to basic goods and resources, and experience disproportionate injury, compromised health, displacement, and mortality resulting from exposure to the drivers and the results of climate change, including disasters, sea level rise, and shifts in agricultural yields.

Below please find illustrative examples of the differential impacts of the climate change continuum on Black communities, listed in the following fifteen categories:

- 1) Anti-Black Hate and Violence
- 2) Criminalization
- 3) Economic Devastation
- 4) Education Injustice
- 5) Energy Insecurity
- 6) Food Insecurity
- 7) Gendered Discrimination
- 8) Housing Insecurity
- 9) Intersectional, Multi-Layered Discrimination
- 10) Mental Health
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- 15) Water Insecurity



1. Anti-Black Hate and Violence

We must never forget....

The Tulsa Race Massacre was not just an incident in history. It is a cautionary tale that continues to reverberate today as a lesson on what happens when Black people are “too successful”, thereby threatening the boundaries and the “natural order” established by a white supremacist culture and its enabling systems.



Too many want to erase....

The extreme backlash against Critical Race Theory (CRT) is rooted in an abdication of responsibility for the enslavement and ongoing systemic oppression of Black people and the wealth and power this system continues to reap for white people; a notion of protecting the mental and emotional wellbeing of white children; the desire to relegate racism into the annals of past sins; and, overarching it all, an investment in maintaining the status quo.

As stated, the extractive economy i.e., the capitalist economy, is predicated on the notion of winners and losers. There are the capitalizers and, particularly in the case of the commoditization of enslaved people, the people who are the capital, traded on the open market. However, with the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few, the inequality is widespread and baked into the economy. And the system of extraction is visited on people as well as the earth and her bounty.

Narratives of false inequality lead to Replacement Theory and use Black people as scapegoats

Charlottesville. January 6th. Tops Market in Buffalo. According to the Center for Public Integrity, Black people are the target of hate crime more than any other racial/ethnic group. ¹ Critical to note is that misogyny combined with anti-Black racism mean that Black women who are public figures, many of whom are advancing climate justice, inciting an extra level of hate, often targeted with threats of violence.²

The extractive economy as the root of climate change and deepening division

This brings us to where we are on the collision course with climate change. As inequality widens and deepens, those in power systematically spread seeds of narrative around scarcity with the intention of pitting population groups against each other so we don't unite and build power to overturn the entire extractive economy.

Out of this comes the fear that the wellbeing of some will be overtaken by the rise of others, combined with an inherent pervasive sense of the inferiority of Black people, and it grows resentment. This coupled with an “us or them” mentality foments hate which in turn feeds violence. The economic collapse resulting from systems shocks such as COVID-19 and climate disasters will only exacerbate division.





2. Criminalization and the Prison Industrial Complex

The system isn't broken – it's functioning as designed

From the Trans-Atlantic Enslavement Massacre to its successors, including segregation, school tracking, redlining, border detainment, and the prison industrial complex, myriad systemic mechanisms have been implemented to contain, constrain, and subjugate Black people in the United States. To continue to treat each of these matters as separate dynamics versus the collective manifestation of this core motive will not achieve the desired aim of true liberation.

When we pull back the curtain and take a look at what our "colorblind" society creates without affirmative action, we see a familiar social, political, and economic structure—the structure of racial caste. The entrance into this new caste system can be found at the prison gate.

Michelle Alexander

Unpacking exacerbators

At a meeting of women impacted by climate change, Tracy Kuhns, a Bayou Waterkeeper, spoke of the devastating circumstances in which waterkeepers are finding themselves because of the reckless extraction that is harming waterways and exacerbating climate change. In riveting, emotional commentary, Tracy stated that she could identify with Somali pirates because, from her own experience, she could see how someone could be driven to desperate acts out of love of family, anger at a soulless system, and a sense of helplessness at not seeing viable options.

In too many Black communities, we find ourselves hemmed in at all sides with multiple assaults in a society pervasive with systematized mechanisms to keep us down. And when we are down, there is another aspect of the system ready to capitalize on vulnerabilities. As an example, the same polluting facilities and practices that belch out the greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change also harm the communities in which they are disproportionately located, overwhelming BIPOC and communities with low income.

Some of the chemicals to which Black communities are exposed impact behavior, with some, including lead and manganese, tied to attention deficit disorder and/or hyperactive disorder and, in some instances, influencing violence. Instead of detoxifying communities, and offering treatment/rehabilitation, with an understanding of this linkage between toxic communities and behavior, people are instead incarcerated.

At the same time double digit unemployment, chronic illnesses and challenged work options result along with under-resourced schools, food and energy insecurity—all contributing to feelings of hopelessness and desperation. Instead of ensuring equal access to economic opportunity so people are not driven to acts of desperation and devastation, they are hunted and shackled.

Committing the crime of “living while Black”

The phenomenon known as “living while black” refers to the motives and intentions of Black Americans, when engaging in the same acts that white Americans perform without question, are met with a range of responses from suspicion and accusation to criminalization, detainment, incarceration, brutality, and even murder.

Racist narratives – spawned from tropes such as Black men as “super-predators”, Black single mothers as “lazy” or “welfare queens”, Black youth as “thugs” or “gangsters,” and more --all serve to evoke a range of emotions from derision to fear when one encounters Black people in various settings.

In the context of climate change-fueled disasters, insecurity heightens fear which in turn increases the chances of the most extreme of circumstances resulting from stereotypes, assumptions, and false accusations. During Hurricane Katrina, these two images appeared in Yahoo! News on the same day. Depicting two sets of people engaged in the same activities but with very different accompanying captions is a textbook case in point of a differential interpretation based on race, prompting one commenter to say, “It’s not looting if you’re white.”³



Hurricane Katrina “looting” photographs captioned differently based on race? (snopes.com)

By no means can this be dismissed as a simple unfortunate characterization in the media. Such differential characterization is fueled by and fuels attitudes and behaviors that incur deadly results. Five days after these articles were published, in the hurricane’s aftermath, a seventeen-year-old named James Brissette and a forty-year-old named Ronald Madison were shot and killed on the Danziger Bridge in New Orleans because they were similarly assumed to be up to no good. Neither were armed. Mr. Madison was shot in the back. Neither had committed any crime. The accusation, indictment, trial, sentencing, and execution all occurred in a matter of moments.

Futures snuffed. Families devastated. Relatives forced to bury the bullet-riddled bodies of their sons/uncles/brothers/nephews. A woman living the rest of her life without her right arm. Racism is the only precipitating crime.

"I have no mercy or compassion in me for a society that will crush people, and then penalize them for not being able to stand up under the weight."

Malcolm X

The links between incarceration, dehumanization, and environmental injustice

After Black people are profiled, harassed, steered, and corralled into imprisonment, the circumstances in prison pose further assaults/human rights violations. A significant proportion of prisons are built near, or actually on top of, abandoned industrial sites that have been deemed fit for only dumping toxic waste. This is testimony to the disregard for the humanity of those persons incarcerated. Specifically, one third of state and federal prisons are located within three miles of federal Superfund sites.

By definition, these sites are the places where the most toxic conditions exist, places where the contamination was so extreme that extensive cleanup was required—which had varying degrees of success. This means that people incarcerated on or near these sites are often exposed to significantly contaminated air and water. Research has cautioned strongly that proximity to a Superfund site is linked to an array of severe illnesses and overall lower life expectancy.⁴

| Prison and Location | Toxic Exposure | Impact |
|---|--|--|
| SCI Fayette, Western Pennsylvania | Coal waste deposit | Skin rashes, sores, cysts, gastrointestinal problems, and cancer ⁵ |
| Laborde Correctional Center, Louisiana | Abandoned landfill that caught fire and burned for four days before the prison evacuated | Headaches, extreme respiratory problems, etc. ⁶ |
| Multiple prisons in Appalachia (ex. Kentucky) | Mining and mountaintop removal | High rates of cancer and warnings against drinking or bathing in the tap water ⁷ |
| Rikers Jail Complex, New York | Sited directly on a landfill | Inmates and staff suffered such extreme impacts that correctional officers sued the city. ⁸ |

How extreme weather + devaluation of incarcerated persons = disproportionate impacts

Between being housed substandard structures that lack adequate ventilation and cooling systems, the dearth of proper emergency management plans, as well as the proliferation of health conditions and the reliance on psychiatric medication, incarcerated persons are differentially vulnerable to being impacted by extreme weather.

With climate change, as each successive year breaks the heat record of the preceding year, excessive heat risk is increasingly creating hazardous conditions for incarcerated persons. And storms continue to increase in frequency and severity. Of note:

- Texas has historically been one of the most dangerous states for prison temperatures. The prison system in Texas has recorded 23 heat-related deaths since 1998 and most agree that this is an underestimation.⁹
- In New Jersey, the Ombudsman's Corrections Office found that some prison cells reached temperatures of over 94 degrees. The conditions were such some inmates reportedly engaged in behaviors that resulted in punitive action, thereby placing them in airconditioned disciplinary housing units.¹⁰
- In Washington State, during the heat wave of 2021, temperatures in the cells in some prison cells hit a blistering 114 degrees.¹¹
- When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, deputies and corrections officers at the Orleans Parish Prison deserted their posts, leaving behind prisoners in locked cells with flood water rising. The prisoners spent days without power, food or water, some standing in sewage-tainted water up to their chests or necks. When the prisoners were finally evacuated from the jail, many were forced to wade through toxic, waste-filled water to the Broad Street overpass on Interstate 10.¹²



Corporations profit from imprisonment—another tool of the extractive economy

A 2021 University of Alabama study found two key factors tying race and prison privatization: 1) The higher the number of Black folks who are incarcerated, the higher the level of prison privatization; and 2) The states with the higher the level of “racial fear” consistently have a higher level of prison privatization.¹³

A University of California Berkeley study that found that Black youth were more likely to be in private prisons than White inmates, who tend to be older, because private companies deliberately exclude people with higher medical costs from their contracts. Gloria Browne-Marshall breaks it down. “What I take away from it is how prisoners are looked at as commodities,” she says. “It’s all about how the private prisons can make the most money.”¹⁴

Critical Resistance describes the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) as “the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems.” They go on to describe the PIC’s role in maintaining power and authority by “earning huge profits for private companies that deal with prisons and police forces and helping earn political gains for “tough on crime” politicians.”¹⁵ This loops back to the study that describes high support for privatization in localities with high levels of “racial fear” and further ties to the racist tropes that associate Black people with crime.



The penal code is modern-day slavery

Ratified in 1865, the 13th amendment of the US constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude. However, it contained an exception that allows forced labor for punishment of crime if the party has been convicted. This clause has been used to exploit prisoners as workers, paying them anywhere from zero compensation to a dollar an hour, to perform jobs ranging from prison services to manufacturing or working for private employers, where the majority of their pay is deducted for room and board and other expenses by the jurisdictions where they are incarcerated.¹⁶

Matthew Mancini, author of *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928*, said that after the emancipation of enslaved people, many Southern state governments leased out the labor of their prison populations to private corporations and businessmen. “The system, of course, was brutal,” he said. “And it was mainly—not entirely, but mainly—a system of controlling Black labor.” Whether it was coal mining in Alabama, turpentine extraction in Florida, or timber harvesting in Georgia, leasing the labor of incarcerated persons was often used as a way to extract valuable natural resources. “The idea that both prisoners and the land are disposable state resources persists today,” said Mancini.¹⁷

Beginning in 1979, participation in prison labor increased with the formation of the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP). The PIECP is a federal program first authorized under the Justice System Improvement Act of 1979.¹⁸ Approved by Congress in 1990 for indefinite continuation, the program legalizes the transportation of prison-made goods across state lines and allows prison inmates to earn market wages in private sector jobs that can go toward tax deductions, victim compensation, family support, and room and board.¹⁹

In June 2022, the American Civil Liberties Union published a report that found that about 800,000 of the 1.2 million people incarcerated in state and federal prisons are forced to work, generating a conservative

estimate of \$11 billion annually in goods and services while average wages range from 13 cents to 52 cents per hour. In Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi and Texas incarcerated persons are forced to work without any pay at all.²⁰ Louisiana has the highest incarceration rate in the country, with a hugely overrepresented Black population. The state penitentiary at Angola was once a plantation, and incarcerated people there still till the cotton fields.²¹

Firms, including those in the technology and food industries, are often provided tax incentives to contract prison labor, commonly at below market rates.²² The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) serves as a federal tax credit that grants employers \$2,400 for every work-release employed inmate.²³ “Prison in-sourcing” has grown in popularity as an alternative to outsourcing work to countries with lower labor costs. A wide variety of companies such as Whole Foods, McDonald’s, Target, IBM, Texas Instruments, Boeing, Nordstrom, Intel, Wal-Mart, Victoria’s Secret, Aramark, AT&T, BP, Starbucks, Microsoft, Nike, Honda, Macy’s and

Sprint, and many more, actively participated in prison in-sourcing throughout the 1990s and 2000s.²⁴

Why is the work “essential,” but the workers disposable?

Incarcerated workers are assigned to public works projects, cemetery maintenance, school grounds and parks maintenance; road work; building construction; government office cleaning; landfill maintenance, and hazardous spill clean-up; forestry work; and more. At least 30 states explicitly include incarcerated workers as a labor resource in their emergency operations plans for disasters and emergencies. Incarcerated firefighters combat wildfires in more than 14 states.²⁵

Workplace safety and labor laws explicitly exempt incarcerated workers from the protections that virtually all other workers have as standard operating procedures. Most incarcerated workers surveyed say they received no formal job training, and many say they worry about their safety while working. Incarcerated workers with minimal experience or training are often assigned hazardous work in unsafe conditions, with inadequate equipment safety precautions, and without standard protective gear, leading to preventable injuries and deaths.²⁶

Prisons don’t keep good records on the number of incarcerated workers injured on the job, but California reported more than 600 instances in its state prison industry program over a four-year period. Because of poor data collection, this number likely underestimates the true impact of prison work on the health and safety of incarcerated workers.²⁷

From the time that BP began the clean up after the oil drilling disaster, in Louisiana, cleanup workers stood out, wearing scarlet pants and T-shirts sporting the words “Inmate Labor”. Parish jails are allowed to contract incarcerated workers out to private businesses. The incarcerated workers receive between zero and forty cents an hour for their labor, as well as the opportunity to earn extra credits off their sentences.

“If you talk to people around here, it is jokingly referred to as rent-a-convict,” said Michael Brewer, a former public defender quoted in a July 2006 New



York Times article on prisoner labor in Louisiana. "There's something offensive about that. It's almost like a form of slavery." Prisoner workers are bound by BP's notorious gag rule and are not allowed to speak about the cleanup. However, it is known that beach cleanup crews work 12 hours a day. Under OSHA rules, they work 20 minutes followed by a 40-minute rest due to the oppressive heat that builds up in their protective suits under the hot sun.

They begin work at 6 a.m. and end at 6 p.m., clocking 3 to 4 hours of back-breaking labor and 12 hours of exposure to noxious, oil fumes that include Corexit, the dispersant BP used is so toxic that it is banned in 90 countries. If a prisoner decides that the risk to his health is too great and refuses the cleanup assignment, he forfeits credits toward reducing his sentence and must return to prison.²⁸

The State of California trains and deploys thousands of prisoners to fight fires each year. "Every fire season it's the same," said Romarilyn Ralston, who leads Project Rebound, a California State University program that supports formerly incarcerated students. "The pay is so little, the work is so dangerous. Now we add Covid-19 to the story, and it gets even worse. The crews are both crucial and heavily exploited".

Ralston was a formerly incarcerated person who worked at a fire camp. With incarcerated workers earning between \$2 and \$5 per day with a \$1 per hour "surplus" when they work a fire, the program saves the state of California between \$90m and \$100m a year. Crew members and trainees injured on the job, or who don't have the same rate of productivity, are relegated to rejoining the general prison population. "So there's a lot of pressure on folks just tough it out at these fire camps when they're sick, injured, or when they're depressed," said Ralston.

Adding insult to injury, options for incarcerated firefighters to finish training and become full-time firefighters after they have served their sentences are quite limited. Fire departments typically require full-time firefighters to have EMT certification. However, anyone with a felony conviction is banned from earning EMT certification for 10 years post release from prison. People with more than two felony convictions are banned from being a certified EMT permanently.²⁹

In the height of the COVID pandemic, as the trees of California burned due to the climate ravaged forest, a comment by a newscaster put in perspective the commoditization of persons who are incarcerated when he referred to prisoners who had died of COVID as "resources that are not available to fight the fires".

Capitalism does not permit an even flow of economic resources. With this system, a small privileged few are rich beyond conscience, and almost all others are doomed to be poor at some level. That's the way the system works. And since we know that the system will not change the rules, we are going to have to change the system.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



3. Economic Devastation

Economic vulnerability results in an extreme level of exposure and likelihood of severe impacts of climate change. Economic disparities compromise access, security, and quality in housing, food, health care, energy, water, and more.

According to the Rand Corporation, Black households have average wealth of \$24,000 including property, investments, etc. while the average household wealth for White Americans is \$189,000.³⁰ With a poverty rate of 19.5%, Black Americans are over twice as likely to live in poverty than White Americans whose poverty rate is 8.2%.³¹

Wealth disparities impact quality of housing, residential neighborhood, exposure to crime, quality of infrastructure, air quality, access to healthy foods, transit/transportation access, and more. Extreme weather worsened by climate change is a hidden cause of inflation, threatening to push up already high prices of everything from food and clothing to electronics.³²

4. Education Injustice

Privatization applies profiteering to the commons and drives unequal access

With less funding available for public goods and services, resulting from a combination of widening economic disparities, inflation, and a global recession, advocates have been successful in increasing the proliferation of privatization by claiming that it's more economical than the provision of services by government entities.³³ However, privatization can create parallel systems in which one system is supported by private interests and typically serves higher-income people, while a less resourced, lower quality system serves people with lower-incomes.

For example, charter schools can siphon funding away from the public system meant to serve everyone. In other circumstances, individuals and families with low incomes can lose access to public goods completely. When they are privatized, public goods meant to serve everyone can become separate and unequal systems that further divide communities and perpetuate inequality.³⁴



Toxic facilities compromise school financing

Another form of education injustice is proximity of our schools to toxic conditions. Under-resourced state/municipal budgets have resulted in the routine placement schools on the least expensive land, which is often beside polluting roadways, factories or on previously contaminated sites. Pollution exposure is also drawn along racial lines.³⁵ Throughout the United States, over 12,000 schools are within one mile of a toxic facility.³⁶ Based on the openings and closings of 1,600 industrial plants, the opening of industrial plants lead to 11 percent declines in housing values within 0.5 mile, or a loss of about \$4.25 million for these households.³⁷

Given that property values finance school systems, the opening of a toxic facility is a double-whammy on students, both exposing them to harmful toxins and lessened tax revenues for schools. This is especially impactful since these companies often get tax breaks and don't contribute to the tax base, or the taxes paid don't specifically benefit the immediate area as they are dispersed throughout a county or state.

Black children's health and education are compromised by toxic exposure

While Black children make up 16% of all US public school students, more than a quarter of Black children attend the schools worst affected by air pollution. By contrast, white children comprise 52% of the public school system but only 28% of those attend the highest risk schools. This disparity remains even when the urban-rural divide is accounted for.³⁸

Black people are 75% more likely to live in a neighborhood next to a polluting facility or "fence-line" community than other racial groups. More than one million Black people live within a half mile of a natural gas facility. Data from by the Clean Air Task Force and the U.S. Census Bureau, recounted in the NAACP "Fumes Across the Fenceline" Report, reveals show that an estimated 138,000 Black children suffer annually from asthma attacks caused by oil and gas pollution.

This makes up 18.5% of the total 750,000 asthma attacks experienced by children nationally and contributes to the 101,000 school days Black children miss each year.³⁹ Other health impacts include: headaches, nose bleeds, and throat and eye irritation.

Black children are disproportionately exposed to more than a dozen neurotoxins, including lead, mercury and cyanide compounds as schools with large numbers of BIPOC children are routinely located near major roads and other sources of pollution, as well as being inundated with other hazards such as lead-laced drinking water and toxins buried beneath school buildings and playgrounds.

Pre-kindergarten children are attending higher risk schools than older students—a stark finding given the vulnerability of developing brains. According to Dr. Sara Grineski, an academic who authored the first study on air pollution and schools, "We're only now realizing how toxins don't just affect the lungs but influence things like emotional development, autism, ADHD and mental health," she said. "Socially-marginalized populations are getting the worst exposure. When you look at the pattern, it's so pervasive that you have to call it an injustice and racism."⁴⁰

Extreme weather is disrupting our children's education

In a study conducted in January 2023, The Government Accountability Office found that more frequent and intense extreme weather events are disrupting school systems nationwide for weeks, months and, in some cases, years. They found that more than 300 presidentially declared major disasters have occurred since 2017 across the United States, with "devastating effects on K-12 schools including trauma and mental health issues among students and staff, lost instructional time and financial strain."



Laura Schifter, a senior fellow with the Aspen Institute, says America's schools are typically old and unprepared for the more extreme weather. And she emphasizes that schools that have already been impacted must work to better understand their future climate risk and build more resilient structures as they recover. "Our public schools right now they received a D+ on the American infrastructure report card, so these impacts that we've seen in terms of buildings being flooded and classrooms being damaged, these will only continue to occur as climate change worsens," Schifter told CNN.⁴¹



Climate change is cooking our classrooms - and children

According to the Government Accountability Office, approximately 36,000 schools nationwide need updated or replaced heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. In 2022, thousands of schools, from Philadelphia to Baltimore to San Diego and Chicago, had to close due to heat days.⁴² In the words of the Washington Post, "Climate Change poses a growing threat to American Schools." Regions where extreme heat was once rare—from the Northeast to the Pacific Northwest—now periodically find their buildings unbearably hot as spring turns to summer and again when classes resume in August or September.⁴³

In a 2020 study called "Heat and Learning," Dr. Park and Dr. Goodman, along with A. Patrick Behrer of Stanford University, examined more than 270 million state-administered test scores for third to eighth graders between 2009 and 2015. They found that students who experienced more school days of 80 degrees or hotter in the year before testing fared worse than their counterparts in the same school districts who took the tests in years with fewer hot days. Alarming, this link was true only for Black and Hispanic students, and for students with lower family income. For white students as a group, there was no statistically significant effect.⁴⁴

In another 2020 study conducted internationally and published in the journal *Nature Human Behavior*, researchers similarly found that students performed worse on standardized tests for every additional day of 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, even after controlling for other factors. Those effects held across 58 countries. When the researchers looked specifically at the United States, using more granular data to break down the effect on test scores by race, they found that the detrimental impact of heat seemed to affect Black and Hispanic students primarily.

One of the authors, Dr. R. Jisung Park said the gap seemed to reflect the fact that Black and Hispanic students are less likely to have air-conditioning at school and at home. Being exposed to higher temperatures throughout the school year appears to take a gradual and cumulative toll on students' ability to absorb their lessons, he said.⁴⁵

In the in the US-based study, Dr. Goodman also pointed out that "low-income students are in school buildings that have worse HVAC and ventilation systems."⁴⁶ A 2019 study provides further context for how this disproportionate exposure to heat is intensified in Black communities and points out how the history of redlining and the underinvestment that goes along with it has left many Black neighborhoods today with more paved areas and fewer trees. As a result, those neighborhoods became hotter than their white counterparts, leading to more cases of heat-related illnesses.⁴⁷

Infrastructure challenges make schooling difficult for Black children and their teachers

Too many schools—particularly those in low-income communities and communities of color—lack the support and resources necessary to provide students and teachers with facilities that are healthy, safe, and conducive to learning and teaching.⁴⁸ Schools with deteriorating infrastructure have higher rates of chronic absenteeism, decreased academic performance, lower morale, and poorer health conditions. These negative impacts affect not only the students, but a poor physical environment can also drive teacher attrition and strained student-teacher relationships.⁴⁹

Lead + ADHD + discriminatory disciplinary measures = unfair treatment of Black children

Exposure to lead is tied to Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and Black children are more likely to be exposed to lead. According to a study by University of Memphis, the under-diagnosis of ADHD in Black children is a result of racism that is structurally and institutionally embedded within school policing policies, and the tendency not to recognize Black illness.

Institutionalized racism and flawed behavioral ascriptions have led to the under-diagnosis of ADHD in Black children and leads to their over-representation in the school-to-prison pipeline.⁵⁰ Low-income students, students with neurodivergence and students with risk of academic failure are overrepresented in the pipeline. This is significant because it illustrates how already vulnerable communities are pushed into the criminal justice system at higher rates than their counterparts.⁵¹

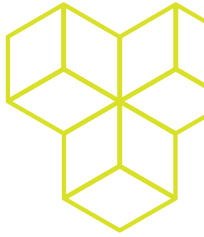
In the words of Symone Walker, a federal attorney and parent, “Illiteracy, special education and discipline are major pathways in the school pipeline to prison, but racial bias is the express route.”⁵²



Compounded challenges lead Black children into the school to prison pipeline

Between redlining, disasters, extreme heat, toxic exposures, and more, the learning context for Black children is exceedingly impacted by the combination of environmental racism and the impacts of climate change due to the pre-existing vulnerabilities advanced by racism. This is further complicated by a poor infrastructure, the failure to diagnose learning challenges, and discriminatory discipline.

Whether children are in school and unable to pay attention due to toxic exposure, or out of school due to poor air quality, asthma and unevenly applied disciplinary measures, or their schools are closed or uninhabitable due to extreme weather – all of these factors impact children’s academic performance. Studies show that if children are not on grade level by the 3rd grade, they are more likely to enter the school to prison pipeline.⁵³



5. Energy insecurity

Black communities are more likely to be harmed from pollution from fossil fuel-based energy production, overburdened by energy costs forcing tough choices, and have their energy shut off for non-payment, while being less likely to contribute significantly to the use of fossil fuel energy. They are least likely to benefit from the revenue generated by the energy sector due to underrepresentation in related jobs or in terms of business opportunities.

Black communities are chronically ingesting fossil fuel fumes

According to a report by Greenpeace and the Gulf Coast Center for Law and Poverty, approximately 56 percent of health-harming air emissions from oil refineries land hardest on people of color, even though people of color represent 39 percent of the overall population. For facilities that manufacture petrochemicals, 66 percent of the local pollution is borne by Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples.⁵⁴

Black households have higher energy costs than white households

A study by University of California Berkeley found that residential electricity, natural gas and other home-heating fuel expenditures were found to be “statistically and economically significantly higher for Black households than for white households.” Examining American Community Survey data from 2010 to 2017, study author Eva Lyubich found that Black renters pay \$273 more each year than their white peers, after controlling for certain factors such as income and household size.

Similarly, Black homeowners annually pay \$408 more for energy than white homeowners, according to the study, which also noted that “the gap is largest for low-income households [...] The degree to which housing is energy-efficient may explain some of the disparity.”⁵⁵ As such, according to the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) on average, Black people pay a disproportionately greater share of their income for energy needs.

Black households are more likely to have their electricity shut off than white households

Economic analyst John Howat at NCLC found that compared to white households, Black households have higher frequencies of disconnections, disconnection notices and households foregoing other necessities to pay for energy. During one of his analyses, he found that on a nationwide basis, Black people earning less than 150% of the poverty level were about twice as likely to have their electricity shut off as white households with comparable incomes.⁵⁶ The impacts were lower in the Midwest than in some other regions, but Black households still had a higher rate of disconnections.⁵⁷



Black communities face higher energy burdens – on multiple levels

In sum, forced hosting of polluting energy producing facilities means extracting health and wellbeing from communities to produce energy to be used by others, while impacted communities are not afforded the opportunity to be a part of reaping the benefits of the energy economy.

6. Food insecurity

Supermarket redlining deprives Black communities of healthy, affordable food options

Supermarket redlining is a term that refers to when owners of large supermarkets choose not to locate their stores in urban and/or low-income neighborhoods. The rationale includes reasons such as “low profit margins” and “higher crime rates,” which in turn perpetuate stigmatization of Black communities.⁵⁸ Large supermarkets often offer fresh foods at lower prices than smaller stores due to bulk purchasing and the advantage of being able to negotiate with large distributors. Therefore, because of supermarket redlining, low-income Black people in the urban have less access to fresh food; and, to add insult to injury, they pay higher prices for food in general.⁵⁹

Climate driven shifts in agricultural yields deepen Black food insecurity

When Black communities are already challenged with accessing healthy and nutritious food, as availability is compromised overall by climate change, the communities are further deprived. The heating of the planet exacerbates drier conditions, compromising crop yields. Flowering, the emergence of pollinators, and other natural events associated with food production are being disrupted causing a decline in yields. Flooding and heatwaves drive losses in production and erosion of fish resources, thereby reducing nutritional contributions from fisheries.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), globally, food prices have risen over 70% since mid-2020 and this inflation is driven by the combination of these factors. Amid supply chain disruption, food commodity prices have also skyrocketed, leading to more food protectionism, which could further inflate prices.⁶⁰

Systemic racism imperils Black farmers in the face of climate impacts

A long history of discriminatory practices means Black farmers tend to own and run smaller, less-resourced operations, tend to have significantly lower incomes and frequently do not have ready access to loans and other resources in comparison to white farmers. They are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The 2017 Census of Agriculture—conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture—found that more than half of Black-operated farms in the U.S. had sales and government payments of less than \$5,000 per year, and only 7% had an income of at least \$50,000 as compared to 25% of farmers overall.⁶¹



As such, the estimated 48,000 Black farmers own operations less resilient to severe storms, droughts and other extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change. A study published in 2014 by researchers from the University of Georgia concluded that Black farmers in the American South were more vulnerable to drought due to their small landholding size and poor access to disaster-mitigation resources such as credit, insurance, loans, and irrigation. ⁶²

Climate-driven agricultural shifts fuel forced Black migration

A large and growing body of research in parts of Africa and Latin America shows that increased or extreme temperatures and rainfall variability and extremes can negatively affect crop yields in ways that may induce migration.⁶³ The effects of climate change and food insecurity on migration and forced displacement are significant. Drought, flooding, wildfires, and extreme weather events have displaced millions. These events, especially given the impact on resources, can spur and amplify conflict.

This results in an increase in the number of food-insecure migrants as well as malnutrition in vulnerable migrant populations, particularly children. Globally, climate impacts place additional stress on communities already facing food insecurity, limited economic opportunities, sociopolitical marginalization, conflict, and compromised governance. Marginalized groups—especially women and girls, older adults, and differently abled persons—are disproportionately affected by disasters, food insecurity, and displacement.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, as seen with the images of Border Patrol agents chasing down Haitian migrants on horseback, using their reins to herd humans in need of refuge and care,⁶⁵ the United States has a long way to go in taking responsibility for its outsized influence on climate forced migration through its excessive greenhouse gas emissions.⁶⁶

Race and gender spell double jeopardy for Black women's food security

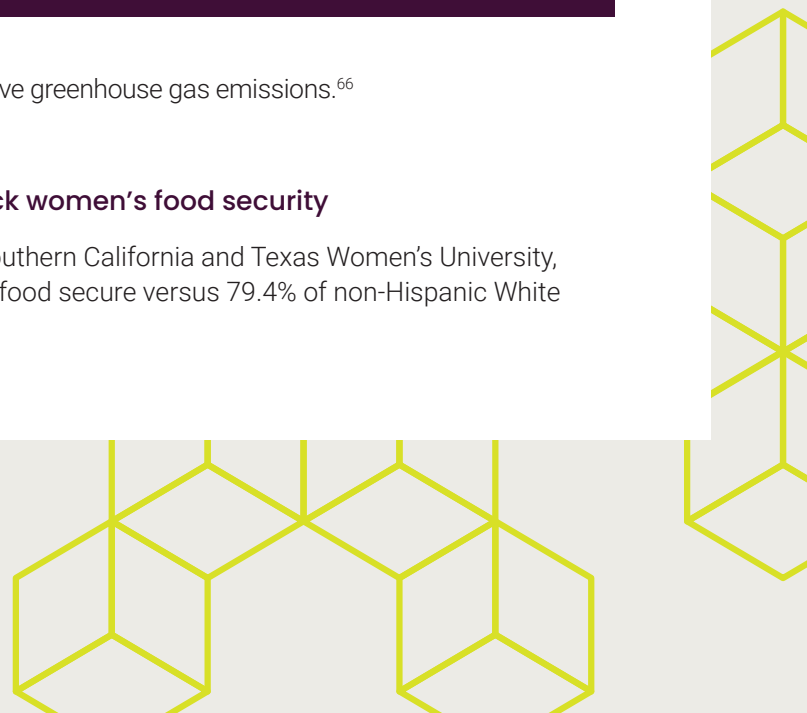
According to a study conducted by the University of Southern California and Texas Women's University, in 2017, only 9.0% of non-Hispanic Black women were food secure versus 79.4% of non-Hispanic White women.⁶⁷



An economy based on extracting from a finite system faster than the capacity of the system to regenerate will eventually come to an end—either through collapse or through our intentional re-organization.

Transition is inevitable. Justice is not.

Movement Generation





7. Gender-Based Discrimination—Impact on Black Women

As a crosscutting dynamic, the combination of racism and pervasive gender inequities means that Black women are in double jeopardy when facing both the gendered and race-based vulnerabilities and differential impacts of climate change. According to a study conducted by In Our Own Voice, “Black women are harmed at significantly higher rates by exposure to high temperatures, air pollution, heat island effect, and proximity to industrial pollutants and waste. Maternal and infant health consequences include, but are not limited to, premature births, low birth weights, increased likelihood of stillbirth, and higher risk pregnancies, especially for people already living with pre-existing conditions.”⁶⁸

Black women earn less and have less wealth, regardless of marital or educational status

Pre-existing economic vulnerabilities render Black women at increased risk due to the extreme economic impacts of climate change. Black women are more likely than white women to earn low wages, have low wealth, and live in poverty.⁶⁹ Single white women without a college degree have 38% higher levels of average wealth (\$8,000) than single Black women with a college degree (\$5,000). At the household level, Black women with a bachelor’s degree have 79 percent less wealth (\$45,000) than white women with no degree (\$117,200) and 83 percent less wealth than white women with a bachelor’s degree (\$260,000).

Black women have the greatest student loan debt—greater than Black men, white men, and white women.⁷⁰ According to the National Women’s Law Center, in 2021, 18.8 percent of Black women lived in poverty, as compared to 7.1% of white women.⁷¹

Economic injustice puts Black women in the crosshairs of domestic violence

The pervasiveness of financial challenges for Black women and families lead to the very dynamics that exacerbate domestic violence. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, “More than 40% of Black women have experienced intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes. And more than half of Black adult female homicides are related to intimate partner violence.”⁷²

According to a study by The National Network to End Domestic Violence, in a relationship where domestic violence is already present, financial problems can exacerbate abuse and contribute to an increase in the severity and frequency of the abuse. When couples are under financial duress, domestic violence is three times more likely. Calls to domestic violence hotlines increase dramatically as the economy falters. The significant rise in domestic violence manifests a spike in 911 calls and demand for emergency shelter.⁷³

Domestic violence is three times more likely in households where couples are under financial duress.



Financial duress and disaster vulnerability can mean double jeopardy for Black Women

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, Black women experience domestic violence at a 35% greater rate than white women.⁷⁴ A survey of US and Canadian domestic violence programs reported an increased service demand as long as six months to a year later in the thirteen most severely disaster impacted areas.⁷⁵ Following the Missouri floods of 1993, the average state turn-away rate at domestic violence shelters rose 111% over the preceding year.

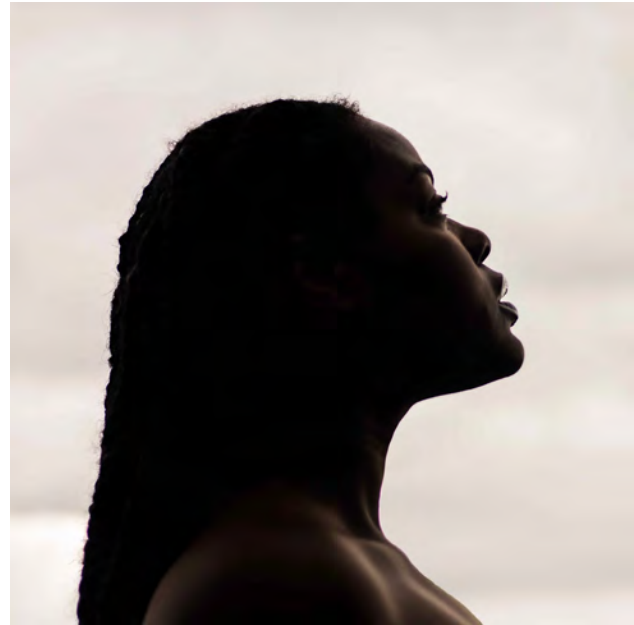
The final report notes that programs for domestic violence survivors sheltered 400% more flood-impacted women and children than anticipated.⁷⁶ Four New Orleans shelters and two nonresidential programs were closed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 with advocates reporting "women are being battered by their partners in the emergency shelters." In the first four months after the US Gulf Coast hurricanes, 38 rape cases were reported to women's services that initiated documentation projects to capture sexual assaults of disaster-displaced women.⁷⁷

After Hurricane Andrew in Miami, spousal abuse calls to the local community helpline increased by 50%⁷⁸ and over one-third of 1400 surveyed residents reported that someone in their home had lost verbal or physical control in the two months since the hurricane.⁷⁹ A quarter (25%) of all community leaders responding to an open-ended question about the effects of the Exxon Valdez oil spill on family problems cited "increase in domestic violence." Asked if spouse abuse increased after the spill, 64% agreed; they also reported increased child physical abuse (39%), child sexual abuse (31%), elder abuse (11%), and rape (21%).⁸⁰

According to a 2020 report from the Domestic Violence Network, Black women are less likely to seek help following a domestic violence incident.⁸¹ Between the significant financial challenges, which are linked to women's likelihood of experiencing violence, the differential disaster vulnerability is linked to violence against women and the reduced likelihood of reporting, although one can surmise that Black women suffer disproportionately from violence as a result of disasters. The date is hard to pinpoint beyond extrapolation due to a combination of underreporting and a lack of focus on the intersection with race by researchers.

The COVID-19 pandemic disaster deepened the proliferation of domestic violence

Using mobile device tracking data, city-level unemployment data, and new data on labor market conditions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, researchers can isolate the effects of unemployment and staying at home on incidents of domestic violence. Unemployment decreases domestic violence after controlling for the degree to which people stay at home. Evidence also suggests that staying at home increases domestic violence. However, we find that the effects of unemployment and staying at home are concentrated right after an initial shock from mid-March to mid-June 2020.



Finally, we find that some labor market conditions linked to COVID-19 such as being prevented from looking for work due to the pandemic, decrease domestic violence, and these labor market effects are often gendered.⁸² Although the statistics on race and DV during the pandemic are sparse, advocates are drawing conclusions from one alarming statistic: At least four Black women and girls were murdered per day in the US in 2020, adding up to 405 more murders than the previous year.⁸³

Climate-forced migration drives violence against women

Whether it is Black people in Latin America, who tend to be economically and politically disenfranchised and disproportionately impacted by climate change, Black people in the Caribbean, ravaged by climate change impacts and still reeling from colonialism, or people on the continent of Africa harmed by the extractive economy and differentially impacted by climate change, it is clear that Afro Descendant climate forced migration is on the rise.^{84 85 86}

According to UN Environment, an estimated 80 percent of people displaced by climate change are women, and this has imperiled thousands of women. “When women are displaced, they are at greater risk of violence, including sexual violence,” said Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. “While they sleep, wash, bathe or dress in emergency shelters, tents or camps, the risk of sexual violence is a tragic reality of their lives as migrants or refugees,” Bachelet said. “Compounding this is the increased danger of human trafficking, and child, early and forced marriage which women and girls on the move endure.”⁸⁷

Incidences of violence against migrant women happen at all stages of migration and are committed by a variety of factors including smugglers, human traffickers, authorities (i.e. police and border guards), intimate partners, and other migrants.⁸⁸ Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, this has led to travel restrictions and border closures, resulting in women and girls turning to more dangerous routes, including using the services of smugglers.⁸⁹ Border crossing guides—otherwise known as coyotes—might make their help conditional on sexual favors.⁹⁰

Rising poverty and the inability to gain access to decent work has also led some migrant women to accept risky economic opportunities rendering them more vulnerable to violence, abuse, and exploitation.⁹¹ The risk is far from over once people who emigrate get settled in the United States. Immigrant women, due to their immigration status, often have a more difficult time escaping abuse. Too many feel trapped in abusive relationships because of immigration laws, language barriers, social isolation, and a lack of financial resources.⁹² Recent federal legislation opened new and safe routes to immigration status for some immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence, which is a step in the right direction.

However, due to lack of access to the information about the legislation, combined with a fear of the system, abuse is still a significant problem as many women do not have access to avenues of support. Additionally, the legal status of the women often

“When the Kerner Commission told white America what Black America has always known, that prejudice and hatred built the nation’s slums, maintains them and profits by them, white America could not believe it. But it is true. Unless we start to fight and defeat the enemies in our own country, poverty and racism, and make our talk of equality and opportunity ring true, we are exposed in the eyes of the world as hypocrites when we talk about making people free.

Shirley Chisholm



precludes them from reporting such crimes to the authorities for fear of deportation. Statistics fail to fully capture the extent of the violence against women that occurs once undocumented immigrants are settled in the States.^{93 94}

8. Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity is both a driver of vulnerability to climate change impacts, and an outcome of the impacts of climate change. Whether it is the poor-quality housing stock that renders Black households more likely to have homes destroyed and life lost, or a proliferation of their homes located in floodplains. There are myriad ways that Black households become more vulnerable to climate impacts.⁹⁵ The lack of homeowners insurance and the greater likelihood of renting versus owning means that Black households are much less likely to bounce back after climate change impacts their living situations, and they are more likely to endure long-term displacement.

Housing vulnerability is particularly challenging for Black women

According to the Urban Institute, in 2016, the typical Black woman-headed household had \$0 in home equity.⁹⁶ According to the November 2022 installment of *Nonprofit Quarterly's* Locked Out series, "Black women have the worst outcomes of any social group in all aspects of housing in the US; they face pervasive barriers to homeownership and high foreclosure risk, are disproportionately impacted by spiking rents and eviction, and are overrepresented in the country's unhoused population."⁹⁷

Black women endure eviction at three times the rate of white women over the course of our lifetimes. One in five Black women experience eviction, as compared to one in fifteen white women.⁹⁸ Nationally, almost half of unhoused single woman-headed families are headed by Black single mothers.⁹⁹ Given the close ties between housing security and climate resilience, all these factors combined translate into greater vulnerability to climate impacts.



Gentrification has been dubbed the "Negro Removal Program" of the 21st century

According to the Institute of the Black World, "Gentrification has become the watchword for the displacement of Black people and culture as it has emerged as a major threat to Black communities that have been centers for Black business/economic development, cultural and civic life for generations."¹⁰⁰

In climate gentrification, climate change driven impacts on community characteristics and changes in property values and may result in the displacement of vulnerable residents.¹⁰¹ Communities that have been ravaged by disasters or are threatened by sea level rise are already seeing displacement of Black people, from New Orleans to Miami. All accounts point to a continued proliferation of Black communities pushed out of home and social networks by climate gentrification as developers see the opportunity to capitalize on housing insecurity and profit from repopulation with wealthier, whiter, residents.



Between 2000 and 2013, more than 110,000 Black residents were displaced from urban areas due to gentrification. Despite the federal eviction moratorium in effect until August 2021, nationwide there were 434,304 evictions in 2021. More than one-quarter (27.9%) of all avoided eviction cases in 2021 were in majority-Black neighborhoods even though just 11.6 percent of neighborhoods are classified as majority-Black communities.¹⁰²

Disasters displace millions, particularly Black communities

According to the US Census Bureau, natural disasters displaced more than three million Americans in 2022.^{103 104} Most displacements were short term, according to the Census Bureau, which reports that nearly 40 percent of people returned home within a week of evacuating. But the census figures also show that roughly 16 percent of the displaced adults never returned home, and 12 percent were out of their homes for more than six months.¹⁰⁵ Black people represent 13 percent of the general population but account for 39 percent of people experiencing homelessness and more than 50 percent of homeless families with children.¹⁰⁶

People experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable during natural disasters and often subject to discrimination during recovery. Too often resources are prioritized for people who were displaced from their homes by natural disasters, even though nothing fundamentally differentiates those made homeless by extreme weather and those who otherwise lack stable housing.¹⁰⁷ People experiencing homelessness are often the first and most severely affected group during public health emergencies and disasters such as COVID-19, hurricanes, and wildfires.

Their limited resources, social isolation, lack of access to housing and other material needs, and a high prevalence of disabilities, chronic physical conditions, and behavioral health needs create substantial barriers to undertaking individual disaster preparedness measures or to shelter in place during and after a disaster.

These disaster-related challenges compound the daily stressors inherent to homelessness, such as social stigma and marginalization, and risk of violence.¹⁰⁸ Hurricane Katrina led to the largest internal migration in the United States since the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. An estimated 1.5 million residents in the Gulf Coast, including 400,000 people in New Orleans, fled or were evacuated. Thousands remain permanently displaced; of those displaced, Black residents were the least likely to return.¹⁰⁹

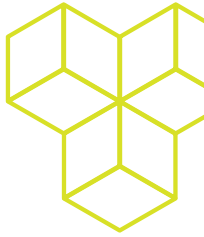
Displacement has wide ranging impacts on physical and mental health

Communities can be disrupted by displacement when critical anchors, including neighbors, churches, and small businesses, are lost, resulting in a loss of history, culture, and opportunities.¹¹⁰ As people move farther away from their regular primary care providers, they lose access to health care.¹¹¹ For people who are elderly, mortality rates increase due to displacement.¹¹² People are forced to live in close quarters to share expenses, thereby exposing themselves to less sanitary conditions and greater prevalence of infections and diseases.¹¹³

Displaced persons are more likely to be food insecure. Diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer are more common in people who have been displaced.¹¹⁴ Displacement has been shown to affect mental health, including increased depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.^{115 116}

Immigrant households suffer worse housing impacts due to pre-existing vulnerabilities

Immigrant households face further vulnerability to disaster impacts as low-income owners of properties



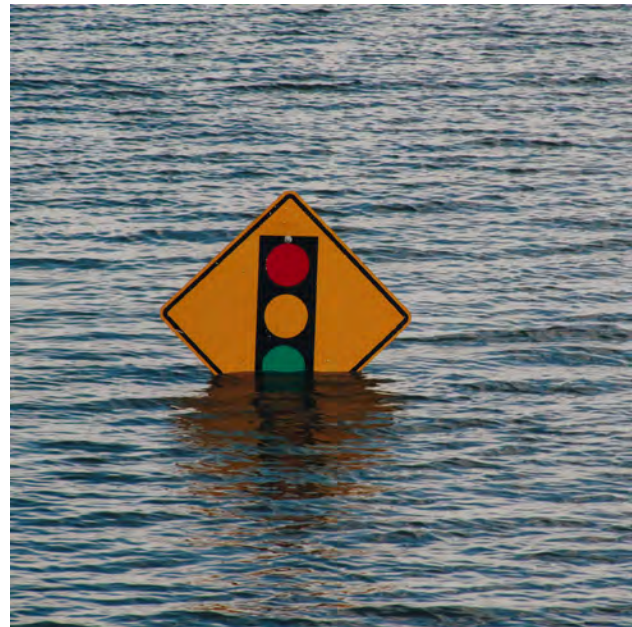
that are uninsured or underinsured. Discrimination based on race and ethnicity can serve as a barrier to access to temporary housing and can result in subsequent displacement. There are numerous additional impediments to disaster recovery: limited English proficiency, isolation, unfamiliarity with the U.S. bureaucratic systems, differences in communication styles, a lack of financial credit and the documentation needed to qualify for assistance, such as deeds and proof of ownership.¹¹⁷

Sea level rise inundates and displaces both coastal and inland communities

As a result of the threat of sea level rise inundation, in the not-too-distant future, coastal dwelling residents are likely to start moving inland from as the costs of staying become too great. Encroachment from escapees from the coast sometimes leads to pressure in communities that occupy higher ground since people who are further inland are more likely to be displaced by higher income residents.

Many inland households with high displacement risk in Florida are likely to be in lower income and working-class neighborhoods. As these neighborhoods undergo redevelopment and investment, current residents will face increasing pressures to relocate, voluntarily (selling homes and businesses) or involuntarily (being evicted for redevelopment projects or being unable to afford increasing rents).

In short, displacement, both from coastal zones due to flooding and inland due to gentrification is disruptive. But, people who are least likely to be able to adapt and move to new areas, due to lower incomes and fewer assets, face a greater burden as a result of the disruption.¹¹⁸

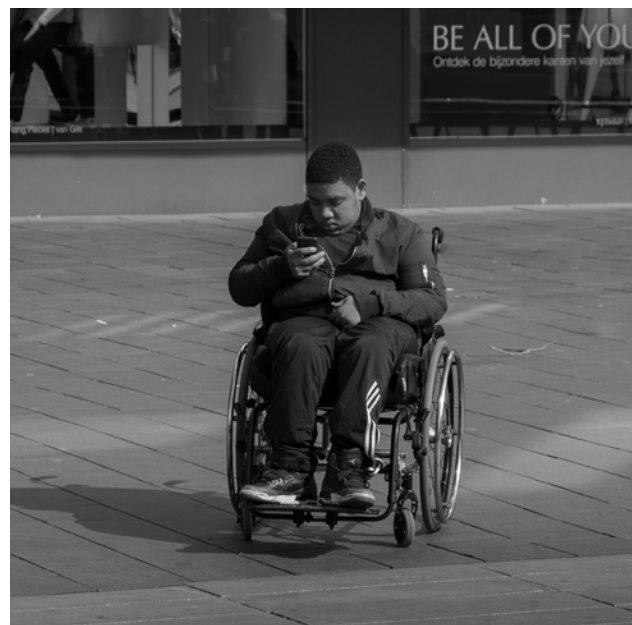



9. Intersectional, Multi-Layered Identities/Circumstances

While we celebrate the bounty of our myriad identities and all their attributes, in an extractive economy, our gifts also become liabilities. Being Black in America is a risk in and of itself. It is the same with having low income, being LGBTQIAP+, an immigrant, differently-abled, a veteran, Indigenous, etc. So, having more than one of any of these identities/circumstances often compounds the insidious jeopardy for Black people.

Differently-abled people

People who are differently abled may be more vulnerable to climate change than the general population due to reasons that stem from not being represented in knowledge and power of decisionmakers, researchers, program designers,





and implementers of programming and infrastructure. Because of the proliferation of non-representational governance, decision makers may not adequately consider people with disabilities in developing policies, planning, and programming.

Beyond the lack of knowledge of necessary accommodations as a contributing factor, the impact of climate change on people who are differently abled has not been studied to the extent of research regarding other vulnerable populations.³ Despite advances, accessibility is often missed when emergency warning systems, including mechanisms for delivering critical information, are being designed.

This can make it difficult for people who are differently abled (low vision or blindness, hearing loss, cognitive challenges, mobility issues, etc.) to plan for extreme weather events.¹¹⁹ Critical medical care may be disrupted before, during, and/or after a natural disaster or extreme weather event. In addition to race as a factor, Black people who are differently-abled are more likely to have socioeconomic risk factors, such as poverty and unemployment, which puts them at even greater risk.¹²⁰

In the context of acute disasters such as hurricanes, people who are differently-abled require earlier access to shelter, social support, and/or medical assistance and this has been lacking in past disasters. When facing displacement, some people who are differently will require differential support in terms of access to food, shelter, and transportation, which has not been the case in the past, resulting in a pattern of disproportionate harm, including isolation, food shortages, and long-term or permanent displacement.¹²¹ (Climatewire, Jan. 6).

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, many people who use wheelchairs were stranded due to the lack of planning for their evacuation. With only non-adapted vehicles on hand, they had no avenue for transport out of the situation.¹²² Similarly, seven years later in 2012 during Hurricane Sandy, the same situation arose.¹²³ In response, to the situation with Hurricane Sandy, the affected persons sued the City of New York for the oversight. This resulted in policy reform that mandates provisions for wheelchair-accessible public shelters.¹²⁴

Black immigrant population

An estimated 10 million people live in the U.S. without legal authorization, according to the Pew Research Center.¹²⁵ Approximately 61% are concentrated in a handful of metro areas, such as New York City, Miami, and Houston,¹²⁶ located in states that are among the most vulnerable to climate change.¹²⁷ The legacy of racist urban planning practices, including redlining, has relegated Black communities to flood-prone neighborhoods in multiple major metro areas.¹²⁸

Millions of undocumented immigrants across the U.S. are in a state of “hyper-marginalization,” in post disaster contexts.¹²⁹ Michael Mendez, an environmental justice and public health researcher at the University of California, Irvine states, “The ways that we have set up our disaster infrastructure—at the federal, state, and local levels—are rendering invisible undocumented migrants because of cultural and racial norms of who is considered a worthy disaster victim.”¹³⁰ According to Lucas Zucker of Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy, “One of the biggest barriers to climate resilience in our society is that millions of people in this country are almost completely excluded from the safety net due to their immigration status.”¹³¹

Immigrant residents may face multiple challenges, from language barriers to eligibility due to immigration status, that can impede access to disaster-relief services and capacity to rebuild life and community. Restrictive and punitive federal immigration enforcement policies and practices as well as state-level anti-immigrant policies exacerbate anxiety and fear. These concerns are exponentially more acute for those who lack immigration status, have time-limited permission to stay in the United States, or are part of mixed-status families.^{132 133}



Amid the crisis circumstances of the Thomas Fire, immigrants from Mixtec Indigenous communities living in Southern California were unable to read the English and Spanish evacuation orders and recommendations; the materials were not made available in their languages.¹³⁴ According to Cesar Espinoza, executive director at FIEL, a grassroots group working in the greater Houston area, “In some cases, their migratory status keeps people away from shelters out of fear of being asked for ID”. Espinoza further states that when Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in 2017, Department of Homeland Security trucks were parked outside of the largest shelter in Houston to help secure the building. As such, many undocumented immigrants didn’t go to the shelter because they were afraid of being asked for their papers. “They wondered, ‘Are we going to be safe there?’” he said. “So, a lot of people were in eight, nine feet of water” during the disaster.¹³⁵

Indigenous People

Whether it be the Gullah Geechee Nation or the descendants of the Black Creek Nation, or the bi-racial progeny of unions across Black and Indigenous peoples and beyond, there are hundreds of thousands of Black people in America who also identify as Indigenous with all the blessings of the blending of such rich heritages and cultures and challenges of systemic anti-Black racism and anti-Indigeneity.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Indigenous populations have higher rates of multiple medical conditions, including asthma, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and dementia, as compared to the general U.S. population. Having these chronic medical conditions puts individuals at more risk for illness and injury amid the shifting conditions of a changing climate.¹³⁶

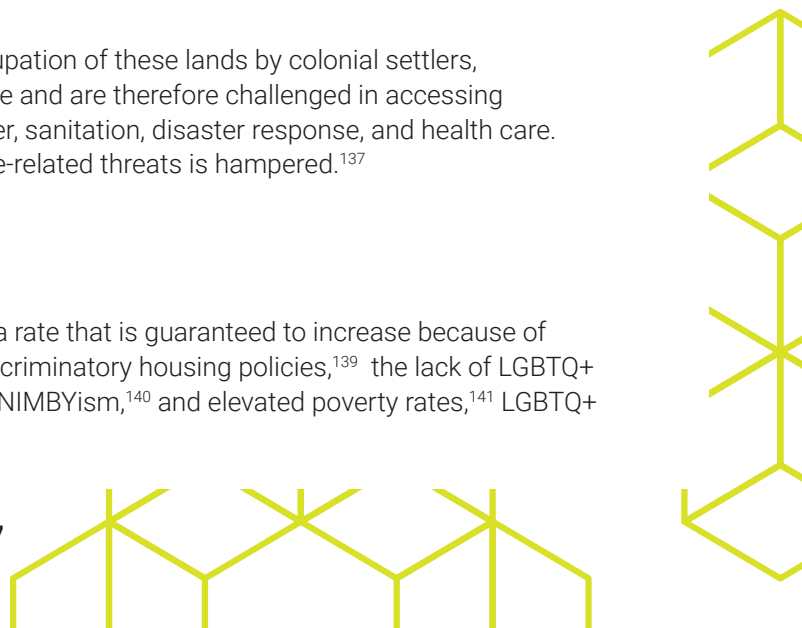


With the unique connections to the natural environment that is inherent to the culture of Indigenous people, it is of special significance that climate change is threatening natural resources and ecosystems, as these are essential to livelihoods, food sources, and cultural practices. Institutional barriers affect the capacity for Indigenous people to adapt, as First Nation peoples have limited access and control over traditional lands and natural resources that are being increasingly impacted by climate change.

Due to the historic and systemic challenges of the occupation of these lands by colonial settlers, many Indigenous populations lack reliable infrastructure and are therefore challenged in accessing essential services such as transportation, drinking water, sanitation, disaster response, and health care. Consequentially, planning for and responding to climate-related threats is hampered.¹³⁷

LGBTQIAP+ People

Approximately 1 in 5 LGBTQ Americans live in poverty, a rate that is guaranteed to increase because of climate change impacts.¹³⁸ Due to a combination of discriminatory housing policies,¹³⁹ the lack of LGBTQ+ spaces in certain communities, a.k.a. heteronormative NIMBYism,¹⁴⁰ and elevated poverty rates,¹⁴¹ LGBTQ+





people have long been disproportionately burdened by pollution. ¹⁴²As such LGBTQ+ people suffer elevated rates of chronic diseases associated with environmental exposure such as respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.^{143 144}

LGBTQI+ youth make up approximately 40% of people who are unhoused in the U.S. and climate change displaces more people as disasters increase in frequency and severity with climate change.¹⁴⁵ Transgender people are particularly more likely to be unsheltered ^{146 147}due to the incipient discriminatory practices in shelter spaces.¹⁴⁸



When disaster strikes, populations that are already vulnerable become at risk for hypothermia, hyperthermia, respiratory distress from wildfire smoke, and infectious diseases from floods, among other conditions.¹⁴⁹ Anti-trans violence has been shown to increase significantly after climate related disasters.¹⁵⁰

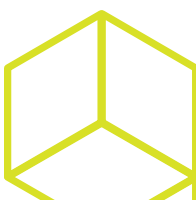
LGBTQI+ people have experienced discrimination in the distribution of aid in the context of a disaster response efforts by local, state, or federal government. According to one study, the lack of legal recognition of LGBTQI+ families by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) led to unequal distribution of resources following Hurricane Katrina.^{151 152}

Low income/wealth communities

People with low income often have less access to information, resources, infrastructure, institutions, and other tools that would be instrumental in preparation for, and avoidance of, risk factors related to the entire climate change continuum from drivers to impacts. In the United States, urban areas, where most Black communities with low income live, produce 80 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.

This means a disproportionate exposure to polluting facilities. It also means that with the urban heat island effect and extreme heat, people are often living in housing developments without sufficient insulation or air conditioning. People with low income/wealth who lack health insurance also run the risk of untreated illnesses exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Because investments in infrastructure are often tied to property values, extreme weather events bring differential harm and loss to economically disadvantaged communities without adequate storm water management systems.

People who rely on public transportation are differentially impacted by disruptions to infrastructure during natural disasters. Rural areas often have agriculture-dependent economies, making the livelihoods of residents who are economically-challenged more vulnerable to changing environmental conditions. As average temperatures continue to rise, people in both rural and urban areas who cannot affordably cool their houses will experience more intense financial strain.¹⁵³ Additionally, people with low incomes and/or without a high school diploma are “25% more likely than non-low-income individuals and those with a high school diploma to currently live in areas with the highest projected losses of labor hours” due to climate change.¹⁵⁴



Veterans

Even after over a decade of dedicated resource allocation and programming toward addressing the housing gap, veterans are still disproportionately represented among people experiencing homelessness. Unhoused veterans often have complex physical and mental health conditions that can make bouncing back from disaster challenging. As such, when unhoused people often find themselves on the frontlines of the effects of fires, floods, and extreme temperatures as weather changes around the world, veterans are affected even more, due to pre-existing vulnerabilities.

According to Sonner Kehert, an investigative Reporter with The War Horse, “increases in extreme weather events affect veterans dealing with homelessness because they have nowhere to store their belongings, the systems they use are taxed by others in emergencies, and as temperatures increase or decrease, shelter is harder to find.”¹⁵⁵



10. Mental Health

“Climate change is a threat to everyone’s mental and physical health and is inextricably linked to social justice and health inequities,” said American Psychiatric Association (APA) Deputy Medical Director and Chief of Diversity and Health Equity Regina James, M.D. “Communities of color, immigrants, low-income communities, and people for whom English is not their native language will suffer the most because of where they live as well as their health, income, language barriers, and limited access to resources. Psychiatrists need to consider these structural determinants of health and mental health.”¹⁵⁶

“Climate change is a public health emergency, and mental health is a central part of it,” said APA CEO and Medical Director Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A. “The poll shows us that the majority of the Black community in America is aware and they’re more stressed about the issue than others. It’s important for psychiatrists and other mental health clinicians to understand that the mental health impacts of climate change are real and can hit different communities in different ways.”

Polls reflect the disproportionate mental health impacts of climate change for Black Americans

According to a poll conducted by APA, over half (54%) of Black Americans agree that climate change is impacting our mental health (48% of all adults). Furthermore, over half of Black Americans (51%) reported being anxious about climate change’s impact on future generations. Black Americans were the most likely to report anxiety over the impact of climate change on the planet (65%) versus all adults (55%), Hispanic adults (62%), or white adults (52%).¹⁵⁷

“Weathering” describes how Black people have been worn down by chronic racism over time

The National Library of Medicine defines allostatic load as the “cumulative burden of chronic stress and life events.”¹⁵⁸ According to a study in the Journal of the National Medical Association, Black people have a significantly higher allostatic load score than white people.¹⁵⁹ Weathering is a term coined by Arline Geronimus, Sc.D. that refers to the way the constant stress of racism can lead to compromised health outcomes for Black people.¹⁶⁰

As Tonya Russell observes in an article published in SELF magazine, “Over time chronic stress response can contribute to a vast array of negative health outcomes, from depression and migraines to hypertension and heart disease.”¹⁶¹

Compounded trauma plus chronic Black grief are heavy weights to bear

Climate change and its disproportionate impacts on Black communities in terms of loss and trauma are significant and far reaching. Whether it is the Chicago Heat Wave or Hurricane Katrina, multiple incidents demonstrate how structural inequities lead to differential levels of loss.

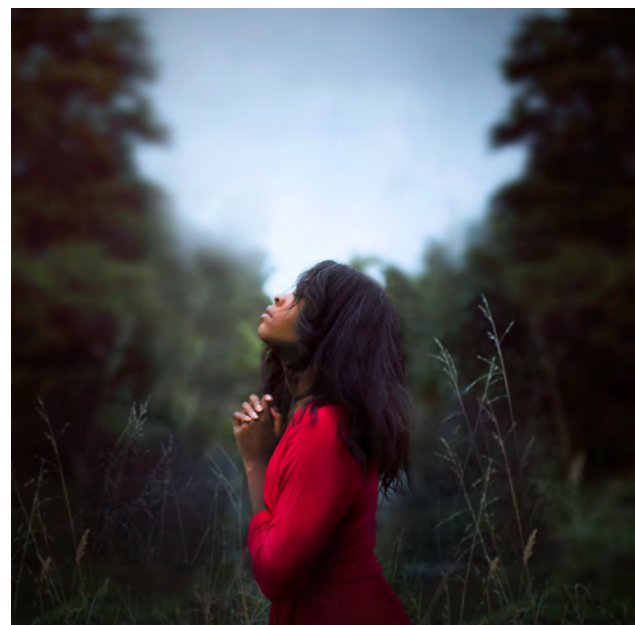
“Disproportionate death in the Black community—whether from COVID-19, infant mortality, or police violence—is one of the most alarming consequences of institutional racism,” says public health expert Stacy Scott, PhD, MPA. “African Americans not only disproportionately face death; they also must deal with an insurmountable amount of grief and mourning.”

Chronic grief has been linked to multiple public health challenges from heart disease and cancer to depression, substance abuse, and even suicide. Historic trauma and ongoing loss and persistent experiences with discrimination have multi-layered, compounding impact. Beginning when Africans were forcefully taken to the Americas and enslaved, Black people have accumulated weathering embedded in our family trees and DNA, eroding the capacity to cope with conditions that are continuously heaped on Black communities.¹⁶²

Structural inequities lead to over-incarceration, economic disparities, and other circumstances which add even more stressors. Dr. Scott asserts, “Structural racism also makes it difficult for Black families to trust the health system and access supports.” Added to distrust based on history, if someone personally experiences racism in a hospital or from a provider, the likelihood of seeking help to navigate grief lessens significantly. In particular, “Black women are often alone in their grief because they are socialized to be strong and stoic,” continues Scott, “to be the stereotypical “strong Black woman.””¹⁶³

Trauma experienced as children plant the seeds for later challenges as adults

According to a study published in PubMed, the effects of climate change place children at risk of mental health consequences including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, anxiety, phobias, sleep disorders, attachment disorders, and substance abuse. These conditions can lead





to problems with emotion regulation, cognition, learning, behavior, language development, and academic performance. Together, this creates a predisposition to adverse adult mental health outcomes.¹⁶⁴ Given the disproportionate impact of climate change on Black communities one can surmise that Black children will experience these challenges to a greater extent, though further study is needed.

11. Migration

Sub-Saharan Africa is facing mass displacement from climate change

As we've seen with record temperatures this year, global warming is increasing; and, as a result, the intensity and frequency of catastrophic events has been rising dramatically over the years. Sub-Saharan Africa is seeing some of the most devastating impacts. Northern Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Mali are among the countries most affected by climate forced migration. In 2012 alone, more than six million people in North-Eastern Nigeria were forcibly displaced due to floods and more than 500,000 people were displaced in Chad.¹⁶⁵ In 2021, nations with the most displaced persons included Ethiopia (579,000), South Sudan (527,000) and DR Congo (888,000).¹⁶⁶



Caribbean children are disproportionately vulnerable to climate forced displacement

The Caribbean is also heavily impacted. In a recent report, UNICEF estimates that the number of children displaced by storms and flooding in the Caribbean islands increased sixfold in the past five years, and estimates 761,000 children were internally displaced by storms in the Caribbean between 2014 and 2018. "This report is a stark reminder that the climate crisis is a child rights crisis," said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. "Children in storm and flood-prone nations around the world are among the most vulnerable to having their lives and rights upended. They are already feeling the impacts of climate change, so governments and the international community should act now to mitigate its most devastating consequences."¹⁶⁷

In spite of US responsibility for climate change, the US criminalizes people seeking refuge

Between the onslaught of disaffection and rise of the "great replacement" theory, America's population has become increasingly politicized, partisan and divisive.^{168 169} Anchored in white supremacy, racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and horrifically gaining in popularity,¹⁷⁰ according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the great replacement theory centers on the belief that nonwhite, non-Christian people are being brought to America for the purpose of replacing the white Christian majority population to establish a new political and socio-cultural agenda.^{171 172}

This mirrors politics in Europe, where there is growing belief that white Christian Europeans are being "colonized" by non-white, non-Christian migrants particularly from Africa and Asia; this false belief fuels the specter of extinction.^{173 174}

Instead of recognizing that the outsized contributions of the United States to the global greenhouse gas emissions burden calls on us to take responsibility and offer safe harbor for those seeking to survive by crossing our borders, U.S. immigration law too often criminalizes immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. A series of unjust laws and increasingly harsh penalties has been imposed not only on those entering the United States, but on those members of the community without citizenship who have also endured mistreatment and racial profiling in the criminal legal system.

The punishment for these crimes includes incarceration and deportation, both of which tear communities and families apart. Many of the family separations that continue to occur at the border mean children are removed from parents accused of criminal activity, with little to no requirement on the part of the government to even provide justifications for the separations. Farther from the border, laws that incentivize harsher punishments for non-citizens, including deportation, regularly separate families by sending mothers and fathers into permanent exile.¹⁷⁵



Children and youth who are undocumented suffer deep impacts from xenophobia and racism

As detailed by an article by Pedro and Silvia Jong-Min in the American Psychological Association, “Many undocumented immigrant children and youth are frequently subject to experiences including:

- racial profiling,
- ongoing discrimination,
- exposure to gangs,
- immigration raids in their communities,
- arbitrary stopping of family members to check their documentation status,
- being forcibly taken or separated from their families,
- returning home to find their families have been taken away,
- placement in detention camps or the child welfare system, and deportation”¹⁷⁶

The authors go on to describe the negative emotional and behavioral effects including anxiety, fear, depression, anger, and social isolation, including a compromised sense of belonging. For young children whose parents have been detained or deported, the impact of separation is traumatizing. Over time, the trauma can lead to more severe issues such as “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, poor identity formation, difficulty forming relationships, feelings of persecution, distrust of institutions and authority figures, acting out behaviors and difficulties at school.”¹⁷⁷

“No one puts their child in a boat, unless
the water is safer than the land.”

Warsan Shire, Kenyan-born Somali poet

12. Physical Health

Throughout the climate change continuum, from drivers to results, Black Americans disproportionately experience compromised health outcomes.

Toxic exposure, illness, and death comprise the reality of too many Black communities

Black Americans are more likely than the general population to be impacted by pollution from the very facilities and practices that also belch out the carbon dioxide and mercury that advance climate change, including coal fired power plants, landfills, incinerators, oil and gas refineries, near roadway air pollution, manufacturing, etc.¹⁷⁸

Approximately 71% of Black people live in counties in violation of federal air pollution standards. A Black family with a household income of \$50,000 per year is more likely to live next to a toxic facility than a white American family with a household income of \$10,000 per year.¹⁷⁹

This means that we are ingesting—through air, water, and soil contamination—toxic co-pollutants including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, arsenic, lead, manganese as well as benzene and trichlorethylene and benzene, known carcinogens, and mercury, a known endocrine disrupter.

The contamination shows up in the body and as high rates of asthma and other respiratory illnesses, cancer, gastrointestinal illnesses, heart disease, as well as compromised birth outcomes including elevated rates of infant mortality and maternal mortality. According to the Office of Minority Health, a Black American child is 4.5 times more likely than a White American child to enter the hospital due to an asthma attack and 2 to 3 times more likely to die of an asthma attack.¹⁸⁰

Black Americans in many localities are more likely to live in cancer clusters¹⁸¹ and have higher incidence and death rates from cancer than any other racial group.¹⁸² The infant mortality rate for Black Americans (10.3/100,000) is more than twice the infant mortality rate of White Americans (4.4/100,000).¹⁸³



Extreme weather leads to disproportionate injury and mortality for Black people

Black Americans are more likely to be coastal dwelling, less likely to have levee protection, more likely to live in flood plains are less likely to have decent drainage systems, more likely to have compromised housing stock, and less likely to live in communities with adequate emergency management plans, while more likely living next to toxic facilities that endanger surrounding communities when impacted by disasters.

All this and more combines to mean that while disasters don't discriminate, pre-existing, systemic conditions that render Black communities more vulnerable to disaster impacts results at exponentially higher rates of injury, death, and displacement for Black Americans during and after disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and heavy flooding.

The 1995 Chicago Heat Waves was the canary in the coal mine, a harbinger of what would come in terms of the differential impact of the Urban Heat Island Effect on Black communities. The vast majority of the 739 people who perished in the heatwave were Black. This resulted from a combination of lack of tree canopy and air conditioning, combined with the pre-existing health conditions that proliferate in our communities due to systemic racism impacting where we live and what we have access to from green spaces to walk in, to nutritious food to eat, to preventative health care.¹⁸⁴

The continued warming of the planet will increase the extreme weather, including the number of days above 90 degrees so these situations will become more frequent. Additionally, recent studies have shown that the Urban Heat Island Effect also contributes to maternal mortality and birth outcomes, which are already compromised for Black families.

Shifts in agricultural yields equals food Insecurity, malnutrition, and chronic illness

From the history of the land that emancipated Black persons could afford being non-producing land, to the systemic segregation via redlining, and the lack of investment in Black communities, we persistently experience compromised access to healthy and nutritious foods. Today, the rate of food insecurity for Black American households stands at 20% as compared to 7.1% for white families. This manifests in the chronic illnesses and high rates of mortality tied to diet from high blood pressure and diabetes to heart disease, each of which was also linked to differential vulnerability and mortality in the COVID-19 pandemic. Preexisting food insecurity for Black Americans has been exacerbated by the shift in agricultural yields that results from climate change.

Lack of access to quality healthcare exacerbates the lack of protection for Black people

With an uninsured rate of 11.2% in 2021, Black Americans were twice as likely to be uninsured than White Americans, whose uninsured rate stood at 5.7%.¹⁸⁵ Even when receiving healthcare, historically and currently, Black Americans have suffered consistently from substandard health care, resulting in higher rates of unnecessarily excessive measures such as amputation,¹⁸⁶ as well as higher rates of mortality as compared to White Americans whose treatments were less extreme and more likely to result in survival.

13. Political Disenfranchisement

Climate change is largely fueled by a handful of multinational companies

According to the 2017 Carbon Majors Report, 100 companies have been the source of more than 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988.¹⁸⁷ The report also found that more than half of



global industrial emissions during the same period can be traced to only 25 corporate and state-owned entities with ExxonMobil, Shell, BP and Chevron identified as among the highest emitting investor-owned companies. “If fossil fuels continue to be extracted at the same rate over the next 28 years as they were between 1988 and 2017,” says the report, “global average temperatures would be on course to rise by 4C by the end of the century.”^{188 189}

At that point, globally no one will be unscathed by the impacts. Currently, however, it is Black communities, other racialized groups, Indigenous communities Global South nations, who are bearing the brunt of extreme impacts and that will continue to be the case even as some degree of impact becomes universal.

Black communities are harmed first by pollution and then by climate change

Southern Company and others continue to pump voluminous amounts of coal pollution communities, compromising public health and threatening the planet.¹⁹⁰ Polluting facilities are more likely to be in Black communities.¹⁹¹ Black children are three to five times more likely to enter the hospital because of an asthma attack and two to three times more likely to die of an asthma attack.¹⁹² Exposure to pollutants, extreme heat, and racism mean that Black women are less likely to live through childbirth as compared to white women and Black babies who are less likely to survive their first year of life as compared to white infants.¹⁹³¹⁹⁴

ALEC is a key instrument of the corporatocracy, privatization, and fossil fuel foolery

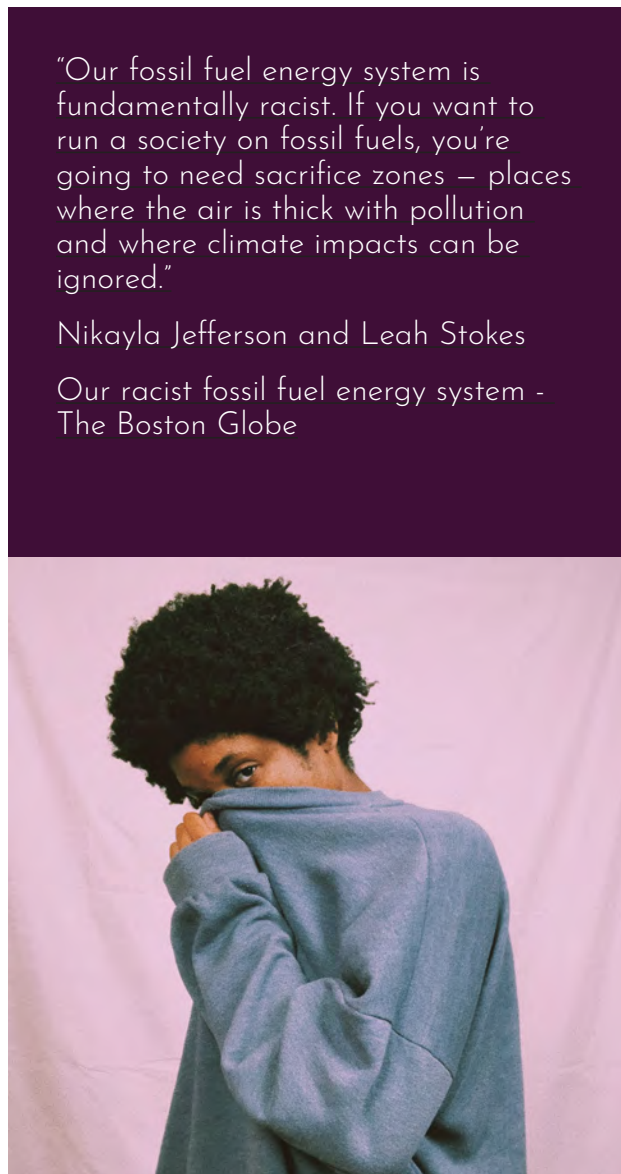
Last year, Texas passed a law to protect big oil from measures to divest, driven by the oil and gas industry’s role in advancing the catastrophic climate crisis. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is pushing other Republican controlled states to do the same, according to The Guardian.¹⁹⁵ Indiana, Oklahoma, and West Virginia state legislatures are each advancing legislation similar to a policy ALEC drafted called “the Energy Discrimination Elimination Act” and other states are exploring following in their footsteps.¹⁹⁶

ALEC is also a major proponent of privatization (corporate takeover) of public services and assets. ALEC has drafted model policies to create incentives and call for the use of private financing to control public infrastructure and service projects. According to the Communication Works of America, “ALEC bills make it easier to create virtual public schools, encourage states to privatize vital

“Our fossil fuel energy system is fundamentally racist. If you want to run a society on fossil fuels, you’re going to need sacrifice zones – places where the air is thick with pollution and where climate impacts can be ignored.”

Nikayla Jefferson and Leah Stokes

Our racist fossil fuel energy system -
The Boston Globe



health programs that help vulnerable populations, force state governments to sell public prisons to private corporations, and help other industries take control of public services. As a result, we stand to lose control of critical public services and assets and we risk a weakened democracy".¹⁹⁷

Key tools of disaster capitalism and white supremacy are redistricting and gerrymandering

The property damage and mass migration resulting from Hurricane Katrina sparked a crisis of Congressional representation with multiple components including: "districts of unequal population, overload of constituent demands, Voting Rights Act liability and break in continuity of representation."¹⁹⁸ In Louisiana, parishes heavily impacted by Hurricane Ida had compromised elections, particularly for Black representation, due to voter challenges in identifying polling places, according to the Center for Public Integrity.¹⁹⁹

Since the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act²⁰⁰ in 2013, almost 1700 polling places have closed,²⁰¹ disproportionately in communities of color. A study by The Brennan Center for Justice showed that Latino voters now wait, on average, 46% longer to vote than white voters. Black voters wait on average 45% longer.^{202, 203} Climate change and its accompanying increase in frequency and severity of extreme weather events, will undoubtedly abet further voter disenfranchisement.



Compromised democracy = underrepresentation = compromised democracy

From defeating candidate Roy Moore in Alabama²⁰⁴ to creating critical satellite technology for NASA,²⁰⁵ some of the major advancements in society have been led by Black women. Yet, due to the corporatocracy, white supremacy, racism, etc., Black women continue to be grossly underrepresented in elected leadership. With Black people being 13.6% of the US population and Black women being 52% of the Black population, Black women are 7% of the US population.

Out of 12,506 who have ever served in Congress,²⁰⁶ just 57 have been Black women - an abysmal .005%.²⁰⁷ Twenty-nine of the 57 are currently serving in Congress. Less than half of all states (22) have ever elected a Black woman as a congressional representative.^{208 209} In our 244-year history of governors, there has never been a Black woman elected as governor. There have only been 4 Black men elected to the governorship. Given large Black populations in states like Mississippi (37%), Louisiana (31%), and Georgia (31%),²¹⁰ this is an especially egregious underrepresentation.

14. Socio-Cultural Erosion

Several studies by the National Institutes of Health found that climate forced migration and displacement threatens social ties, as well as mental health, for the displaced persons and for those who are left behind.²¹¹ Mechanisms found to be protective, through social ties include those that facilitate the sharing of

resources, emotional support, and financial burden. Furthermore, as we've seen in the aftermath of multiple disasters, evacuees trying to resettle in new places, faced substantial social isolation and marginalization.²¹²

History has proven that climate fluctuations have correlated with periods of cultural dislocations, collapses, and population declines in the United States and globally. Specifically in the US along the Gulf Coast, we can see documented instances of adjustments in housing, and livelihoods to accommodate shifts in topography and coastal conditions as a result of sea regression. These shifts in culture and climate also required social adjustments/adaptation.^{213 214}

15. Water Insecurity

According to the White House Action Plan on Global Water Security, "Global trends in population growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, deforestation, and climate change pose growing challenges to water security around the world. Here at home, water crises are becoming more frequent and intense. Historic droughts threaten our supply of water and failing infrastructure and chronic underinvestment deprive our most vulnerable communities of safe drinking water.

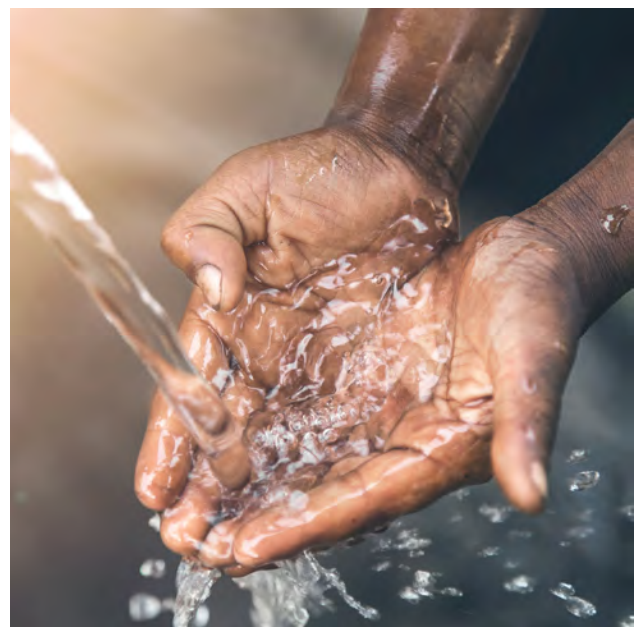
A lack of sanitation threatens public health, individual safety and dignity, equity, and the protection of freshwater resources; extreme weather events intensify these risks, where improved sanitation is unavailable. As the source of both life and livelihoods, water security is central to human wellbeing."²¹⁵

For Black communities, the right to water is far from promised

According to a recent report, more than two million people in the U.S. and Puerto Rico don't have access to running water and basic indoor plumbing and race is still the strongest determinant of whether one has access to safe potable water. The report found that "Latino and Black households are twice as likely as white households to lack indoor plumbing while Native Americans are 19 times more likely."²¹⁶

A 2022 US Water Alliance report analyzing data from eight cities found that water shutoffs last four times longer in majority-Black communities.²¹⁷ According to a News21 national analysis of EPA data on nationwide water violations, out of the tens of millions of Americans who are drinking contaminated water, small towns populated by people who have low-incomes and/or are Black, Latino, or Indigenous are disproportionately impacted.²¹⁸

Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Flint, Michigan are two examples of cities whose water systems have earned the skepticism of Black communities due to water contamination. States such as Louisiana, Alabama, North Carolina, and Texas have also suffered from water systems that have become polluted due to industrial action antiquated infrastructure.²¹⁹



Water insecurity dates back to emancipation for many Black neighborhoods

With a legacy stemming back to the late 1800s, freedom colonies are where people settled after gaining liberation from enslavement. Many of these communities are still lacking basics such as water infrastructure, 150+ years post emancipation.²²⁰ Climate change further threatens the nation's crumbling water infrastructure

Climate change is imposing a strain on aging infrastructure and driving up costs for households. Drought-driven reduction in water supply and extreme weather events, such as flooding, can overwhelm water systems.²²¹ Jackson, Mississippi's water infrastructure has been plagued by decades of underinvestment and deferred maintenance. In a recent water crisis incident, approximately 150,000 of the primarily Black population were under a boil water notice even before heavy rainfall and river flooding swamped the system.

This is a cautionary tale for other municipalities as climate change's worsening impacts push under-resourced and overburdened water systems to the brink. According to Andrew Whelton, an environmental engineer at Purdue University, "Every public drinking water system in the country is vulnerable to a natural disaster. But, many are not actually prepared to respond in the way they're going to need to be."

Antiquated sewers often do not have the capacity to handle bigger storms. High temperatures and extensive drought give rise to algae blooms and elevated sediment that may contaminate reservoirs. Septic systems swell as the seas rise and wells are inundated with saltwater incursion. In the aftermath of wildfires, water mains are destroyed, resulting in toxic contamination, which may persist for a while before water is drinkable again.²²²



Privatization is a Trojan horse for Black communities

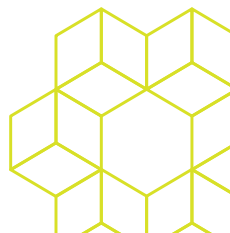
Private companies position themselves as a quick fix for small municipalities starved for manpower, expertise, and funding to address water issues. Going private could push bills even higher for communities. Yet the dire state of the nation's infrastructure means more communities from coast to coast are considering the sale of their drinking water networks.

"It's disaster capitalism," said Brittany Alston, deputy research director for the Action Center on Race and the Economy. "In these poor communities, specifically Black and Brown communities, water systems are up for sale as soon as the community needs money."²²³

In the tapestry of America's history, Black individuals trace our origins predominantly to the harrowing times when we were viewed as merely property, forcibly uprooted from our ancestral lands and rich cultural legacies. Upon arrival in this nation—its soil already bearing the weight of injustice toward Indigenous people—we became the cornerstone that shaped its infrastructure. The pressing challenge of climate change further exacerbates these injustices, disproportionately affecting Black Americans across an array of domains, from economic strain to health complications. As evidence, consider the varied impacts of

climate change on Black communities spanning fifteen critical areas, including housing insecurity, political disenfranchisement, and health disparities, among others. This serves as a poignant reminder of the interconnected challenges we face and the urgent need for systemic change.

Yet, our legacy isn't just one of oppression; it's one marked by resilience, innovation, and a fervent spirit of community. Even today, systems rooted in white supremacy perpetuate the marginalization of Black communities in various facets of life.



We need a vision that recognizes that we are at one of the great turning points in human history when the survival of our planet and the restoration of our humanity require a great sea change in our ecological, economic, political, and spiritual values.

Grace Lee Boggs

A Tale of Two Freedom Colonies...

Tamina, Texas

“My mother, God rest her soul, Della Henry, was on the water, septic, sewer committee all her life and we never ever got the services that the community should have had,” said longtime Tamina resident Rita Wiltz. “Here we are and we still haven’t received the services yet.” The conditions in Tamina, founded in 1871, reflect decades of inadequate public services. Unless a solution can be found, community leaders say, one of the nation’s last remaining “freedmen’s towns” faces a slow death by attrition as older residents die and the lack of essential infrastructure discourages new investment.”

[Project could be first step in bringing water, sewer services to Tamina, Your Conroe News \(yourconroenews.com\)](#)

Little Egypt, Texas

“Gloria McCoy grew up in Little Egypt. “We had electricity, but we had no running water,” she says. “We didn’t have any indoor plumbing. We had the outhouse. And we had butane gas. And we did have a telephone.” The dig Grundelman worked is where the McCoy home once stood. In the early ‘60s, the McCoy sisters say their dad fought but failed to get running water into Little Egypt. “He had seen city sprinklers watering nearby Flag Pole Hill. And we, this black neighborhood, could not get running water,” says Joann McCoy. “So, from there he really kind of decided he could do better, and we could do better as a family.””

[‘Little Egypt,’ A Nearly-Lost Freedmen’s Town In Dallas, Resurfaces Thanks To College’s Digging | KERA News](#)



45 Black-led climate justice solutions—we are already leading the way!!

For Black people, surviving centuries of systemic oppression has been undergirded by heritage and customs of living in harmony with the earth, coupled with the brilliance and ingenuity that yielded transformational advancements from pyramids to, most recently, the COVID-19 vaccination! As chronicled below, Black people and organizations are leading the solutions we need in order to advance a Just Transition!

Through framing the Nguzo Saba, the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa, Dr. Maulana Karenga encapsulated the characteristic elements of a legacy of Black traditions born on the Motherland and sustained throughout the African Diaspora:

- I. Umoja (Unity)
- II. Kujichagulia (Self-determination)
- III. Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)
- IV. Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)
- V. Nia (Purpose)
- VI. Kuumba (Creativity)
- VII. Imani (Faith)





Umoja—Unity

- Racial Justice
- Indigenous Rights
- Labor/Workers' Rights
- Immigration Rights
- Gender Justice
- LGBTQ Rights
- Differently Abled Persons Rights
- Elder Justice and Leadership
- Diaspora Organizing
- Grassroots Organizing/Base Building
- Movement Support
- Networking/Movement Building

Ujima—Cooperative Economics

- Energy Justice
- Housing/Land Justice
- New Economy/Equitable, Sustainable Development

Nia—Purpose

- Biodiversity/Ecosystem
- Preserving Historically Black Communities
- Children/Youth Justice/Leadership
- Reproductive Justice/Birthing Equity
- Healing and Self Care

Ujamaa—Collective Work and Responsibility

- Food Justice
- Disaster Equity
- Education Justice
- Zero Waste
- Water Equity/Justice
- Transportation Justice
- Maker Movement/Local Manufacturing
- Climate Finance

mani—Faith

- Faith-based Leadership

Kuumba—Creativity

- Culture Work
- Narrative Strategy

Kujichagulia—Self-determination

- Environmental Justice Advocacy/Activism
- Culture/Heritage/Tradition
- Abolition/Dismantling the Prison Industrial Complex
- Democracy and Governance/Civic Engagement
- Government Leadership—Local, State, Federal

The detailed list—a beautiful tapestry of Black wisdom, power, and possibilities!!

Leadership on Just Transition framing through a Black Liberation lens has been held by luminary organizations and individuals including: [Climate Justice Alliance](#) and co-director [Monica Atkins](#); [The Black Hive](#) co-led by [Valencia Gunder](#) and [Natalie Jeffers](#); [Taproot Earth](#) co-led by [Colette Pichon Battle](#); with all due kudos to [Movement Generation](#), which facilitated a multi-racial effort to define a robust [Just Transition Strategy Framework](#) from a US standpoint; they are deepening their Black Liberation lens.

This is just an illustrative list. It is not at all meant to be comprehensive; it is merely the tip of a deep and wide iceberg, consisting of a plethora of Black individuals and organizations leading climate justice solutions. Please check out [BIPOC in ECJ](#) and [The Resource Hub Database](#) to see many others!!



The list of 45 categories of solutions is divided into 28 focus areas and 17 approaches. The 28 focus areas are topic/issue specific initiatives such as energy justice, disaster equity, immigration rights, etc. The 17 approaches are a list of roles/methodology that individuals/organizations employ such as research, policy analysis, leadership development, etc.

Recognizing intersectionality, individuals and organizations may occupy many categories simultaneously. This list is merely to illustrate and highlight a sampling of the leadership happening in the key areas and pathways to a Just Transition...not to box anyone into one focus, space, or role.

The highlighted entries alternate between starting with names of institutions, while others lead with names of individuals. How each is listed depends upon whether it is an organization focused on racial justice and/or climate justice, or it's a Black individual focused on climate justice and/or racial justice within an organization that is not specifically working on racial/climate justice. For most organizations that are Black-led, we list the leader of the organization and for some, where there is more of a flat structure, or it's a coalition, there may not be a named leader. If a person is a consultant or an institution unto themselves, just their name is listed with a hyperlink to their primary affiliation, or LinkedIn or self-named website.

Within each list, the entries are in alphabetical order by organization name, last name, or if it's a mixed org/individual list, by first name of individual and first word of organization.

It takes strong roots to weather the storm.

Community leadership is imperative to address the root cause of the climate crisis and foster resilience.

Climate Justice Alliance

CRITICAL FOCI

1. Heritage/Tradition

- a. [Picking Greens and Being Green: Tales from Black Mamas on Culture, Conservation, and Community](#): Blog and Podcast—Dr. Adrienne Hollis
- b. [Rooted in the Earth: Reclaiming the African American Environmental Heritage](#)—Dr. Dianne Glave
- c. [Shirley Chisholm Cultural Institute](#)—Barbara Bullard

2. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Preservation/Restoration

- a. Tree Planting
 - i. [Great Green Wall: 18 Million Trees for 18 Million Africans Stolen in the Trans-Atlantic Enslavement Massacre](#)—Kemo Fatty
 - ii. [Ubuntu Climate Circle](#)—Dr. Denise Fairchild
- b. Wetlands Preservation/Restoration
 - i. [Sankofa NOLA](#)—Rashida Ferdinand
 - ii. [Education, Economics, Environmental, Climate and Health Organization \(EEECHO\)](#)—Kathy Egland and Ruth Story
- c. Parks and Wild Spaces
 - i. [Outdoor Afro](#)—Rue Mapp

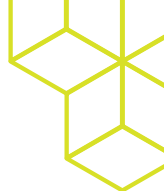


3. Historically Black Community Preservation and Self-determination

- a. [African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund](#)—Brent Leggs
- b. [Africatown Heritage Preservation Foundation](#)—Dr. Afia Zakiya and Major Joe Womack
- c. [Historic Black Towns and Settlements Alliance](#)—Honorable Johnny Ford
- d. [Sandbranch, TX](#)—Tonnette Byrd and Phyllis Gage
- e. [The Texas Freedom Colonies Project](#)—Andrea Roberts

4. Racial Justice

- a. [Color of Change](#)—Rashad Robinson
- b. [Race Forward](#)—Glenn Harris
- c. [Institute of the Black World 21st Century](#)—Dr. Ron Daniels



5. Energy Justice

- a. [Initiative for Energy Justice](#)—Shalanda Baker (co-founder)
- b. [Hoodwinked in the Hothouse: Resist False Solutions to Climate Change](#)
- c. [Soulardarity](#)—Shimekia Nichols
- d. [Blacks in Green](#)—Naomi Davis
- e. [Ruth Santiago](#)—Community Leader in Puerto Rico

6. Health Justice

- a. [Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments](#)—Jessica Mengistab, Jeremiah Headen
- b. [Black Family Summit](#) (including the National Medical Association, National Black Nurses Association, National Association of Black Social Workers, etc.)—Leonard Dunston, Dr. Zakiya Newland
- c. [Community Engagement, Environmental Justice, and Health](#)—Dr. Sacoby Wilson

7. Food Justice

- a. [Dat Pharm](#)—Julie Gable
- b. [Earthseed Permaculture Center and Form](#)—Pandora Thomas
- c. [National Black Food and Justice Network](#)—Dara Cooper
- d. [SAAFON: Black Farming, Black History, Black Culture](#)
- e. [Soulfire Farm](#)—Leah Penniman, Dr. Ife Kilimanjaro

Learn more about Soulfire Farm on page 59!

8. Housing/Land Justice

- a. [Black Land and Liberation Initiative](#)—BlackOUT Collective and Movement Generation
- b. [East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative](#)—Noni Session
- c. [Land Loss Prevention Project](#)—Savi Horne
- d. [PUSH Buffalo](#)— Dawn Wells-Clyburn
- e. [Right to the City](#)

Learn more about PUSH Buffalo's work on page 58!

9. Disaster Equity

- a. [Education, Economics, Environmental, Climate and Health Organization \(EEECHO\)](#)—Kathy Eglan and Ruth Story
- b. [Deep South Center for Environmental Justice](#)—Dr. Beverly L Wright
- c. [Bill Anderson Fund](#)—Norma Anderson
- d. [Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management](#)—Chauncia Willis



10. Afro-Indigenous Rights/Justice

- a. [Gullah Geechee Nation](#)—Queen Quet
- b. [I Love Ancestry: Afro-Native Narratives](#)—Jihan Gearon (Former ED of Black Mesa Water Coalition)

11. Education Justice

- a. [Michigan Board of Education--Pamela Pugh](#) (Environmental Justice Advocate)
- b. [Historically Black Colleges and Universities Climate Consortium](#)
- c. [Journey for Justice Alliance](#)— Beth Glenn

12. Environmental Justice Advocacy/Activism

- a. [Alternatives for Community and Environment](#)—Dwaign Tyndall
- b. [Blacks in Green](#)—Naomi Davis
- c. [Community In-Power and Development Association](#)—Hilton Kelly
- d. [Harambee House: Citizens for Environmental Justice](#) —Dr. Mildred McClain
- e. [Rise St. James](#)—Sharon Lavigne
- f. [Sol Nation](#)—Nakisa Glover, Tiffany Fant
- g. [Healthy Gulf](#) — Jasmine Moll, Laura-Sage Marshall, Sage Michael Pellet, Breon Robinson
- h. [West Atlanta Watershed Alliance](#)—Dr. Na'Taki Osborn-Jelks
- i. [West Harlem Environmental Action \(WeAct for Environmental Justice\)](#)—Peggy Shepard, Vernice Miller Travis

13. Immigration Rights

- a. [Black Alliance for Just Immigration](#)—Nana Gyamfi
- b. [Dream Defenders](#)— Epiphany, Jonel, Nailah, and Rachel
- c. [Immigrants Rising](#)—Denea Joseph, Marilia Zellner
- d. [Undocumented Black Girl Podcast](#)—solange Rose
- e. [Vera Institute](#)—] Raf Jefferson, Victor O. Obaseki, Tracey Wilmot

14. Labor/Workers' Rights

- a. [Bill Fletcher](#)
- b. [Just Futures](#)—Anand Jahi
- c. [National Black Workers Center](#)—Tanya Wallace Gobern
- d. [Sierra Club Labor Project](#)—Derrick Figures

15. Youth Justice/Children/ Leadership

- a. [Achieving Sustainability through Education and Economic Development Solutions \(ASEED\)](#) – Romona Taylor Williams
- b. [Children’s Environmental Health Network](#)– Nsedu Witherspoon
- c. [Greening Youth Foundation](#)–Angelou Ezeilo
- d. [OneMillionofUs](#)–Jerome Foster
- e. [Power Shift Network](#)–Eriqah Vincent
- f. [UPROSE](#)–Elizabeth Yeampierre



16. Zero Waste

- a. [Zero Waste Detroit](#)
- b. [Zero Waste Habesha: “Five Days in the Life of a Black Zero Waste Activist”](#)–Freweyni Asress

17. Water Equity/Justice

- a. [Little Miss Flint](#)–Mari Copeny
- b. [Patuxent Riverkeepers](#)–Fred Tutman
- c. [Urban Ocean Lab](#)–Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Marquise Stillwell (co-founders)
- d. [We the People of Detroit](#)–Monica Lewis Patrick

18. Transportation Justice

- a. [Alternatives for Community and Environment](#)–Dwain Tyndall
- b. [Baltimore Transportation Equity Coalition](#)–Samuel Jordan
- c. [EV Noire](#)–Dr. Shelley Francis
- d. [West Oakland Indicators Project](#)–Ms. Margaret Gordon

19. Abolition/Dismantling the Prison Industrial Complex

- a. [Critical Resistance](#)–Rehana Lerandean
- b. [Fight Toxic Prisons](#)
- c. [FreeSiwatu.org](#)–Siwatu Salama Ra
- d. [Vera Institute](#)– Raf Jefferson, Victor O. Obaseki, Tracey Wilmot

20. Differently Abled Persons Rights

- a. [Center for Disability Rights](#)–Dara Baldwin
- b. [Invisible Strengths](#)–Mariah Barber

21. Elder Justice and Leadership

- a. Justice in Aging—Vivianne Mbaku
- b. Third Act—Akaya Windwood
- c. Living Legacies, Thriving Stewards (coming soon at www.thechisholmlegacyproject.org)

22. Reproductive Justice/Birthing Equity

- a. Birthing Center Equity—Leselley Welch, Nashira Baril
- b. Mocha Moms—Karla Chustz, Cheli English-Figaro, Jolene Ivey
- c. Planned Parenthood—Nia Eshu Martin-Robinson, Director of Black Leadership and Engagement
- d. Sister Song—Monica Simpson
- e. Birthing Project USA—Kathryn Hall-Trujillo
- f. University of California Riverside Department of Gender and Sexuality Studies— Jade S. Sasser



23. Gender Justice

- a. Black Girl Environmentalist—Wanjiku “Wawa” Gatheru
- b. Black Women’s Blueprint—Farah Tanis, Sevonna Brown
- c. Black Women’s Health Imperative—Linda Goler Blount
- d. IamNegrx—Luz Marquez Benbow
- e. National Congress of Black Women - Lynn Vivian Dymally
- f. National Council of Negro Women—Shavon Arline-Bradley

24. 2SLGBTQQIA+ Rights

- a. The National LGBTQ Taskforce—Kierra Johnson
- b. National Black Justice Coalition—Dr. David J. Johns
- c. Sovereign Earthworks



25. Maker Movement/Local Manufacturing

- a. [Institute for Local Self Reliance](#)—Chris Lewis, Reggie Rucker, Sophia Hosain, Sean Gonsales
- b. [Liberating Ourselves Locally](#)—Maker Space
- c. [Technology/Coding](#)—[Black Girls Code](#), [Code2040](#), [All Star Code](#)

26. New Economy/Equitable, Sustainable Development

- a. [Black Towns Municipal Management](#)—Cymone Davis
- b. [Cooperation Jackson](#)—Kali Akuno
- c. [Downtown Crenshaw](#) —[Damien Goodmon](#)
- d. [Kheprw Institute](#)—Imhotep Adisa
- e. [New Economy Coalition](#)—R'yana Michele, Shardé Nabors, Julian Rose, Jaylin Ward
- f. [Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Coop](#)—Aleta Alston Toure
- g. [The Regenesys Institute](#)—Harold Mitchell Jr.



Learn more about intentional communities on page 60!

27. Climate Finance

- a. [Communities First](#) — Helen Chin
- b. [Full Spectrum Capital](#)—Taj James
- c. [National African Americans Reparations Commission](#)—Ron Daniels
- d. [National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations](#)—Kamm Howard
- e. [Sustainable Capital Advisors](#)—Trenton Allen
- f. [Taproot Earth's Climate Reparations Initiative](#)—Colette Pichon Battle

28. Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI)

- a. [Chante Coleman](#)—Green Equity Officers/National Wildlife Federation
- b. [Green Leadership Trust](#)—Emira Woods
- c. [Climate Reality Project](#) - Jamiah Adams
- d. [Abt Associates](#) - Roslyn Brock
- e. [Makeeba Browne](#)—ClimateWorks Foundation

CRITICAL APPROACHES

29. Philanthropy, including participatory grantmaking

- a. [Black Philanthropic Network](#)—T.J. Breeden
- b. [Building Equity and Alignment for Environmental Justice](#) —Linda Saleh
- c. [Climate Funders Justice Pledge--Donors of Color Network--](#) Ashindi Maxton
- d. [Equitable Building Electrification Fund](#)—Jamesa Johnson Greer
- e. [Frontline Justice Fund](#)
- f. [Fund for Frontline Power](#)
- g. [Hive Fund for Gender and Climate Justice](#)-Melanie Allen
- h. [Kataly Foundation](#)--Nwamaka Agbo
- i. [Mosaic Momentum](#)—Rahwa Ghirmatzion, Rashad Morris, Jennifer Lesorogol
- j. [The Solutions Project](#)—Gloria Walton
- k. [Stardust Fund](#)—Lawanna Kimbro
 - i. A sampling of Black Leaders in mainstream climate justice philanthropy-Lande Ajose, Shamar Bibbins, Najah Casmir, Brynne Craig, Danielle Deane-Ryan, Shawn Escoffery, Carole Excell, Garnesha Ezediaro, Tatianna Lyne, Dominic McQuerry, Rashad Morris, Ben Passer, Shannon Small, Trellis Scepter, Kellie Terry, Tamara Toles O’Laughlin, Marilyn Waite, Erika Williams, Kathryn Wright, etc.

30. Healing Justice/Self-care

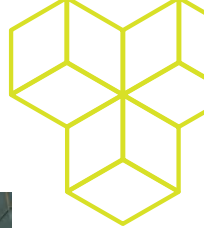
- a. [All Healers Mental Health Alliance](#)—Dr. Annelle Primm
- b. [Climate Critical Earth](#)—Tamara Toles O’Laughlin
- c. [IamNegrx](#)—Luz Marquez Benbow
- d. [Kindred Collective](#)—Cara Page
- e. [The Nap Ministry: Rest is Resistance](#)—Tricia Hersey

31. Diaspora Organizing

- a. [Taproot Noire](#)—Tiffany Fant
- b. [Global Afro Descendant Climate Justice Collaborative](#)—Mariama Williams, Cheryl KwaPong
- c. [Afro-InterAmerican Forum on Climate Change](#)—Kelvin Alie and Marcela Angel
- d. [Africans in the Diaspora](#)— Solomé Lemma

32. Faith-based Leadership

- a. [Alabama Interfaith Power and Light/ People’s Justice Council](#)—Reverend Michael Malcolm
- b. [Green the Church](#)—Rev. Dr. Ambrose Carroll Sr.
- c. [Green Muslims](#)



- d. [The Imani Group](#)—Reverend Brendolyn Jenkins
- e. [Kingdom Living Temple](#)—Reverend Leo Woodberry
- f. [Poor People's Campaign](#)—Bishop William J. Barber
- g. [Rev. Mariama White-Hammond](#)

33. Facilitators/Strategic Planners

- a. [Akaya Windwood](#)—Windwise, LLC
- b. [Be Inspired](#)—J.K. Nelson
- c. [Darlene Nipper](#)—The Rockwood Leadership Institute
- d. [Forward Movement Consulting](#)—Melissa Johnson Hewitt
- e. [Higher Ground Strategies](#)—Makani Themba
- f. [Inca Mohammad](#)
- g. [Masharika Prejean Maddison](#)
- h. [Mia Birdsong](#)

34. Research/Authors

- a. [Dr. Robert Bullard](#)—The Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice
- b. [Dr. Carolyn Finney](#)—Black Faces, White Spaces
- c. [Dr. Myles Lennon](#)—Brown University
- d. [Dr. Esther Obonyo](#)—University of Pennsylvania
- e. [Dr. Mayra Oyola-Merced](#)—Howard University
- f. [Dr. J. Marshall Shepherd](#)—American Meteorological Association
- g. [Heather McTeer Toney](#)—When the Streetlights Come On
- h. [Dr. Sacoby Wilson](#)—University of Maryland School of Public Health



35. Policy Analysis and Advocacy

- a. [Action Center on Race and the Economy](#)—Bree Carlson
- b. [Black Futures Lab](#)—Alicia Garza
- c. [Black Organizing Project](#)—Malaika Parker
- d. [Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies](#)— Jessica Fulton
- e. [Race Forward](#)—Glenn Harris
- f. [The Roosevelt Institute](#)—Rhianna Gunn Wright

36. Grassroots Organizing/Base Building

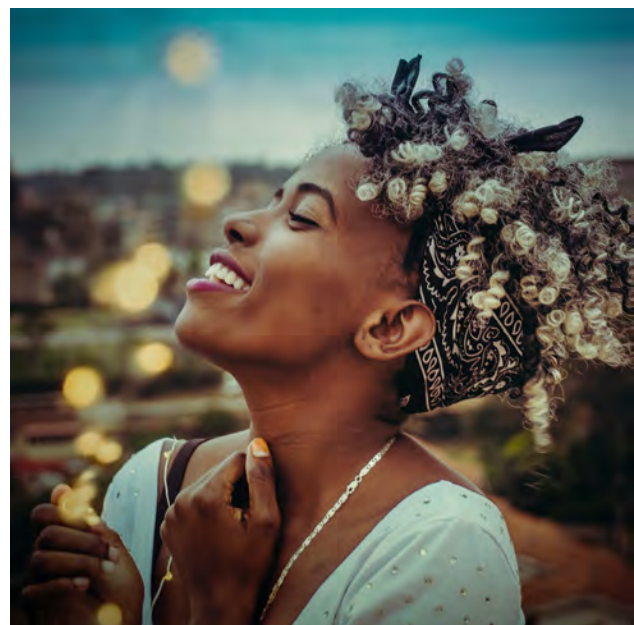
- a. [NAACP Center for Environmental and Climate Justice](#)—Abre Conner
- b. [National Community Reinvestment Coalition](#)—Dedrick Muhammad
- c. [Poor People's Campaign](#)—Bishop William J. Barber

37. Corporate Accountability/Corporate Social Responsibility

- a. [Ceres](#)—Steven Clarke, Wambui Gatheru, Alexandria Harris, Sarah Hicks, Tiffany Jones, Taylor Powell, Malayah Redmond, Laura Ross, Lauren Snyder, Elizabeth St. Brice, Clauselle Stokes III, Zalika Woods, Reginald Zimmerman Board of Directors—[Veronica Eady](#), [Michael Gelobter](#)
- b. [Corporate Accountability](#)—Greg Akili and Akinbode Oluwafemi
- c. [Unkoch My Campus](#)—Jasmine Banks
- d. [Neka Logan](#)— Virginia Tech

38. Leadership Development

- a. [Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity](#)—Denise Perry
- b. Coaches— [Kim Fowler](#), [Kimberly Freeman Brown](#), [Idrissa Simmonds](#)
- c. [Environmental Justice Movement Fellowship](#)
 - i. Staff—Terri Brezner, Taylor Griggs
 - ii. Advisors— Xavier Brown, Jihan Gearon, Darryl Jordan
- d. [Leadership for Democracy and Social Justice](#)—Jennifer Disla and Chris Torres
- e. [ProInspire](#)—[Bianca Casanova Anderson](#)



39. Culture Work

- a. [Climbing Poetree](#)—Naima Penniman and Alixa Garcia (no longer touring but their legacy lives on and thrives)
- b. [Hip Hop Caucus--Lennox Yearwood](#)
- c. [Warsan Shire, Kenyan Somali Spoken Word Artist](#)

40. Movement Support

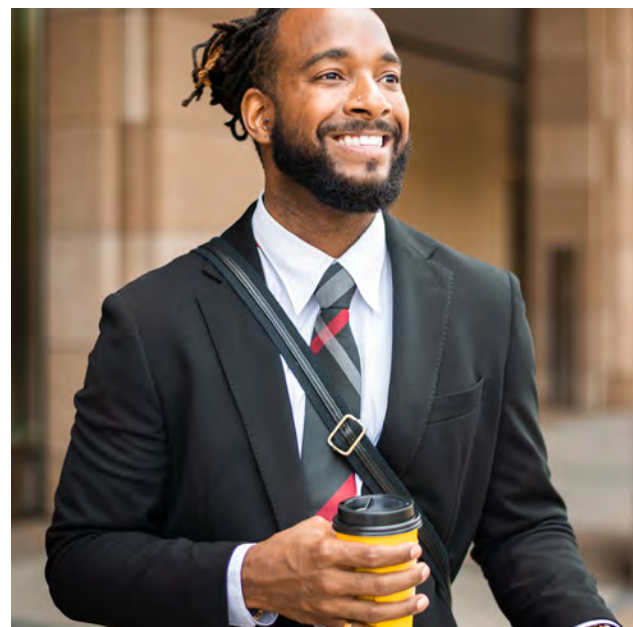
- a. [Movement Strategy Center](#)—Carla Dartis
- b. [People's Climate Innovation Center](#)—Corrine Van Hook Turner
- c. [Movement Generation](#)—Abbas Khalid, Melissa “Crosby”, Deseree Fontenot, Quinton Sankofa

41. Narrative Strategy/Strategic Communications

- a. [Paige Curtis](#)
- b. [dallas diaz](#)
- c. [Mary Annalise Heglar](#)
- d. [Shana McDavis-Conway](#)
- e. [Brentin Mock](#)
- f. [Matt Scott](#)
- g. [Sabrina Williams](#)
- h. [The Uproot Project](#)

42. Legal Strategy

- a. [Just Transition Lawyering Institute](#)
- b. [Gilmore, Khandhar, LLC \(Solidarity Economies Law Firm\)](#)--Dorcas Gilmore
- c. [Just Transition Lawyering Network](#)—Angela Hill, Colette Pichon Battle, Dorcas Gilmore
- d. [Black Belt Justice Center](#)--Tracy McCurdy
- e. [Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law](#)—Damon Hewitt
- f. [Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#)—Maya Wiley, J.D.
- g. [Leslie Fields, Esq](#)—Sierra Club
- h. [NAACP Legal Defense Fund](#)—Janai Nelson, J.D.
- i. [National Black Student Law Association](#)



- j. [National Council of Black Lawyers](#)
- k. [New York Lawyers for Public Interest](#)
- l. [Young Black Lawyers Organizing Coalition](#)

43. Democracy and Governance/Base Building/Political Leadership Development

- a. [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#)—Amber Hikes, Esete Assefa, Tata Traore-Rogers
- b. [Black Men Vote](#)
- c. [Black Voters Matter](#)—Latosha Brown
- d. [Collective PAC](#)—Quentin James, Stephanie Brown James
- e. [Emerge America](#)—A’Shanti F. Gholar
- f. [Higher Heights](#)—Glynda C. Carr, Kimberly Peeler-Allen
- g. [National Coalition for Black Civic Participation](#)—Melanie L. Campbell
- h. [Participatory Budgeting Project](#)—Shari Davis, Kristina Banks
- i. [She the People](#)—Aimee Allison

Learn more about Black Voters Matter on page 61!

44. Government-- Local/State/Federal

- a. Associations/Affinity Groups/Membership Organizations
 - i. [African American Mayors Association](#)
 - ii. [Blacks in Government](#)
- b. Individual Elected/Appointed Leaders
 - i. [Karen Abrams](#)—Pittsburgh Office of City Planning
 - ii. [Shalanda Baker](#)—Department of Energy
 - iii. [Mary Black](#)—Raleigh City Council
 - iv. [Ketanji Brown Jackson, J.D.](#)—Supreme Court
 - v. [Marcus T. Coleman, Jr.](#)—Federal Emergency Management Agency
 - vi. [Dr. Lisa Cook](#)—Federal Reserve
 - vii. [Chandra Farley](#)—Atlanta Office of Sustainability and Resiliency
 - viii. [Cynthia M. Ferguson](#)—Department of Justice
 - ix. [JoAnn Hardesty](#)—Portland City Council
 - x. [Daniel Lee](#)—City of Culver City
 - xi. [Summer Lee - Representative for Pennsylvania](#)

- xii. [Dr. Pamela Pugh](#)—Michigan State Board of Education
- xiii. [Michael Regan](#)—Environmental Protection Agency
- xiv. [Wes Moore](#)— State of Maryland
- c. White House
 - i. [Office of the Vice President](#)—Kamala Harris
 - ii. [White House Council on Environmental Quality](#)— Dr. Brenda Mallory, Dr. Jalonne White Newsome, Holly Wilson
 - iii. [White House Environmental Justice Advisory Committee](#)



45. **Networking/Movement Building**

- a. [Black Oak Collective](#)—Wes Gobar
- b. [Black Owners of Solar Services](#)—Ajulo Othow and Dana Clare Redden
- c. [Environmental Justice Leadership Forum](#)
- d. [National Black Environmental Justice Network](#)—Asti Davis
- e. State Environmental Justice Alliances
 - i. [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#)
 - ii. [Michigan Environmental Justice Alliance](#)
 - iii. [New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance](#)
 - iv. [New York Environmental Justice Alliance](#)
- f. [US Climate Action Network](#)—Reverend Dallas Conyers, Sharon Phillip, Rosita Scarborough, and Laura Kigweba James (Black Climate Alignment Network)

When we lead, we win—a sampling of black-led victories in environmental and climate justice

In reflecting on the triumphs led by Black voices and hands, we witness the testament of a resilient spirit that continues to lead change for a more just world. From Baltimore to Los Angeles, communities have risen to prevent environmentally hazardous projects from poisoning their air and water. Our victories are not just about opposing what harms us but also constructing what nurtures us. Our stories are not just tales of resistance but also narratives of creation, innovation, and unwavering strength. Our victories are numerous, and they sing the song of a future where justice isn't just a demand but a lived reality.



Here's a glimpse into some of the transformative changes led by Black individuals and communities, which are a testament to the power of collective action and advocacy!

Stopping the Bad

- **Baltimore, Maryland:** Free Your Voice, a human rights committee of United Workers based in Curtis Bay mounted a public pressure campaign across the region, calling Baltimore City leaders to cut ties to the Energy Answers trash-burning incinerator project. Students, parents, teachers, community members and environmentalists have been protesting the massive waste-to-energy incinerator because it would cause more air pollution to a community that already suffers some of the most toxic air pollution in Maryland. This opposition resulted in Baltimore Regional Cooperative Purchasing Committee's decision to end its support for the project, the Baltimore City School Board's withdrawal of its support, and the Board of Estimates voted to terminate its energy purchasing agreement with the company. *SOURCE: [We Demand Fair Development! Stop the Incinerator! | Clean Air is a Human Right \(wordpress.com\)](#)*
- **Los Angeles, California:** In December 2022, the city that's home to the country's largest network of urban oil production approved a plan to phase out oil drilling. Across the country, urban oil wells are primarily found in Black and Latino communities and are connected to several respiratory and cardiovascular health ailments. The City Council's decision to ban the long-standing practice follows more than 25 years of community organizing, including a decade-long campaign from the STAND L.A. coalition, a collection of seven Black and Latino-led environmental justice organizations. *SOURCE: [The Environmental Justice Wins You Might Have Missed in 2022 - Capital B \(capitalnews.org\)](#)*
- **Memphis, Tennessee:** In a [win](#) for environmental justice and water, Plains All American Pipeline announced that the company was pulling the plug on the [controversial Byhalia Pipeline](#), a proposed 49-mile pipeline that would have gone through several historically Black Memphis neighborhoods to transport crude oil for export. Among other harmful impacts, the pipeline was slated to plow through a drinking water well field in southwest Memphis operated by Memphis Light, Gas and Water. Community groups [Memphis Community Against the Pipeline \(MCAP\)](#) and [Protect Our Aquifer](#) led the charge to rally community opposition against the pipeline, over concerns of threats to local drinking water and further health risks to southwest



Memphis communities that have borne disproportionate environmental burdens due to polluting industries. Representing MCAP, Protect Our Aquifer, and the Tennessee Chapter of the Sierra Club, they fought state and federal permits for the project and represented MCAP in litigation challenging the pipeline company's attempt to forcibly take Black landowners' property through condemnation lawsuits.

- **Norco, Louisiana:** Black residents of the Diamond community in Norco, Louisiana won a decisive environmental justice victory in which the Shell Corporation took actions that were unprecedented in the corporation's history. Through strategic activism, Concerned Citizens of Norco won: (1) support from Shell for residents to move away from Shell's toxic facilities; and (2) a commitment by Shell to reduce toxic pollution at its local facilities by 30%. This victory was the result of CCN being both undaunted in their demand for relocation and pollution reduction and working in an effective coalition. *SOURCE:* [Surviving Cancer Alley](#)
- **Randolph, Arizona:** When Salt River Project announced its proposal two years ago to expand a gas-fired generating station, it was met with swift opposition from residents of Randolph, a historic African-American community near Coolidge. Randolph residents worried about impacts on the community. Their opposition got the attention of the Arizona Corporation Commission, which denied SRP's request for permits. Under terms of the agreement, the utility will scale back the project and fund scholarships, job training and other programs for local residents. *SOURCE:* [SRP, Randolph reach settlement on gas-fired plant expansion | Fronteras \(fronterasdesk.org\)](#)
- **St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands:** Island residents successfully extended the temporary shutdown of the Limetree Bay refinery, a massive facility known to dump poisonous fumes and oil droplets onto nearby homes. The refinery, which received its operating permit from the Trump administration, was first shuttered in May 2021 after island residents organized to show the facility's harmful impacts on their health. In November, the closure was expanded after the Environmental Protection Agency ruled the facility needed a new permit before considering if the plant could re-open. *SOURCE:* [The Environmental Justice Wins You Might Have Missed in 2022 - Capital B \(capitalbnews.org\)](#)
- **St. James Parish, Louisiana:** In the parish known as America's Cancer Alley, residents blocked two petrochemical plants from opening in their community. More than 15,000 residents submitted public comments





opposing the petrochemical projects, which were designed to create plastics and other chemical products. If they had been approved, the two plants, located in the majority Black county, would have emitted more pollution into the air than nearly four coal plants. *SOURCE: [The Environmental Justice Wins You Might Have Missed in 2022 - Capital B \(capitalbnews.org\)](#)*

"There is always light. If only we are brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it...."

Amanda Gorman, Poet Laureat

Building the Good

- **Universal Basic Income:** Led by then-Mayor Michael Tubbs, the city of Stockton, California embarked on a bold experiment two years ago: It decided to distribute \$500 a month to 125 people for 24 months – with no strings attached and no work requirements. The people were randomly chosen from neighborhoods at or below the city's median household income; they were free to spend the money any way they liked. Meanwhile, researchers studied what impact the cash had on their lives. The people who received the cash managed to secure full-time jobs at more than twice the rate of people in a control group, who did not receive cash. Within a year, the proportion of cash recipients who had full-time jobs jumped from 28 percent to 40 percent. The control group saw only a 5 percent jump over the same period. *SOURCE: [Stockton, California, gave people a basic income. It boosted employment. - Vox](#)*
- **Housing Justice**—Led by Rahwa Ghirmatzion (and now Dawn Wells-Clyburn) PUSH Buffalo, as a founding member of the NY Renews coalition with nearly 200 organizational members across NY State, passed the most ambitious and equitable climate legislation in the country—the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. With the Upstate/Downstate coalition, they won major legislation for tenant protections. Over the years, they have acquired dozens of properties and developed community led, community-owned sustainable housing while creating scores of jobs and improving the economic conditions and self-determination of predominately Black communities in Buffalo. *SOURCE: <https://www.pushbuffalo.org/>*



- Food Justice**—Led by Leah Penniman and Ife Kilimanjaro, Soulfire Farm is, in their own words, “an Afro-Indigenous centered community farm committed to uprooting racism and seeding sovereignty in the food system. We raise and distribute life-giving food as a means to end food apartheid. With deep reverence for the land and wisdom of our ancestors, we work to reclaim our collective right to belong to the earth and to have agency in the food system. We bring diverse communities together on this healing land to share skills on sustainable agriculture, natural building, spiritual activism, health, and environmental justice. We are training the next generation of activist-farmers and strengthening the movements for food sovereignty and community self-determination. Our food sovereignty programs reach over 50,000 people each year, including farmer training for Black and Brown growers, reparations and land return initiatives for northeast farmers, food justice workshops for urban youth, home gardens for city-dwellers living under food apartheid, doorstep harvest delivery for food insecure households, and systems and policy education for public decision-makers.”



- Energy Justice**—Led by Donnel Baird, Bloc Power is a national climate tech company focused on greening aging urban buildings. “The dream of BlocPower is that we can go into an undervalued community and train and hire people to transform their own community and lead the way on helping all of America learn how to solve the climate crisis,” according to Donnel Baird. “BlocPower’s vision is smarter, green, and healthier buildings for everybody.” BlocPower has retrofitted more than 1,200 buildings in more than 25 American cities, replacing unhealthy, fossil fuel-burning heating and cooling systems with clean, efficient, all-electric air source heat pumps, water heaters and solar panels. It leverages advanced technologies to monitor energy consumption, digitally simulate the most impactful green energy solutions, and dramatically lower the cost of construction and installation.



- Water Justice**—Led by Thomas Barnwell, local predominantly Black advocates formed Comp Health after vowing to find solutions to contaminated water and poor health outcomes. Together, they advocated for a federally qualified health center with affordable payment options. In the fall of 1970, the doors opened to Beaufort Jasper Hampton Comprehensive Health Services, Inc, often called ‘Comp Health.’ In turn, leaders of the health center supported a new water system and created jobs for residents, influencing better health outcomes for decades. By 1974, reports indicated that the infant mortality rate had decreased by two-thirds. “It was



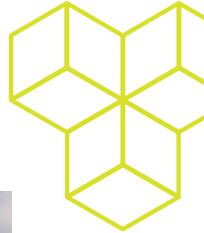
almost like a miracle,” said Thomas Barnwell, the first executive director of Comp Health, “because just, for example, solving the problem of intestinal parasites was described by the epidemiologist as an almost unsolvable situation.” In 53 years, Comp Health has expanded to host 15 health programs at 10 locations across Beaufort, Jasper and now Hampton counties. Just three executives have led the health center since its inception in 1970: Thomas Barnwell, Roland Gardner, and Dr. Faith Polkey. The creation of the water system and the health center has yielded massive dividends; Beaufort has been recognized as the healthiest county in South Carolina for the last 11 years, and its residents have the longest life expectancy in the state. *SOURCE: [How a Black Community Brought Affordable Health Care and Clean Water to Rural South Carolina in the 1970s](#) (directrelief.org)*

- **Transportation Justice**—Led by Eddie Bautista, the NY EJ Alliance, in collaboration with transit and environmental justice advocates, advanced the Fix the Subway Campaign which led to the passage of the nation’s first Congestion Pricing plan, projected to generate nearly \$2 billion in annual revenue to be invested into NYC’s public transit system. *SOURCE: [Transportation Justice – NYC ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE](#) (nyc-eja.org)*



- **Intentional Community**—Led by Aleta Toure, the Parable of the Sower Intentional Community is a worker-owned cooperative is for black women with children. They are women with partners gay and straight, bi and trans, children and grandparents, but the ten core cooperative members are black women. Of the two thousand intentional communities recognized in the world, Parable of the Sower is the first for black women. In the community, four sections/villages will be comprised of tiny homes, or adobe houses. Cooperative members are doing the construction. The first village is for women and children, including beloved partners, or grandparents. The second village is more elderly and differently abled individuals and will be set up to give those members ways to meet their needs, through support from the rest of the community, who will all work 35 hours a week. The third village will be the primary source of community income, from a central retreat space and cabins around it. There will also be income derived from the fourth village with interns coming out to stay for organizing campaigns, and legal support – it will be almost like a dorm, with space to camp out, too, and a concert venue. Finally, there will be a farm, an organic vegetable garden, as well as goats, chickens, and bees. Some of the work will be selling our wares at a farmer’s market on Saturday, and there will be a collective kitchen and collective daycare. *SOURCE: [About – Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Coop](#) (wordpress.com)*





- **Voter Engagement/Democracy**—Led by LaTosha Brown and Cliff Albright, the Black Voters Matter Fund is a voting rights and community empowerment organization. BVM's stated purpose is "to increase power in our communities" by focusing on voter registration, getting out the vote, independent election-related expenditures, and organizational development & training for other grassroots groups. BVM actively supports infrastructure for grassroots organizations in rural Black communities pursuing voting rights initiatives, providing financial support, training, candidate development, and networking. In the 2020 election cycle, BVM supported more than 600 Black-led grassroots groups in 12 states. As of November 2020, they had invested in over 500 Black-led community organizations, and describe advocating for voting rights "in a way that's about power and not just about participation." *SOURCE: Black Voters Matter - Wikipedia*



In Conclusion

41 million Black Americans. Millions of communities. Fifteen ways Black Americans are differentially impacted by the climate change continuum. Countless polluted and ravaged neighborhoods. Too many hospital beds. Tens of thousands of graves. Too many scarred hearts and souls. Too many children with threatened futures.

It doesn't have to be this way..

Forty-one million Black Americans with resilience born of struggle and strength and conservation practices born of heritage and tradition. Forty-five categories of remedies, each with multiple examples of solution-makers. Each of these leaders is a luminary who lights the path to systems change through a Just Transition. Each solution paves the way to dismantling the extractive economy and giving rise to a regenerative economy that embodies cooperation, caring for the sacred, and deep democracy.

We already see it happening from Indianapolis, IN to Spartanburg, SC to Gulfport, MS to Crenshaw/Los Angeles, CA, and beyond. The leadership on solutions is honed from frontline experience of persistent impacts of the problem. The solutions are proven. The models proliferate. All we have to do is get behind the frontline leadership, unify around the principles, practices and policies of Just Transition, and scale.

I end this tome—which is a documented lamentation for what shouldn't be, as well as celebration of the promise and possibilities of what is and what can be—with this poem that touches me, a Chicagoan. This culturally grounding reflection of where hope does and doesn't reside paints a vibrant picture of what should be—where “all life thrives”.

Hope isn't a vacant lot-- Rasheena Fountain

In my dream, Chicago blues join the songbirds in melodies of hope,
a vision I imagine as skyscraper promises to you, the skies.

I wish in new heights, in treetop rebellions the oaks and maples offer
to the children, from our ancestors, for the continuation of breaths.

I love beyond white picket fences into avenue streets.

I re-envision vacant lots as forests—spaces where we can plant new seed.



Little Village, Chicago, was home to two coal power plants, routinely rated as among the most toxic in the country. In 1994, residents founded the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) to not just fight environmental racism forced on their community, but to actively reclaim green space and grow food to nurture the community. They also worked for nearly two decades worked to have the plants shut down – and succeeded in 2018.

The Semillas de Justicia community garden and the people of Little Village embody the spirit of this report: a community systemically excluded, marginalized, put in danger – but fighting back for love of land and each other, leading the way in the creation of something new and beautiful.

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