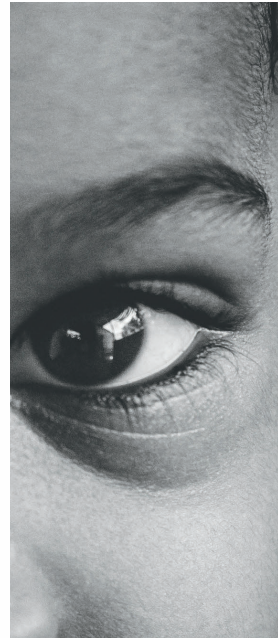


CULTIVATING THE CONDITIONS FOR BLACK LIBERATION AND JUST TRANSITION:

An Encyclopedia of Power, Peril and
U.S. Climate Finance Policy Prerequisites




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The time has come to end this charade. The debts are unaffordable. If they won't cancel the debts, I would suggest obstruction; you do it, yourselves. Africa should say: 'Thank you very much, but we need this money to meet the needs of children who are dying, right now, so, we will put the debt-servicing payments into urgent social investment in health, education, drinking water, the control of AIDS, and other needs.

– Activist





We've got to decolonize ourselves and understand that all these things... are rooted in an economy that has devalued our humanity.





– Colette Pichon Battle


We might not necessarily say the words 'climate change,' but people understand that something is wrong when two historical hurricanes come to one area back-to-back. And that's followed by a flood, and that's followed by a freeze, and they're pushed out of their homes and communities.

– Roishetta Ozane

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*There is so much loss and damage
with so little reparations to countries
that contributed so little to the world's
carbon footprint that obviously...
It is the historically wealthy, white,
colonizing nations that benefited (and
continue to benefit) from a long history
of unimpeded emissions.*

**-- Pakistan's Minister of Climate Change,
Sherry Rehman**

*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

*Rise Up
You Mighty Race.
You Can Accomplish
What You Will.*

--Marcus Garvey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Encyclopedia of Power, Peril and U.S. Climate Finance Policy Prerequisites* equips us with a detailed framework for transforming climate finance policy through a Black Liberation lens. The *Encyclopedia* is designed to serve as a reference and guide for multiple constituencies in the climate finance movement who are seeking transformation.

We start with setting the stage with the broader vision — what are we building toward? Each section of the *Encyclopedia* also provides historical context and illustrative examples of how climate finance rooted in colonial and extractive systems fail us.

Climate finance transformation demands confronting and dismantling these colonial and extractive systems through a strategic, multi-phase approach encompassing:

- 1) Historical responsibility and reparative justice;
- 2) Legitimacy of multiple knowledge systems;
- 3) Democratic and participatory governance;
- 4) International financial architecture transformation; and
- 5) Movement resource-building.

Together these Five Political Prerequisites protect Black community and nation-controlled climate finance from historical and ongoing systemic destruction.

The *Encyclopedia* outlines a phased approach for implementing these Prerequisites between 2025 and 2035, including legislative actions, movement organizing timelines, and policy development. It highlights the necessity of coalition-building across climate justice, Black liberation, and anti-colonial movements, and stresses the importance of creating parallel democratic and financial institutions resilient to political backlash.

Movement resource-building requires the U.S. to establish permanent federal funding streams that resource movement organizations for sustained transformation rather than project cycles. This will ensure Black communities and Black-led frontline formations throughout the Black Diaspora have the financial infrastructure necessary to implement the other four Political Prerequisites.

Rather than appealing to the current administration and their efforts to actively dismantle climate programs, we are building implementation blueprints for leadership committed to reparative justice and ecological survival. The Five Political Prerequisites approach recognizes that political transformation takes time—movements must organize now, policies must be developed throughout 2025 to 2028, and implementation must begin immediately in 2029, to redistribute power and center Black liberation and community self-determination as foundational to a just and regenerative future.



OVERVIEW

Setting the Context

The 2007 United States Social Forum had the motto, “Another World is Possible, Another U.S. is Necessary.” Since January 2025, the U.S. Administration’s systematic dismantling of climate programs has illuminated the political obstacles to transformation. With federal agencies banned from using terms such as “climate change” and “Black” and with over \$14 billion in environmental justice grants withdrawn and/or threatened, the current moment demands strategic political action rather than incremental reform.

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.

– Shirley Chisholm

This pattern of U.S. attacks on Black economic autonomy is not new. Throughout history, Black communities and Black nations attempting autonomous economic development have faced systematic retaliation orchestrated or enabled by U.S. economic and military power. From the **Tulsa Race Massacre** (1921) that destroyed Black Wall Street to the **MOVE bombing** (1985), and from U.S.-enabled sanctions against **Burkina Faso’s** gold nationalization to NATO intervention against resource sovereignty, the United States has consistently punished Black economic autonomy both domestically and internationally.

Despite this opposition, successful community-controlled climate finance systems continue demonstrating transformative potential. From Ghana’s community-controlled green banks to the **Southern Reparations Loan Fund’s** community-led grantmaking in the U.S. South, and from **Barbados’s** sovereignty-maintaining debt swaps to Brazil’s Quilombola agroecological systems, these models prove alternative approaches work when protected from U.S. institutional retaliation.

In November 2024, The Chisholm Legacy Project (TCLP) published [Transforming Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens](#), presenting ten comprehensive mandates for transforming global climate finance toward community control, sovereign nationhood, and reparative justice. Building on that foundational framework, this encyclopedia details measures for U.S. accountability as the prerequisite for global transformation, identifying Five Political Prerequisites that must be secured to protect Black liberation initiatives from the systematic destruction that U.S. power has historically imposed.

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Acknowledgment of Foundational Work

This encyclopedia builds upon the visionary work and tireless organizing of Black liberation

movements, leaders, and organizations who have been advancing climate justice, economic transformation, and community self-determination for decades. We humbly acknowledge and pay deep respect to the foundational thinking and organizing that makes our work possible.

The theoretical and practical frameworks we draw from include:

- **The Black Panther Party's** revolutionary analysis connecting liberation struggles to environmental justice, economic justice, and community control.
- **The Combahee River Collective's** intersectional framework linking racism, capitalism, and environmental destruction.
- **The National Black Environmental Justice Network's** pioneering work establishing environmental racism as a framework.
- **Luminary Leadership:**
 - **Malcolm X's** international solidarity perspective connecting domestic Black liberation to Global South anti-imperial struggles.
 - **Angela Davis's** prison abolition work demonstrating how carceral systems connect to environmental racism.
 - **Fannie Lou Hamer's** food sovereignty organizing in Mississippi that prefigured climate justice organizing.

Environmental justice led by Black leaders works against patterns of systemic racism and injustice to build a sustainable future for all.

—EcoRise

Additional contemporary movements and organizations whose leadership guides our work:

- **Climate Justice Alliance** and the Our Power Campaign centering frontline community leadership.
- **Grassroots Global Justice and It Takes Roots** building grassroots power for climate justice, economic justice, gender justice, etc.
- **Indigenous Environmental Network** advancing Indigenous sovereignty and traditional ecological knowledge.
- **Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) and the Black Hive** connecting police violence, environmental racism, extractive economies, and myriad points of intersection.
- **Movement Generation** facilitated multiple frontline groups in developing the Just Transition Framework which is a guide and a key point of reference.
- **National Domestic Workers Alliance** linking care work to climate resilience and community sustainability.

- **New Economy Coalition** coordinating a plethora of groups demonstrating community-controlled economic development and ecological sustainability.
- **Taproot Earth** leading global discourse on climate reparations, climate forced migration, and beyond.
- **And so many more.**

We also acknowledge the leadership of Global South movements including **La Via Campesina**, **Buen Vivir** movements across Latin America, **Pan African Climate Justice Alliance** leading work across the Continent of Africa, and **land back** movements worldwide that have maintained traditional knowledge systems and community-controlled resource management despite centuries of colonial assault.

This work stands in the tradition of these movements while attempting to contribute to the ongoing struggle for Black liberation, climate justice, and community self-determination. Any insights or contributions this encyclopedia makes belong to the collective wisdom of these movements and should be understood as continuing their work rather than inventing new approaches.

People who fight. People who do not let the garbage trucks and the landfills and the petrochemical plants roll over them. That has kept me in this movement for the last 25 years.

– Dr. Robert Bullard

This encyclopedia identifies and explains Five Political Prerequisites that must be secured before broader transformation can proceed without facing the institutional destruction that has eliminated previous Black autonomous economic endeavors. Drawing from the Ten Mandates framework, we focus on the changes that create protective political conditions: 1) Historical Responsibility; 2) Multiple Ways of Knowing; 3) Democratic Governance; 4) International Architecture Transformation; and 5) Movement Building.

The United States, as the world's largest historical carbon emitter and current military spender, bears primary responsibility for climate reparations. American policy determines how international financial institutions operate globally, making U.S. transformation essential for worldwide climate justice.



Overarching Transformation Strategy: Three Components

This encyclopedia serves as the second component of a comprehensive transformation strategy:

Figure/Box 1

Component 1 (The Ten Mandates Framework): Complete systems blueprint for transformed climate finance	Component 2 (Cultivating Conditions Prerequisites Encyclopedia):	Component 3 (Future Implementation Guide):
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reimagine Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens 2. Center Historic Responsibility and Reparative Justice 3. Honor Traditional Knowledge Systems 4. Build Black Led Autonomous Financial Infrastructure 5. Protect Cultural Sovereignty 6. Advance Democratic and Participatory Governance 7. Measure Access Holistically 8. Follow Global South Leadership 9. Transform Climate Finance Architecture 10. Resource Movement Building 	<p>This encyclopedia focuses on Mandates 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, as the Five Political Prerequisites for creating protective conditions for implementation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enact Historical Responsibility and Reparative Justice 2. Legitimate Multiple Ways of Knowing 3. Advance Democratic and Participatory Governance 4. Transform International Climate Finance Architecture 5. Resource Movement-Building 	<p>Practical roadmap for immediate community action</p> <p>The third publication in this three-part series will focus on Mandates 1, 4, 5, 7 & 8, developing community and nation-centered implementation strategies for the institutional foundations this encyclopedia aims to establish.</p>

Three-Part Analysis, Focal Audience, and Strategic Vision

Each of the Five Political Prerequisites sections includes a three-part analysis:

1. **Problem Identification** and Historical Context – why current systems fail and how they developed;
2. **Power Analysis** – identifying key institutions, decision makers, and leverage points for change; and
3. Concrete **U.S. Policy Demands** – specific policies and structural changes needed primarily in the U.S. for restructuring/transforming global climate finance.

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

Primary Audiences. This encyclopedia serves multiple constituencies in the climate finance movement seeking climate finance transformation; for individuals and groups who care, for the world that does not exist yet and oppressive governments who try to prove us wrong. We write with movement and organizations developing advocacy strategies, policymakers seeking justice-centered frameworks, international bodies reconsidering colonial financial structures, and nations and communities building autonomous regenerative economies.

Strategic Timeline: Project 2029. In addition to appealing to current U.S. power holders, we develop implementation blueprints that recognize multiple pathways for transformation. While the current U.S. administration actively dismantles climate programs and policies, strategic opportunities exist even within their stated priorities — including their emphasis on U.S. manufacturing, border policies, and skepticism of foreign aid and multilateral institutions. Additionally, through work with various civil society groups, G8/G20 and other nations may be willing to lead aspects of this transformation independently of U.S. action.

This multi-pathway approach recognizes that:

- Current U.S. political leadership opposes many transformations outlined here but may support specific elements that align with their stated goals of reducing foreign dependencies.
- Other Global North and emerging economies may advance these transformations regardless of U.S. positions.
- Movement organizing and policy development must happen now to be ready for opportunities across multiple political contexts.
- Political prerequisites take time to establish and require sustained coordination across multiple election cycles and international forums.

Core Goal: Protection Through Prerequisites

Our goal is restructuring climate finance to materially repair colonial extraction while building Black nation and community-controlled alternatives that can withstand institutional backlash. This requires securing political prerequisites before implementing the complete mandate framework, ensuring transformation efforts can flourish rather than face systematic elimination that destroyed previous autonomous economic endeavors.

Why Prerequisites Matter. History demonstrates that attempts at community-controlled economic development face predictable retaliation when protective political conditions do not exist. The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre destroyed the prosperous Greenwood District—known as

“Black Wall Street”—when white mobs, supported by local government and law enforcement, burned 35 city blocks and eliminated what represented the most successful example of Black economic autonomy in American history.¹ This pattern repeated across numerous Freedmen’s settlements that faced systematic destruction whenever they achieved prosperity and economic independence.

Similarly, when Black nations assert resource sovereignty—from Burkina Faso’s gold nationalization to Libya’s gold dinar proposal—they face coordinated international economic retaliation.

By securing these five prerequisites first, we create the institutional safeguards necessary for broader transformation to survive and thrive without facing the systematic destruction that has historically eliminated autonomous Black community endeavors and Black sovereign nation initiatives.

Methodological Note: Contextual approaches to sovereignty in funding Black nations and Black communities abroad

This encyclopedia recognizes the complex relationship between community-controlled climate finance and Black nation sovereignty. Rather than advocating for the United States to bypass sovereign governments universally, our approach is contextual and principled.

We distinguish between three scenarios for U.S. climate finance distribution:

Sovereign Nation Partnership: Where Black nations have democratic governance structures that serve community interests, the U.S. should channel climate finance through government-to-government partnerships that strengthen national sovereignty while ensuring community participation in resource allocation decisions.

Community-Led Call Amplification: Where Black nations and their communities explicitly call for direct community-to-community climate finance relationships due to concerns about governmental intermediaries, the U.S. should respond to these specific requests by supporting the mechanisms these communities themselves identify, while ensuring such support strengthens rather than undermines national sovereignty.

Figure/Box 2

KEY CAVEAT: This framework operates only in response to explicit calls from Black nations and communities themselves, rather than U.S. determinations about governmental legitimacy. The United States has no legitimate authority to assess other nations’ governance structures, given its own history of supporting authoritarian regimes when convenient for U.S. interests while opposing democratic movements that threaten U.S. corporate access to resources.

Moreover, the current extreme authoritarian moment in the United States—with systematic attacks on democratic institutions—demonstrates that the U.S. government itself lacks the democratic legitimacy necessary to make judgments about other nations’ governance. Any framework for international climate finance cooperation must first acknowledge that meaningful implementation requires fundamental democratic transformation within the United States itself.

1 Ellsworth, Scott. *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Louisiana State University Press, 1982; Tulsa’s Greenwood Cultural Center. “1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.” National Endowment for the Humanities.

For this approach to function authentically, the U.S. would need to first secure the political prerequisites outlined in this paper including: Ending military protection of corporate extraction, dismantling colonial financial architecture, and establishing genuine community control over domestic climate finance decisions. Only after demonstrating authentic democratic governance domestically could the United States legitimately respond to international requests for climate finance cooperation without perpetuating neocolonial intervention patterns.

Instead, this approach recognizes that many Black nations and communities are already articulating their own analyses of how climate finance can best serve their needs. The U.S. role is limited to responding to these explicit requests in ways that communities themselves design, while simultaneously working to dismantle the structural barriers (debt, sanctions, military interference) that prevent Black nations from having full sovereignty over their climate responses.

You don't know where you stand in America until you know where America stands in the world.


—Malcolm X

Dual-Track Approaches: In many contexts, both approaches operate simultaneously—supporting government capacity building for climate governance while strengthening grassroots organizations to ensure community voice in national climate decisions.

This framework prioritizes community self-determination within the context of Black nation sovereignty, recognizing that authentic climate solutions require both strong community control and legitimate national governance. The U.S. role is to support rather than supplant local democratic processes, providing resources that strengthen rather than undermine the relationship between communities and their governments.

Our demands for “community-controlled oversight” of U.S. climate finance reflect the principle that affected communities should have meaningful authority over external resources flowing into their territories, implemented through locally appropriate mechanisms that respect both community autonomy and national sovereignty.





Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future.

– **Audre Lorde**

The land does not belong to us; we belong to the land. We are balance and equity, solidarity, integrity, diversity, territorial defense, the 'buen vivir,' the dialogue between ways of knowing, expressed through the peasant-to-peasant method. We do not want sustainable development, we want sustainable life.

– **Via Campesina**

The world has gone mad; the world has become too material; the world has lost its spirit of kinship with God, and man can see nothing else but prejudice, avarice and greed. Avarice and greed will destroy the world...

-- **Marcus Garvey**

GLOSSARY FOR COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY

KEY TERMS

Black Liberation: Political framework emphasizing self-determination, economic empowerment, and community control for Black communities, based on 1960s-70s Black Power movement principles that recognize Black communities as the canary in the coal mine of societal wellbeing.

Black Nations: Countries and territories with majority African populations, including African countries and nations in the African diaspora, recognizing both continental African states and Black-majority nations globally.

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color - communities most impacted by climate change and systematic exclusion.

CDFI (Community Development Financial Institution): Financial institutions certified by U.S. Treasury to provide credit and financial services to underserved communities outside traditional banking.

Climate Finance: Money and financial mechanisms used to fund climate change mitigation (reducing emissions) and adaptation (preparing for climate impacts).

Climate Justice: Framework recognizing that communities least responsible for climate change face the greatest impacts, and solutions must address these inequities.

Climate Reparations: Financial compensation and resource transfers from high-emitting countries and corporations to communities and nations most harmed by climate change, recognizing climate impacts as the result of historical and ongoing extraction rather than natural disasters.

Colonial Financial Architecture: International financial systems – namely the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) that maintain colonial extraction patterns through debt, structural adjustment, and resource control.

Community Change Grant Program (CCGP): Established by the **Inflation Reduction Act** of 2022 (see entry below), the program provided \$2 billion for community-driven projects that reduce pollution and increase climate resilience in disadvantaged communities. The program was launched by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is the largest amount of federal money ever given directly to communities for environmental and climate justice in American history.

Community-Controlled: Decision-making power residing with frontline communities rather than government agencies, corporations, or nonprofits acting on behalf of communities.

Community-Controlled Finance: Financial systems where affected communities have genuine decision-making power over resources flowing to their territories, including the authority to determine priorities, allocate funds, and hold institutions accountable.

Extractive Economy: An economic system based on removing resources from communities and ecosystems faster than they can regenerate, prioritizing short-term profit over long-term sustainability and community well-being.

Extractive Systems: Economic and political systems that remove resources, wealth, or decision-making power from communities for outside benefit.

Frontline Communities: Communities most directly impacted by climate change and environmental injustice, including communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities.

Global South: Countries and regions that have experienced colonization and continue to face economic marginalization in the global economy, often located in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, though the term refers to political and economic relationships rather than strict geography.

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022: A U.S. federal law that invests heavily in climate energy initiatives. The IRA aimed to lower energy costs, reduce carbon emissions, and strengthen energy security. It also contained provisions to reduce the federal government budget deficit and lower prescription drug prices.

Justice40: Former U.S. Federal government goal that 40% of climate and clean energy investment benefits reach disadvantaged communities that have been historically marginalized and underinvested in.

Just Transition: Framework for moving from an extractive economy to a regenerative one through community-controlled alternatives that provide good jobs, clean environments, and democratic economic participation while living in harmony with earth systems.

Political Prerequisites: Five essential political changes that must happen first to create protective conditions for community-controlled climate finance transformation.

Project 2029: Strategic timeline focusing on the next U.S. presidential administration as an opportunity to implement political prerequisites for climate finance transformation.

Regenerative Economy: An economic system designed to restore and enhance community and ecological health, operating within natural limits while ensuring all people have access to what they need to thrive.

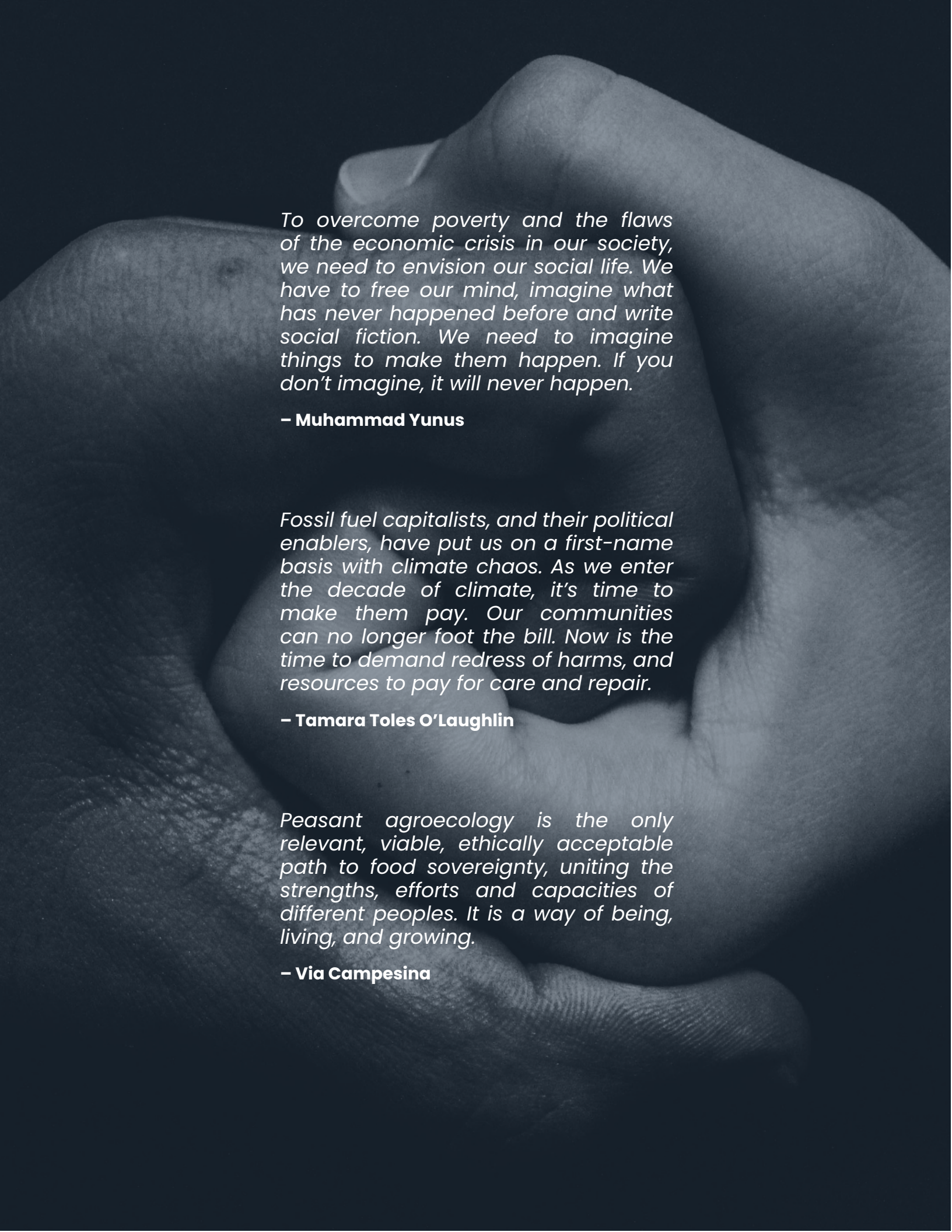
Reparative Justice: Accountability framework requiring those responsible for historical harm to repair damages and transform systems causing ongoing harm.

Resource Sovereignty: Community or national control over natural resources and development decisions affecting their territories.

Structural Adjustment Programs: Economic policies imposed by World Bank/IMF requiring countries to privatize public services, eliminate trade protections, and open markets to foreign corporations.

Traditional Knowledge Systems: Indigenous and community-based ways of understanding and managing relationships between people and the natural world, developed over generations through direct experience and cultural practices.

Technical Assistance (TA): Support and training provided to help organizations navigate complex federal grant processes and requirements.



To overcome poverty and the flaws of the economic crisis in our society, we need to envision our social life. We have to free our mind, imagine what has never happened before and write social fiction. We need to imagine things to make them happen. If you don't imagine, it will never happen.

– Muhammad Yunus

Fossil fuel capitalists, and their political enablers, have put us on a first-name basis with climate chaos. As we enter the decade of climate, it's time to make them pay. Our communities can no longer foot the bill. Now is the time to demand redress of harms, and resources to pay for care and repair.

– Tamara Toles O'Laughlin

Peasant agroecology is the only relevant, viable, ethically acceptable path to food sovereignty, uniting the strengths, efforts and capacities of different peoples. It is a way of being, living, and growing.

– Via Campesina

VISION: WHAT ARE WE BUILDING TOWARD?

Black Liberation Framework

Black Liberation is the complete freedom of Black people from all forms of oppression and the establishment of self-determined, autonomous Black communities and nations. Drawing from the revolutionary Black Power movement of the 1960s and 70s, Black Liberation encompasses self-determination, economic empowerment, community-controlled institutions, social justice, and intersectional solidarity.

Black Power simply means: Look at me. I'm here. I have dignity. I have pride. I have roots. I insist, I demand that I participate in those decisions that affect my life and the lives of my children. It means that I am somebody.

—Whitney M. Young

In practice, Black Liberation means Black communities developing autonomous economic, educational, medical, and agricultural systems that enhance both agency and access. It involves dismantling the vestiges of colonialism—from macro-level extractive economic structures to meso-level and micro-level systems of community control and individual liberation. This is not paradoxical to cooperation and interdependence; rather, it breaks the bonds of power and control over communities to build collective power and control with communities.

Black Liberation recognizes that **Black communities are the canary in the coal mine of societal well-being**. Addressing Black liberation creates conditions for all communities to thrive.

It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Just Transition Framework

Just Transition is the framework for moving from our current extractive economy to a regenerative one that sustains life rather than destroys it. A Just Transition dismantles harmful industries and economic structures while building community-controlled alternatives that provide good jobs, clean environments, and democratic participation in economic decisions.

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

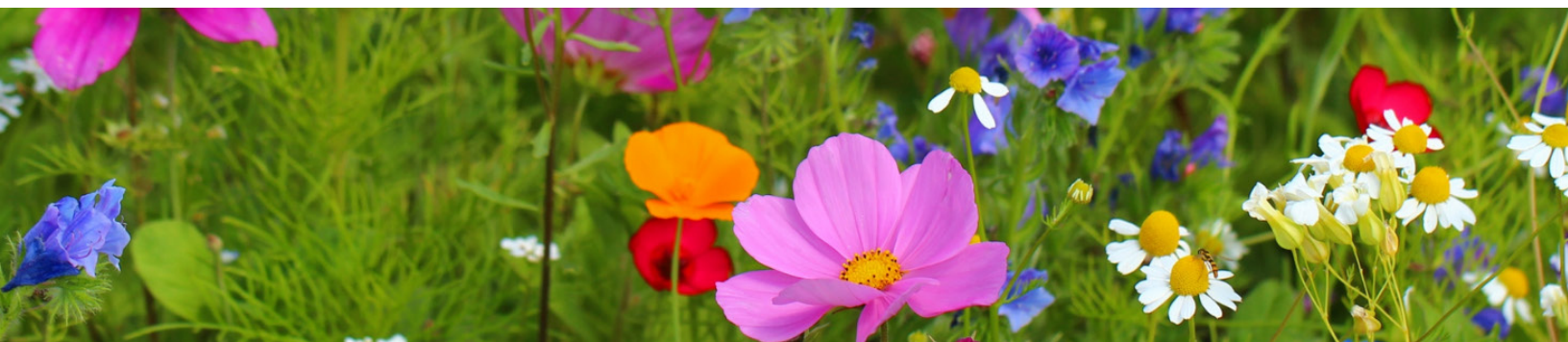
Just Transition principles align with earth systems' design to sustain life when we live in harmony with natural abundance—growing crops in concert with seasons, designing passive homes and buildings, operating as zero waste economies. This means less consumerism, local production, reduced shipping and flying of goods, and building self-reliance from national to local levels. This does not mean nationalism or closing borders, but it does mean that countries do not depend on other nations for the vast majority of their goods. Just Transition centers cooperation, caring for the sacred, ecological restoration, regenerative systems, and deep democracy.

The Synergy of Black Liberation and Just Transition

Black Liberation and Just Transition are mutually reinforcing frameworks. Historical and ongoing extraction patterns target Black communities first and worst, making Black liberation essential for any genuine transition to regenerative systems. Simultaneously, creating regenerative economic systems requires the leadership of those most impacted by extractive systems.

There's this deep intersectionality of all of these different issues, and they're inextricably connected. We have to work on the systemic underpinnings to address any of these issues and to address all of these issues.

—Jacqueline Patterson



Climate crisis and social injustice are inextricably linked... Our economic system must work not only for the few, but for all nations and all people, especially communities that are impacted first and worst by the climate crisis.

– Jerome Foster II, youngest-ever White House advisor for environmental justice

Conservation Study Integration - Black Environmental Stewardship Legacy

The groundbreaking study, “An Uprooted People, A Legacy of Conservation,” by Conservation International provides indisputable evidence of what Black communities have long known—Black people are environmental stewards, not environmental burdens.² The research examined Afro-descendant community lands across Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Suriname, finding **deforestation rates up to 55% lower** compared to similar areas and discovering that **more than half of Afro-descendant lands rank among the top 5% globally in biodiversity**.

This study reveals that African environmental knowledge did not disappear with the forced displacement of slavery—it adapted and thrived in new environments. As the researchers document: “These time-tested African practices subsequently crossed the Atlantic Ocean with enslaved individuals, ultimately being adapted for the plants, animals and humans of the Americas... enslaved individuals implemented management practices that replicated food forests, creating forest canopy structures that constituted functional reservoirs for dietary, medicinal, ritual and festive purposes.”

This study is very important to us Saamaka people, as it highlights for the first time how, through our deep cultural and spiritual connection to the land, we have sustained vital forest areas. We hope this raises awareness, so that [political leaders] no longer see us as mere claimants of land.

– Hugo Jabini

² Sangat, S.S., Rosero, M., Olsson, E. et al. Afro-descendant lands in South America contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. *Commun Earth Environ* 6, 458 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-025-02339-5>

Our 2035 Vision: Black Liberation Through Climate Finance Transformation

By 2035, we envision a fundamentally transformed climate finance ecosystem where Black communities and Black nations control the resources flowing to their territories. This transformation moves us beyond reforming extractive institutions to building an entirely different relationship between finance and liberation—one where community and nation state sovereignty guide every decision and traditional knowledge shapes every investment.

*We were not asking for a donation;
we were demanding what is owed to
us by developed countries... We don't
want any more debt!*

--Sokhna Die Ka

Our vision realizes this demand for reparative rather than extractive relationships.

Black Nation and Black Community-Controlled Financial Architecture in Practice

Success looks like the Pan-African Climate Finance Alliance model scaled globally: Traditional governance systems integrated with modern financial tools, where elder councils provide cultural guidance while community assemblies make investment decisions. Imagine Caribbean networks of cooperatives coordinating climate adaptation through Ubuntu economics. Or Indigenous communities in the Americas managing billion-dollar resilience funds through traditional decision-making processes that center seven-generation thinking.

In this future, climate finance operates through community-controlled institutions guided by African economic philosophies of collective benefit and ecological stewardship. Rather than chasing narrow profit metrics, these systems measure success through collective wellbeing, cultural vitality, and ecological health. Community assemblies decide how resources flow, youth councils ensure long-term vision, and technical committees support rather than supplant community wisdom.

*For me, the climate crisis is Mother
Earth giving us very, very important
feedback. She's asking us to listen to
her. She is telling us that the structures
and systems that we've relied on for so
long aren't working.*

—Wawa Gatheru

Democratic Governance of Climate Resources

By 2035, at least \$1 trillion flows through democratic community control rather than colonial financial architecture. Frontline communities have genuine decision-making power over climate finance affecting their territories, with enforcement mechanisms preventing external interference. These institutions demonstrate resilience to political backlash because they are rooted in traditional governance systems that have survived centuries of colonization.

This governance extends beyond individual projects to reshape entire regions. West African climate finance networks coordinate across 16 countries, strengthening both local autonomy and regional solidarity. Caribbean communities manage adaptation resources through cooperative structures that honor both immediate survival needs and long-term cultural preservation. African diaspora communities create cross-border financial networks that support liberation struggles while building climate resilience.

The disproportionate responsibility placed on Africa, which contributes less than 4 percent of the world's energy-related emissions but faces serious consequences to the lives and livelihood of its people, cannot be described as anything but climate injustice. We need bold and collective actions built on the principle of equity.

–Sameh Shoukry, former Egyptian Foreign Minister and COP27 President-Designate

Traditional Knowledge Guiding Climate Solutions

In our 2035 Vision, Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems guide every major climate finance decision. As documented in “An Uprooted People, A Legacy of Conservation,” Black communities have always been environmental stewards, developing sophisticated resource management systems over thousands of years that modern science is only beginning to understand.³ Risk assessment frameworks incorporate ancestral ecological wisdom alongside technical data. Monitoring systems measure what matters to communities—including spiritual health of the land, strength of cultural practices, and vitality of intergenerational knowledge transfer.

This knowledge integration transforms how we understand climate solutions themselves. Community-designed agroecology projects restore both carbon sequestration and food sovereignty. Traditional water management systems become templates for regional adaptation strategies. Sacred site protection drives landscape-scale conservation that outperforms market-based mechanisms in both ecological and social outcomes.

3 Sangat, S.S., Rosero, M., Olsson, E. et al. Afro-descendant lands in South America contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. *Commun Earth Environ* 6, 458 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-025-02339-5>

“An Uprooted People, A Legacy of Conservation,” provides scientific validation for this vision, documenting how Afro-descendant communities achieve deforestation rates up to 55% lower than other approaches while maintaining 99% of their territories among the top 5% globally for biodiversity.⁴ These results reflect sophisticated African environmental knowledge systems that crossed the Atlantic through slavery and were adapted to new environments, creating “food forests” that provide sustenance while maintaining ecological integrity.

Ultimately, the only wealth that can sustain any community, economy or nation is derived from the photosynthetic process—green plants growing on regenerating soil.⁵

—Allan Savory

Reparative Rather Than Extractive Relationships

The complete transformation requires replacing extractive relationships with reparative ones. Historical responsibility mechanisms link past emissions to current adaptation funding obligations, ensuring the Global North provides resources without control. Climate reparations flow directly to frontline communities as recognition of historical debt rather than charity requiring gratitude.

These reparative relationships extend to knowledge systems, where traditional ecological wisdom receives recognition and compensation rather than appropriation. Community climate innovations receive intellectual property protection. Indigenous adaptation strategies are supported and scaled with community consent rather than extracted for corporate profit.

How the Five Political Prerequisites Enable Complete Transformation

The Five Political Prerequisites create the protective foundation necessary for this vision to survive institutional backlash:

- **Historical Responsibility** establishes legal frameworks forcing accountability for past extraction while funding community-controlled transformation.
- **Multiple Ways of Knowing** legitimizes traditional knowledge systems that guide Black nation and community climate solutions.
- **Democratic Governance** ensures Black nations and Black communities maintain decision-making power as financial systems scale.

4 Id.

5 [Allan Savory: Save the world's food supply through a grazing revolution - CSMonitor.com](#)

- **International Architecture Transformation** dismantles colonial financial institutions that punish nation/community autonomy.
- **Movement Building** supports frontline capacity to implement and defend this complete transformation.

Without these prerequisites, autonomous endeavors face the same systematic destruction that eliminated Tulsa's Black Wall Street and Philadelphia's MOVE organization, and that targeted Libya's Muammar Gaddafi when he proposed the African gold dinar to challenge Western financial dominance. With them, Black nations and communities can build the protective political conditions necessary for climate finance that serves liberation rather than extraction.⁶

By 2035, this transformation demonstrates that a different world is possible—one where financial systems serve Black communities and nations flourishing rather than elite accumulation, where traditional wisdom guides technological innovation, and where Black nations and communities control the resources necessary for both survival and sovereignty.

*These are the times to grow our souls.
Each of us is called upon to embrace the
conviction that despite the powers and
principalities bent on commodifying
all our human relationships, we have
the power within us to create the world
anew.*

—Grace Lee Boggs



⁶ Clinton, Hillary. Email dated April 2, 2011. "Qaddafi's government holds 143 tons of gold, and a similar amount in silver... This gold was accumulated prior to the current rebellion and was intended to be used to establish a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar." Released emails, 2015.

The few own the many because they possess the means of livelihood of all ... The country is governed for the richest, for the corporations, the bankers, the land speculators, and for the exploiters of labor. The majority of mankind are working people. So long as their fair demands - the ownership and control of their livelihoods - are set at naught, we can have neither men's rights nor women's rights. The majority of mankind is ground down by industrial oppression in order that the small remnant may live in ease.

–Helen Keller

European nations have parceled out among them and taken possession of nearly all of the continent of Africa, and the natives are compelled to surrender their lands to aliens and are treated in most instances like slaves.

–Marcus Garvey

The business of grabbing and money-making, through a violent extractive economy that the 1% have built, is burdening the earth and humanity with unbearable and non-sustainable costs, and has brought us to the brink of extinction. We do not have to escape from the earth; we have to escape from the illusions that enslave our minds and make extinction look inevitable.

–Vandana Shiva

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: ROOTS OF EXTRACTIVE ECONOMY

European “Exploration” as Exportation of Extractivism

What European historians called “exploration” was actually the exportation of extractive economic systems that would eventually drive the climate crisis. Beginning in the 15th century, European powers did not discover new continents—they invaded existing civilizations with sophisticated economic systems based on reciprocity, sustainability, and collective benefit. African kingdoms, Asian empires, and Indigenous nations throughout “Turtle Island” and other lands now called the Americas, had developed economic relationships with land and resources that sustained complex societies for millennia without destroying ecological systems.

European colonialism systematically destroyed these sustainable economic models, replacing them with extraction-based systems designed to accumulate wealth in European centers while impoverishing the periphery.

Processes of racialization are especially evident in the conscription of those designated as Black in the system of global capitalism. Trans-Atlantic enslavement was a world-historical phenomenon in which color, culture, labor, and humanity were conflated as markers of inferiority.

-- Dr. Charisse Burden-Stelly

The wealth that financed European industrialization—and later American expansion—came directly from this organized theft of land, labor, and resources from Africa, the Americas, and Asia. This was not primitive accumulation that prepared the ground for capitalism; it was the foundation that capitalism was built upon. These extractive relationships continue today through climate finance mechanisms.

Evolution from European Colonialism to U.S. Imperial Expansion

As European colonial power waned in the 20th century, the United States inherited and modernized these extractive systems. The Bretton Woods institutions — the World Bank and International Monetary Fund—were explicitly designed to maintain Global North control over Global South resources without the expense of direct military occupation.

Dr. Walter Rodney explained this transition: “Under colonialism, the ownership was complete and backed by military domination. Today, in many African countries the foreign ownership is still present, although the armies and flags of foreign powers have been removed. So long as foreigners own land, mines, factories, banks, insurance companies, means of transportation, newspapers, power stations, then for so long will the wealth of Africa flow outwards into the hands of those elements.”

The United States amplified European extraction patterns through financial architecture that could extract resources more efficiently than direct colonial control. Structural adjustment programs forced Global South countries to export raw materials while importing manufactured goods, creating debt relationships that transferred wealth northward while increasing vulnerability to climate impacts.

The disproportionate responsibility placed on Africa, which contributes less than 4 percent of the world's energy-related emissions but faces serious consequences to the lives and livelihood of its people, cannot be described as anything but climate injustice. We need bold and collective actions built on the principle of equity.

–Sameh Shoukry, former Egyptian Foreign Minister and COP27 President–Designate

From Slavery to Industrial Capitalism to Climate Destruction

Within the United States, extractive systems evolved from chattel slavery through industrial capitalism to the current climate-destroying economy. Wall Street's development depended directly on Atlantic Slave Trade profits, while contemporary mass incarceration continues providing unpaid labor through the 13th Amendment's exception clause allowing forced labor for convicted persons.

These were not separate historical phases but continuous evolution of the same extractive logic. Enslaved Africans built the wealth that financed American industrialization. Industrial capitalism provided the profits that enabled massive fossil fuel expansion. Corporate fossil fuel profits now fund political systems that block climate action while communities of color, Indigenous communities, and communities of low wealth/income bear disproportionate climate impacts.

The prison industrial complex demonstrates this continuity: Black communities are intensely surveilled, profiled, and disproportionately incarcerated, even in circumstances of innocence and. The carceral state lacks rehabilitative measures and focuses on keeping people in the oft-privatized imprisonment. States quantify incarcerated persons and their labor as revenue sources in state budgets, maintaining the extractive relationship between Black bodies and white wealth accumulation that began under slavery. This same logic drives climate finance systems that profit from crisis rather than preventing it.

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

Pattern of Destroying Black-Led Autonomous Economic Endeavors

Throughout American history, successful Black economic autonomy has faced systematic destruction whenever communities attempted genuine independence from extractive systems. This pattern reveals why current climate finance approaches fail: they operate within the same financial architecture that historically punishes Black community control and resource sovereignty.

Tulsa's Black Wall Street (1921): The Greenwood District represented the most successful example of Black economic autonomy in American history. Black-owned businesses, banks, and institutions had created genuine economic independence that threatened white economic control. White mobs, supported by local government and law enforcement, burned 35 city blocks, killed hundreds of residents, and eliminated this autonomous economic project through coordinated state and vigilante violence.⁷

Philadelphia's MOVE Organization (1985): MOVE created alternative economic and social structures completely outside mainstream systems—growing their own food, educating children independently, practicing collective ownership, and developing autonomous economic, educational, medical, and agricultural systems. Philadelphia police dropped a bomb on their headquarters, killing 11 people including 5 children and destroying 61 homes in a predominantly Black neighborhood, demonstrating continued state violence against Black autonomy.⁸

Contemporary global examples: These domestic patterns reflect global retaliation against resource sovereignty. When Burkina Faso declared gold mines would be nationalized to fund community development, France coordinated international market sanctions that damaged the country's economy. Similar economic warfare targeted Libya's gold dinar proposal, and Venezuela's increased state oil control, demonstrating how the international system punishes attempts at resource sovereignty

7

Id.

8

Anderson, John, and Hilary Doe. "Let It Burn: The Philadelphia Tragedy." St. Martin's Press, 1987.

The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage. In the past it was possible to convert a country upon which a neo-colonial regime had been imposed... into a colonial territory. Today this process is no longer feasible. In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism, we have today neo-colonialism.

–Kwame Nkrumah

Climate Finance Perpetuating Extractive Patterns

Current climate finance operates according to the same extractive logic that destroyed autonomous Black economic endeavors, at community and nation state levels of resource sovereignty. The World Bank, IMF, and private climate funds emerged from and continue operating through financial architecture designed to maintain Global North control over Global South resources.

Most climate finance initiatives ignore these historical patterns, assuming better policies or increased funding will succeed where previous autonomous projects were systematically destroyed. They operate within the same financial institutions that historically punish Black community and nation control, expecting different outcomes from the same extractive systems.

The current format of global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank prioritizes the interests of the rich countries in the Global North and perpetuates global inequalities. They need urgent reforms to make them more representative and effective.

–Oxfam

This history demonstrates why political prerequisites must be secured to support Black communities and nation states in achieving broader economic transformation. Without protective conditions—including legal accountability for historical extraction, legitimized community knowledge systems, democratic governance structures, transformed international architecture, and resourced movement organizations—new autonomous initiatives face the same systematic destruction that eliminated previous efforts.

Understanding this historical trajectory reveals how current systems function as designed, rather than representing failures requiring reform. Achieving different outcomes requires restructuring the financial architecture itself, not merely adjusting its operations. The Five Political Prerequisites create the foundation necessary for climate finance transformation that can survive institutional backlash and serve community liberation rather than continued extraction.

I need you to understand that our racial inequality crisis is intertwined with our climate crisis. If we don't work on both, we will succeed at neither.⁹

–Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, PhD

Human rights are not only violated by terrorism, repression or assassination, but also by unfair economic structures that create huge inequalities.

–Pope Francis

Climate Forced Migration: The Human Cost of Colonial Extraction

The Mediterranean Crisis: Climate Displacement at Sea

As we write this paper, another horrific story emerges from the Mediterranean—three Sudanese sisters found dead on an overcrowded migrant boat, their lives lost while desperately trying to reach safety. Their deaths represent more than individual tragedy; they embody the terrible dynamic of people forced from their homelands because of imperialist actions and climate-driven migration.

These sisters were not “migrants” in the way the term is often used—they were climate refugees, forced to flee conditions created by centuries of colonial extraction and the accelerating climate crisis. Sudan, contributing minimal greenhouse gas emissions globally, faces extreme drought, desertification, and conflict over scarce resources—conditions exacerbated by climate change and the historical disruption of traditional resource management systems.

⁹ Johnson, Ayana Elizabeth. “I’m a Black Climate Expert. Racism Derails Our Efforts to Save the Planet.” *The Washington Post*, June 3, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/06/03/im-black-climate-expert-racism-derails-our-efforts-save-planet/>

No one should pay for poverty with their very lives.

–Jacqui Patterson

The Global Pattern of Climate Displacement

The Mediterranean crossing represents just one front in a global crisis of climate-forced displacement. From Sudan to Honduras, from Bangladesh to Somalia, people are forced from their ancestral lands not by natural disasters but by the predictable outcomes of an economic system that prioritizes extraction over sustainability.

Trust the people who are living in these conditions. Those closest to the struggle are closest to the solutions.

–Lola West, of the Donors of Color Network

Current estimates suggest that climate change could displace over 200 million people by 2050, but these numbers obscure the colonial dynamics driving displacement. The countries producing the least emissions—predominantly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—face the greatest climate impacts and subsequent displacement.

Sudan: Conflict, Climate, and Corporate Extraction

Sudan exemplifies how imperial extraction patterns create climate vulnerability. Decades of resource extraction by foreign corporations, combined with imposed economic policies from international financial institutions, have undermined local food systems and traditional drought management practices. Climate change amplifies these vulnerabilities, but the underlying cause remains the systematic disruption of community-controlled resource management.

The ongoing conflict in Sudan reflects competition for increasingly scarce resources, competition intensified by climate change but rooted in colonial disruption of traditional governance systems that previously managed resources sustainably during drought cycles.



The current and future global demand for transitional metals and minerals offers a potentially huge economic opportunity... Almost all of the continent's current output is presently shipped as ore for processing in third countries, meaning the potential economic benefit of this enormous mineral wealth has not filtered through to the real economics in its African source countries.

**-- Economic Development in Africa Report
2023, UNCTAD**

The Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo

Similarly, in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo, mining operations for “green” technology metals have displaced millions of people while destroying the forests that provided climate resilience. Communities forced from mining areas face impossible choices: remain and risk violence or environmental poisoning, or attempt dangerous journeys to seek safety elsewhere.

These are not natural disasters—they are the predictable outcomes of prioritizing corporate profits over community survival. As climate impacts intensify, more communities face these impossible choices.

The climate catastrophe should be paid for by the people who sponsored it.

—Tamara Toles O’Laughlin

Climate Finance and Displacement Prevention

Climate finance has largely ignored the displacement crisis, focusing on infrastructure projects rather than addressing the root causes of vulnerability. Current approaches often worsen displacement by funding large-scale projects that displace communities in the name of climate adaptation.

True climate justice requires recognizing displacement as a failure of climate finance systems. Rather than managing displacement after it occurs, climate finance must prevent further displacement by:

- **Supporting Community-Controlled Adaptation:** Funding traditional resource management systems that have sustained communities through climate variability for generations, rather than imposing external technological solutions.
- **Ending Extractive Development:** Stopping the mining, logging, and infrastructure projects that destroy community resilience in the name of climate solutions.
- **Providing Reparative Resources:** Acknowledging that displacement often results from colonial extraction patterns and providing reparative resources to rebuild community resilience rather than charity for displaced populations.

The False Solutions Driving Displacement

Current climate finance often funds projects that increase rather than decrease displacement. Carbon offset projects displace communities from traditional lands. Large-scale renewable energy projects appropriate community territories. Ecosystem restoration projects exclude communities from areas they have sustainably managed for generations.

These “climate solutions” perpetuate the same colonial logic that created the climate crisis—removing communities from their lands for external benefit, whether for fossil fuel extraction or renewable energy production.

In Africa, we can be a green industrial hub that helps other regions achieve their net-zero strategies by 2050. Unlocking the renewable energy resources that we have in our continent is not only good for Africa, it is good for the rest of the world.

–William Ruto, President of Kenya

We're not going to deal with false solutions, it's hey, we're going to fine this oil company, and they're going to put money into schools, but they still get to burn all this stuff into our air, and we still have to breathe it in, and we're going to lose Black lives. We're not doing that. No matter how many jobs. We can create jobs and solutions that aren't harmful to our people. Those fines aren't solutions.

–Valencia Gunder

Honoring Those Lost at Sea

The three Sudanese sisters who died in the Mediterranean join thousands of others whose deaths result from a global economic system that treats some lives as expendable for others' profit. Their deaths occurred not because of natural disasters but because of policy choices that prioritize corporate extraction over community survival.

We are sailing the same troubled waters, but in very different boats. Vulnerable countries that contribute the least to climate change suffer the most.

– Brianna Fruean, Samoan environmental activist

Climate finance transformation offers a different path—one where resources flow to strengthen community resilience rather than extracting from it, where traditional knowledge guides adaptation rather than being displaced by external solutions, where communities control the resources necessary for both survival and thriving.

This transformation will not bring back the lives already lost, but it can prevent future tragedies by addressing climate change at its roots rather than only managing its consequences. The choice is ours: continue climate finance that increases displacement while claiming to address climate change, or transform climate finance to serve the communities most impacted by the crisis we've created.

These are some of the injustices of the climate crisis – those who didn't cause the climate crisis, those who aren't responsible for the rising global emissions – they're the ones on the frontlines. They're the ones whose voices are not being listened to. And they're the ones who don't get climate finance for mitigation, or adaptation, or finance for loss and damage.

– Vanessa Nakate, Ugandan climate activist



Economy, food, housing, transit—all of these are civil rights issues. And climate issues intersect with every single one.

– Jacqueline Patterson

The problems of racial injustice and economic injustice cannot be solved without a radical redistribution of political and economic power.

–Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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

POLITICAL PREREQUISITES FOR CLIMATE FINANCE TRANSFORMATION

From Historical Pattern to Current Crisis: The Political Context of Climate Finance

Fast forward to today, and the intersection of extractive economic systems with the current political climate crisis reveals why incremental reform continues to fail. The same financial architecture that historically destroyed autonomous Black economic systems—from Tulsa’s Black Wall Street to contemporary Black nation and community resource sovereignty efforts—now controls climate finance flows, ensuring that supposed “solutions” perpetuate rather than challenge extractive relationships.

The Current Moment: The Crisis and the Opportunity

Since January 2025, the U.S. administration’s systematic dismantling of climate programs has exposed why we need political prerequisites for lasting transformation that can survive political backlash. The administration rapidly implemented changes that profoundly impacted climate justice and climate finance through executive orders:¹⁰ “Unleashing America’s Energy,”¹¹ which cancelled every environmental and climate executive order from the previous administration, and “Protecting American Energy from State Overreach,”¹² which targets state and local climate programs.

It's time for us to all fully recognize that climate justice is not possible in an extractive economy. It's time for us to reject the myth of scarcity and embrace the reality of abundance in the context of a regenerative economy. It's time for us to unify and see that it's only through our collective cooperation that we all win.

–Jacqueline Patterson

While the administration has yet to admit this is true, multiple leaked emails revealed directives to remove language such as gay (as evidenced by the Enola Gay debacle),¹³ Black, discrimination, groundwater, or climate change from their publications across different departments including the National Institute of Health (NIH), U.S. Department of Agriculture, and

10 <https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2025/04/president-trump-issues-executive-order-targeting-state#:~:text=President%20Donald%20Trump%20on%20April,or%20preempted%20by%20federal%20law.>

11 <https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2025/04/president-trump-issues-executive-order-targeting-state#:~:text=President%20Donald%20Trump%20on%20April,or%20preempted%20by%20federal%20law>

12 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/protecting-american-energy-from-state-overreach/>

13 [World War II Enola Gay Aircraft Targeted By Pentagon DEI Purge](#)

Centers for Disease Control (CDC).¹⁴ Over a hundred words are listed as slated to be purged, and are squarely focused on addressing race and gender, climate change, environmental science and water protection.¹⁵

The earth, science, and all oppressed beings are attacked while resources are dismantled.¹⁶ All that stands between us, technocracy, tyranny, and complete chaos is our judicial system and our resistance. Through multiple lawsuits from State and environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Infrastructure Reduction Act (IRA) funding have been unfrozen, including a recent ruling by a federal judge to block the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from canceling \$14 billion in climate justice grants.¹⁷ The judge ruled a preliminary injunction that prohibits the EPA from unlawfully terminating the grants and orders Citibank to release the money to the grant recipients. However, on September 2, 2025, this injunction was vacated by a Court of Appeals, meaning the EPA's grant terminations are now in effect and Citibank is not obligated to release the funds.¹⁸ This systematic dismantling illuminates why incremental reform fails, and why we need political prerequisites for lasting transformation.

This political moment reveals the fundamental contradictions between Black liberation and finance that are actually dangerous. Autonomous economic endeavors—from Tulsa's Black Wall Street to Burkina Faso's gold nationalization—face predictable institutional retaliation. Most climate finance initiatives ignore these patterns, assuming better policies will succeed where previous efforts were systematically destroyed.

For example, in Burkina Faso, when revolutionary leader Ibrahim Traore declared gold mines would be nationalized, France pressured international markets to sanction the country—accusing them of being thieves of their very own gold. Until we transform international climate finance, it will be dangerous for Black people to declare community-controlled resources or financial sovereignty. **As such, throughout this paper, there will be references to “safety” as a necessary pre-condition for the success of what we propose as interim and long-term transformative measures.**

The current distress is caused by the abandonment of cultural and moral values... People must exchange and develop mutual aid.

-- Fadimata Walet Alassane, of the Tuareg people in Burkina Faso

With these rapid and ongoing changes, each day that passes brings new assaults and constraints. In the United States, measures to address climate change at the federal level are all but presumptively prohibited, much less through a lens of equity and justice. Unless radically

14 <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/fda-staffers-told-that-woman-disabled-among-banned-words-white-house-says-its-an-2025-02-20/>

15 <https://barnraisingmedia.com/usda-leaked-memo/> (The aim is obvious and insidious: to defund research and public health.)

16 <https://www.stinson.com/newsroom-publications-first-month-of-the-trump-administration-environmental-summaries-and-insights>

17 <https://time.com/7271567/trump-project-2025-anti-climate-action/>

18 [Court of Appeals Sets Aside Preliminary Injunction in GGRF Litigation - Climate Law Blog](#)

restructured, these systems will not change under the current administration. So we take a page out of their own book and write not to this current government but as our own “Project 2029”—writing blueprints for the world that does not exist yet, though seeds of emerging model communities have been planted to lead the way, but must be envisioned and planned for to ensure a liberated future for all.

The health and vitality of the earth begins at the community level—every community—and we must be vigilant to ensure that environmental justice is dispensed fairly and vigorously across the diverse landscape of America.

–Peggy Shepard

This encyclopedia identifies five political changes that must happen first to create protective conditions for Black nation and community-controlled climate finance. We focus on 2029 implementation, developing blueprints for leadership committed to reparative justice rather than appealing to current power holders dismantling climate programs.

Recent Climate Policy Trajectory

The last four years saw significant movement and change in the climate space. The previous U.S. administration represented both the promise and limitations of climate action within existing systems. Undoubtedly responding to frontline communities and young people demanding better, the IRA, constituted the largest federal climate investment in U.S. history, while executive orders integrated climate considerations across all levels of government. The Securities and Exchange Commission’s (SEC) 2024 climate disclosure rules for publicly traded companies required all publicly traded companies to disclose direct emissions and climate risk, demonstrating institutional momentum toward acknowledging climate risk.

However, this progress proved fragile. Corporate legal challenges forced the SEC to suspend implementation in April 2024, months before the current Administration’s systematic reversal. This pattern—initial progress followed by coordinated resistance—illustrates why transformative change requires addressing underlying power structures rather than relying on regulatory reforms alone.

The colonial world is a world of compartments... The colonial subject is a man penned in; his humanity is denied him by force of arms and police.

– Frantz Fanon

Contradictions in Western Climate Policy

The previous U.S. Administration's climate record exemplifies broader contradictions in Western approaches to environmental policy. The 2021-2025 Administration invested domestically in climate change mitigation more than any previous Administration; however, they simultaneously funded military aid and support for conflicts whose environmental impacts undermined global climate goals. U.S. military spending and overseas operations consistently generate massive carbon emissions while supporting conflicts that devastate ecosystems and communities. For example, U.S. military aid to Israel during the Gaza conflict contributed to emissions that, according to researchers at Queen Mary University of London, "exceeded the annual emissions of 26 individual countries" in just the first 120 days of fighting.¹⁹

This pattern reflects a consistent Western approach: performing environmental responsibility domestically while maintaining extractive relationships globally. These contradictions demonstrate why climate finance transformation requires addressing the colonial relationships that enable simultaneous "green" investment and ecological destruction.

We're in this environmental mess because we have declared parts of our planet disposable... You can't have climate change without sacrifice zones, and you can't have sacrifice zones without disposable people, and you can't have disposable people without racism.

—Hop Hopkins

Black Liberation Framework

Evidence-Based Black Liberation

"An Uprooted People" provides scientific validation for Black Liberation's emphasis on self-determination and community control. The study demonstrates that when Black communities control their territories, they achieve remarkable conservation outcomes that benefit the entire planet.²⁰ **99% of all Afro-descendant lands in Ecuador rank among the top 5% globally for biodiversity**—a testament to the sophisticated environmental management systems developed and maintained by Black communities.

This research counters racist narratives that portray Black communities as environmental problems rather than environmental solutions. As **Martha Cecilia Rosero Peña**, co-author of the study, states: "*Afro-descendant communities across the Americas have long served as environmental stewards without recognition or reward—most of their territories are not even*

¹⁹ <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/media/news/2024/hss/new-study-reveals-substantial-carbon-emissions-from-the-ongoing-iz-rl-gaza-conflict.html>

²⁰ Sangat, S.S., Rosero, M., Olsson, E. et al. Afro-descendant lands in South America contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. *Commun Earth Environ* 6, 458 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-025-02339-5>

formally recognized. The evidence, however, is indisputable; the world has much to learn from their land management practices.”

The study reveals how African “food forests”—agroforestry systems that provide food while mimicking natural forest ecosystems—were recreated in the Americas by enslaved Africans who maintained their environmental knowledge despite the violence of displacement. These systems now protect some of the world’s most biodiverse landscapes.

To understand why previous climate finance efforts have failed the Black communities and Black nations most impacted by climate change, we must center a Black Liberation framework that prioritizes community control and self-determination. Our analysis draws from the revolutionary Black Power movement in the 1960s and 70s,²¹ emphasizing self-determination, economic liberation, building Black power, social justice, intersectionality, and community-controlled institutions. In practice this means Black nations and communities developing autonomous economic, educational, medical, and agricultural systems that enhance both agency and access.

*Any community seriously concerned
with its own freedom has to be
concerned about other peoples’
freedom as well.*

–Assata Shakur

Often it is assumed a concept like ‘Black liberation’ is exclusionary, but it is actually the opposite. Black communities have been subjugated consistently since being transported to the shores of what is now the United States. During the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, Black lives mattering was often put in juxtaposition with all lives mattering. But the reality of the situation is all lives will matter when Black lives matter. Black people have been an indicator species of societal conditions, because of how in every society Black people are consistently put on the bottom. Thus you can judge a society’s most challenging conditions by seeing how Black people in that country are doing. When we improve the floor of what justice and human rights look like in this country, we improve everyone’s standard of living, increase everyone’s safety, and improve the resilience of our society.

²¹ “Black Power.” National Archives, African American Heritage, 16 March 2021, www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/black-power#:~:text=Black%20Power%20began%20as%20revolutionary,of%20political%20and%20cultural%20institutions. Accessed 1 April 2025.



Africa's voice in the global climate negotiations therefore becomes critical. We are proud to say that Africa is now recognized as the strongest agriculture negotiating group and that others are adopting our model.

–George Wamukoya, team leader of the African Group of Negotiators Expert Support (AGNES)

In the climate justice field, we often say the communities on the frontlines of climate change are “least responsible but most impacted.” Climate justice advocates recognize that frontline communities are “least responsible but most impacted” by climate change. This disparity results from centuries of subjugation and deliberate disinvestment that positioned communities of color in the most vulnerable locations—flood plains, industrial corridors, areas lacking infrastructure investment. Understanding this constructed vulnerability²² reveals climate finance’s responsibility to provide reparative rather than merely adaptive responses.

We have always cared about the environment, both because of cultural tradition and heritage and a connection with the land. We are conservationists as a survival tactic, given the historic deprivation that we’ve had and how we’ve had to do with very little.

–Jacqueline Patterson

This is why climate finance transformation must center Black liberation – not as charity or inclusion, but as the pathway to systemic change that both repairs harm inflicted on Black people and ensure our wellbeing but also more broadly paving a path to a society and world that benefits everyone. When we build financial systems that work for the most marginalized communities, we create resilient alternatives that can survive institutional backlash and serve frontline communities facing climate crisis, which, if climate change continues to progress unchecked, will eventually encompass all.

²² The combo of Climate Change & oppression is what produces CCC and “vulnerability”. Climate change + oppression = climate crises (the way it plays out, not just a neutral climate crises that is evenly distributed across all populations including the elite).

Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.

–Nelson Mandela

The Safety Imperative

Before examining historical patterns, we must clarify what we mean by ‘safe implementation’ of Black nation and Black community-controlled climate finance. History reveals that autonomous economic endeavors face predictable institutional retaliation when protective conditions do not exist.


Why Safe Implementation Matters. This framework centers Black liberation because achieving climate justice requires what we call ‘safe implementation’—creating conditions where community-controlled economic projects can develop without facing the coordinated institutional destruction that has historically eliminated Black autonomous initiatives. Safe implementation means:

- **Legal protection** from state violence and property seizure (as happened in Tulsa 1921).
- **Economic protection** from coordinated sanctions and financial warfare (as seen with Burkina Faso’s gold nationalization).
- **Political protection** from authoritarian backlash and program elimination (as occurring under the current administration).
- **Institutional protection** from systematic defunding and regulatory attacks (as experienced by MOVE and other autonomous projects).

Without these protective conditions, Black nation and Black community-controlled climate finance initiatives face the same systematic elimination that destroyed previous Black economic autonomy efforts.

The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.

–Audre Lorde



It is our stance that the problems created and perpetuated by colonization and capitalism cannot find solutions in those same frames. This is why it is crucial our Indigenous communities and nations recognize our place in this conversation. We are stronger together. Indigenous sovereignty and black liberation will put us on the path toward a better future, in which a regenerative economy will be realized, nourished, and implemented for our future generations.

–Indigenous Environmental Network

The world, more than ever, needs us to act with singular purpose. The world, more than ever, does not have the luxury of going on pause with the climate crisis... If we are busy not being able to talk with one another, and not to work with one another, then we will find that even that will become a bridge too far for us.

–Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados

In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism, we have today neo-colonialism... The result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment, under neo-colonialism, increases, rather than decreases, the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world.

–Kwame Nkrumah

TRANSLATING TEN TRANSFORMATIONAL CLIMATE FINANCE MANDATES INTO POLITICAL ACTION

Reimagining climate finance through a Black Liberation lens requires a deep understanding of the historical context and future possibilities of climate action. It means recognizing that the current climate finance system is rooted in centuries of colonial exploitation, racial oppression, and economic extraction, which have disproportionately burdened Black communities while benefiting those in power.

–Delicia Reynolds Hand

In *Transforming Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens*, The Chisholm Legacy Project addresses the “failure of climate finance mechanisms to meet the magnitude of the necessary transition.”²³ The comprehensive framework presents Ten Mandates that acknowledge the centuries old, ongoing structures the West uses to dominate and oppress much of the world, breaking down how ‘vulnerability’ to climate change is *constructed* for the most oppressed to struggle with.

These imperialist structures are the initial, fundamental drivers of climate change we experience today. The analysis in the Ten Mandates paper expands the depth and breadth of climate justice frameworks to assess responsibility more accurately, enabling more appropriate and commensurate justice through reparative actions. Citing several historic and current initiatives, the underlying analysis of the Ten Mandates emphasizes two key points: (1) how centering the most oppressed, climate-burdened communities and nations to shape Climate Justice and Climate Finance mitigation strategies will benefit all, and, (2) these successful models of Black nation and Black community-controlled climate finance “could be scaled and enhanced into more comprehensive systems for transformation”²⁴. Building on the foundational work in the Ten Mandates document, this paper addresses a critical implementation gap: the political obstacles that prevent these transformative mandates from taking root without facing systematic destruction.

²³ Hand, Delicia Reynolds. “Transforming Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens.” Chisholm Legacy Project, November 2024.

²⁴ Id

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

Why These Five as Political Prerequisites

Of the Ten Mandates, we focus on five that create the protective political conditions necessary for broader transformation. Current political realities—from the current U.S. administration’s attacks on climate programs to France’s economic sanctions against Burkina Faso’s resource nationalization—demonstrate that Black communities and Black nations attempting autonomous economic development face immediate institutional retaliation.

This encyclopedia focuses on five of the Ten Mandates framework as ‘political prerequisites’—the changes that must happen first to make other transformations possible. These five mandates also address the power structures that have systematically destroyed autonomous Black economic initiatives in the United States, revealing a consistent pattern of coordinated destruction spanning over a century:

Reconstruction Era Through Early 20th Century:

- **Freedmen’s Settlements destruction (1870s-1920s):** Hundreds of autonomous Black towns and settlements across the South faced coordinated violence, legal dispossession, and economic warfare.
- **Tulsa’s Black Wall Street massacre (1921):** White mobs supported by local government eliminated 35 blocks of Black economic autonomy.²⁵
- **Rosewood massacre (1923):** Entire Black town destroyed, residents murdered or driven out permanently.
- **Hamburg massacre (1876):** Federal troops allowed white militias to destroy Black political and economic leadership in South Carolina.

Ideals of liberty, freedom and righteousness do not prosper in the 20th century except they coincide with oil, rubber, gold, diamond, coal, iron, sugar, coffee, and such other minerals and products desired by the privileged, capitalists and leaders who control the system of government.

–Marcus Garvey

25 Ellsworth, Scott. *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Louisiana State University Press, 1982; Tulsa’s Greenwood Cultural Center. “1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.” National Endowment for the Humanities.

Mid-20th Century Systematic Suppression:

- **Urban Renewal/"Negro Removal" (1950s-1960s):** Federal programs destroyed over 1,600 Black communities and businesses under the guise of "slum clearance."²⁶
- **Highway construction through Black communities (1950s-1970s):** Interstate system deliberately routed through thriving Black neighborhoods, destroying economic centers.
- **Redlining and disinvestment:** Government-sanctioned financial exclusion that prevented Black community economic development.

Contemporary Attacks on Autonomy:

- **MOVE bombing (1985):** Philadelphia police destroyed Black autonomous living systems, killing 11, including 5 children.
- **Cooperative economics suppression:** FBI COINTELPRO targeted Black cooperative businesses and credit unions as "subversive."
- **Environmental racism placement:** Deliberate siting of toxic facilities in Black communities to prevent economic development.
- **Gentrification and displacement:** Market-driven elimination of Black economic enclaves from Harlem to Oakland.

International Pattern Extensions:

- **Cold War destabilization:** U.S. support for coups against African leaders pursuing economic sovereignty (Lumumba in Congo, Nkrumah in Ghana).
- **Structural Adjustment Programs:** World Bank/IMF policies that dismantled community-controlled African economies.
- **Contemporary sanctions:** Economic warfare against Black nations asserting resource sovereignty (Venezuela, Iran, Zimbabwe).

This comprehensive pattern demonstrates that the destruction of Black economic autonomy represents **deliberate policy** rather than isolated incidents, requiring systematic prerequisites to overcome systematic opposition.

They trample the sovereignty of states underfoot in flagrant violation of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular through the conditionalities they impose.

– Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM)

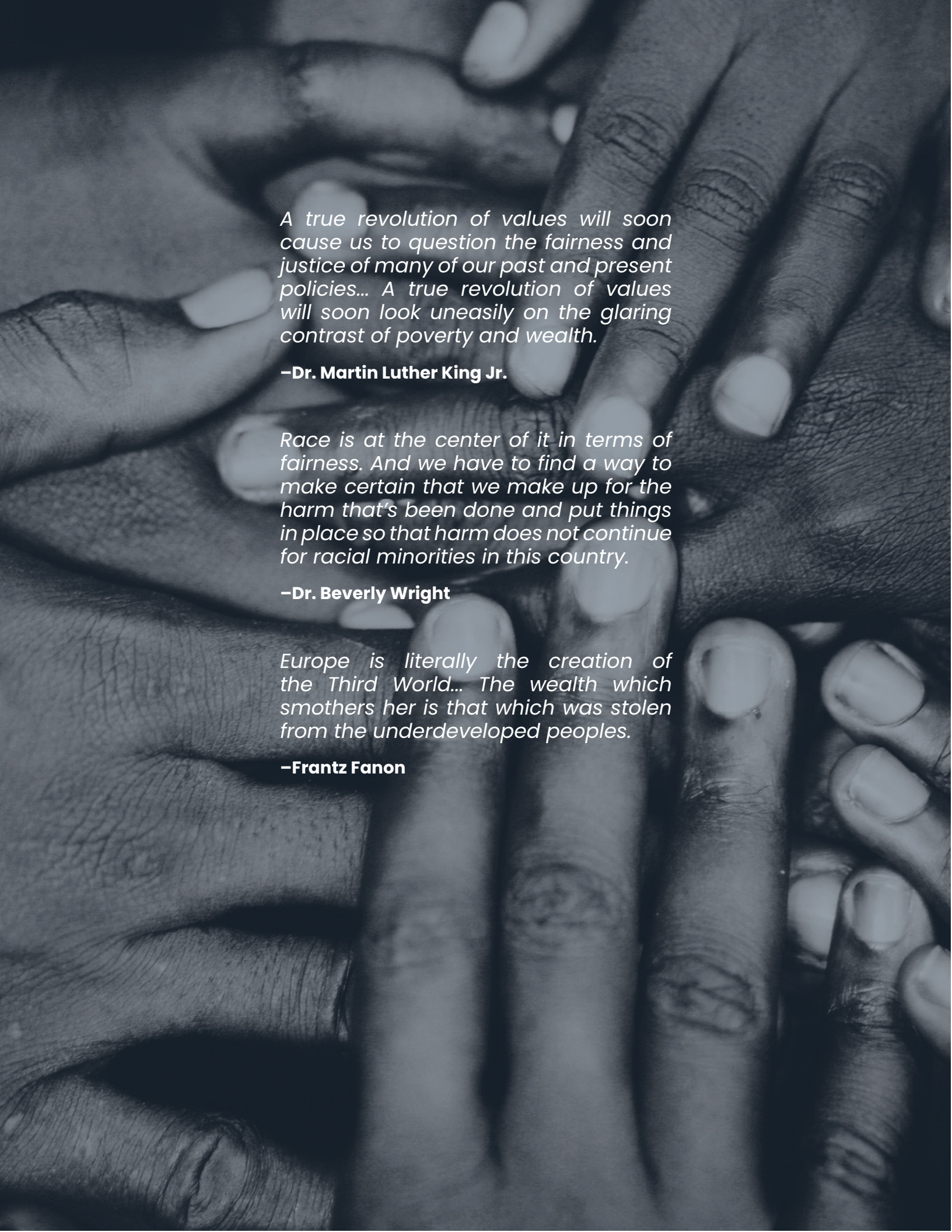
26 Fullilove, Mindy Thompson. *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America*. One World/Bal-lantine, 2005.

Strategic Sequencing for Safe Implementation Within Three-Component Strategy

These five mandates create the political foundation for the remaining mandates—Black-led infrastructure (4), cultural sovereignty (5), holistic metrics (7), and Global South leadership (8)—to flourish without facing the systematic destruction that has historically eliminated Black economic autonomy. Only with these protective conditions secured can Black nations and communities safely build the comprehensive transformation envisioned by the myriad leaders and movements catalogued in the Ten Mandates paper.

Figure/Box 3

Ten Foundational Mandates for Transformational Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens	The Five Political Demands Creating Implementation Conditions <i>(Demands italicized beneath foundational mandates)</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fundamentally Reimagine Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens 2. Center Historical Responsibility and Reparative Justice 3. Honor Traditional Knowledge Systems 4. Build Black-Led Autonomous Financial Infrastructure 5. Protect Cultural Sovereignty 6. Advance Democratic and Participatory Governance 7. Measure Success Holistically 8. Follow Global South Leadership 9. Transform International Climate Finance Architecture 10. Resource Movement-Building 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Center Historical Responsibility & Reparative Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enact Historical Responsibility & Reparative Justice</i> 2. Honor Traditional Knowledge Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Legitimate Pluralist Epistemologies & Heed Knowledge Systems of the Global Majority</i> 3. Advance Democratic and Participatory Governance 4. Transform International Climate Finance Architecture 5. Resource Movement-Building



A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies... A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth.

–Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Race is at the center of it in terms of fairness. And we have to find a way to make certain that we make up for the harm that's been done and put things in place so that harm does not continue for racial minorities in this country.

–Dr. Beverly Wright

Europe is literally the creation of the Third World... The wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the underdeveloped peoples.

–Frantz Fanon

PREREQUISITE: ENACT HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY AND REPARATIVE JUSTICE

Problem Identification: U.S. Accountability in Response to Global South Demands

This prerequisite requires the United States to respond to Global South demands for climate reparations because American economic and military systems created and maintain the extraction patterns driving climate crisis. While European colonialism established initial extraction relationships, the United States amplified and modernized these systems into the global financial architecture that controls climate responses today. Given U.S. structural dominance, American transformation is necessary—not to lead the global process, but to remove the barriers that prevent Black nations and communities from controlling their own reparations frameworks.²⁷

Black communities deserve climate reparations for damages they did not cause and for environmental services they have provided. “An Uprooted People, A Legacy of Conservation” demonstrates that Afro-descendant territories consistently protect biodiversity and sequester carbon at rates far exceeding other land management approaches—providing global environmental benefits without compensation while facing climate impacts created by others’ emissions.

Under colonialism, the ownership was complete and backed by military domination. Today, in many African countries the foreign ownership is still present, although the armies and flags of foreign powers have been removed. So long as foreigners own land, mines, factories, banks, insurance companies, means of transportation, newspapers, power stations, then for so long will the wealth of Africa flow outwards into the hands of those elements. In other words, in the absence of direct political control, foreign investment ensures that the natural resources and the labor of Africa produce economic value which is lost to the continent.

—Dr. Walter Rodney, Author, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*²⁸

²⁷ This framing responds to Global South coordination efforts like the V20 Climate Vulnerable Forum and Bridgetown Initiative demanding reparative climate finance.

²⁸ Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L’Ouverture Publications, 1972.

We view climate finance as a critical leverage point within an unjust system to mitigate climate crises and ensure the future of Black and frontline communities and nations. This requires actions to counter and repair the harm climate change produced through multiple imperialist activities.²⁹ When it comes to responsibility and justice, we specifically seek actions that address:

- **Communities who disproportionately experience constructed vulnerability** to climate change crises; and
- **The groups of people who disproportionately perpetrate environmental destruction** (those driving the most extreme activities that created and continue exacerbating climate change).

Origins of the Climate Crisis: The Foundation of Extraction

Transatlantic Slave Trade and Ecological Destruction. In order to envision historical responsibility and reparative justice, we must begin with a critical examination of the origins of climate crises.³⁰ The climate crisis cannot be understood without acknowledging its foundational relationship to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Indigenous genocide. The forced labor of over 12 million enslaved Africans enabled the capital accumulation that financed European and American industrialization—the beginning of mass fossil fuel consumption.³¹

The United States inherited and amplified these extraction systems, with American banks, insurance companies, and corporations becoming the primary drivers of fossil fuel expansion globally. U.S. climate policy must therefore center reparations not as charity, but as accountability for this historical foundation.

It's our country saying no [to financing work for people feeling the impacts of climate change]. That, to me, is like, come on now. We're better than that. This is lives we're talking about.

– Collette Pichon Battle

Carbon emissions began to rise during the Industrial Revolution (originating in Great Britain). This was facilitated through what Marx called “primitive accumulation,” a term that obscures the **theft of resources, land and people—the spoils of colonialism**.³² The wealth extracted through slavery and land theft created the financial infrastructure—from Wall Street banks to insurance companies—that later financed fossil fuel expansion globally. Lloyd’s of London insured slave ships before insuring oil tankers; New York banks that financed cotton plantations later financed coal mines and oil drilling.³³

29 Hand, Delicia Reynolds. “Transforming Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens.” Chisholm Legacy Project, November 2024.

30 Note: We focus on climate crises—the combination of climate changes with politically determined geographic distribution, infrastructure, and economic conditions that produce these crises. We emphasize that these crises are constructed rather than naturally occurring.

31 Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2014.

32 Marx, Karl. *Capital, Volume 1*. Chapter 26: “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation.”

33 Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Knopf, 2014.

Traditional Knowledge Systems vs. Colonial Extraction. Societies worldwide have always been challenged with the capacity of their lands. Most adopted different ways to work with those limitations, whether through migratory lifestyles, cultural protocols, or other Indigenous methods often cited in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous Knowledge (IK) scholarship.³⁴

We can find solutions to this planet in peril, especially when we respectfully bring science and Indigenous wisdom together...

-- Siila Watt-Cloutier, internationally-renowned Inuk author and advocate

African Ecological Wisdom. African societies developed sophisticated resource management systems over thousands of years. Traditional African farming systems like intercropping, agroforestry, and soil restoration techniques sequester more carbon and require fewer external inputs than industrial agriculture.³⁵ The terraced farming systems of Rwanda and Ethiopia prevent soil erosion while increasing food security. Traditional seed varieties developed across Africa show greater resilience to climate extremes than industrial monocultures.³⁶

A nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.

–Franklin Delano Roosevelt

It's so stupid, this idea that land can be owned. Land, which existed long before people... It doesn't belong to us. If anything, the soil owns us. It lets us move around for a bit and then it takes us back.

–Alistair Mackay

³⁴ Berkes, Fikret. *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

³⁵ Altieri, Miguel A., and Clara I. Nicholls. "Agroecology and the reconstruction of a post-COVID-19 agriculture." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 47, no. 5 (2020): 881-898.

³⁶ Gepts, Paul. "Crop domestication as a long-term selection experiment." *Plant Breeding Reviews* 24, no. 2 (2004): 1-44.

For example, the **Maasai rotational grazing systems** in East Africa demonstrate sophisticated ecological management that maintains grassland biodiversity while supporting livestock. Maasai communities move cattle, goats, and sheep through different areas according to seasonal

patterns and grass recovery cycles, preventing overgrazing while maintaining soil health and carbon sequestration. These systems support both wildlife conservation and community food security—achieving outcomes that modern ranching cannot match.

Yet these African solutions remain excluded from international climate funding because U.S.-controlled institutions like the World Bank and U.S.AID determine what counts as legitimate climate knowledge. The U.S. government must restructure its research funding and international development programs to center African expertise rather than imposing Western techno-fixes.

Traditional Knowledge Systems Globally. Similar sophisticated resource management systems developed worldwide among Indigenous peoples. The Kingdom of Hawai‘i developed kapu systems that functioned as comprehensive resource management frameworks.³⁷ When ‘ōpelu and akule fish—two species that were main food sources—entered their reproductive seasons, fishing them became kapu (forbidden). These alternating reproductive cycles allowed both species to regenerate while enabling Kanaka to continuously nourish their communities and maintain the abundance, biomass, and diversity of their marine ecosystems.³⁸

American colonization of Hawai‘i destroyed sustainable systems, replacing them with extractive plantation agriculture that degraded ecosystems while enriching American corporations. This pattern—destroying Indigenous sustainability to enable extraction—defines U.S. climate responsibility globally.³⁹

Again we have deluded ourselves into believing the myth that capitalism grew and prospered out of the Protestant ethic of hard work and sacrifices. Capitalism was built on the exploitation of black slaves and continues to thrive on the exploitation of the poor, both black and white, both here and abroad.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

European Colonial Departure. However, certain **societies consistently chose to continue living beyond the capacity of the land.** This traces back to European imperialist systems, particularly through colonialism.⁴⁰ Colonial projects included multi-continent, large-scale deforestation;

37 Malo, David. *Hawaiian Antiquities*. Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Co., 1903.

38 The Kingdom of Hawai‘i created kapu systems which functioned as resource management systems. ‘Ōpelu and akule are two fish species that were main food sources. Fishing during reproductive season was considered “kapu” (forbidden), which allowed their populations to regenerate and flourish. These fish had alternating reproduction seasons which allowed Kanaka to continue nourishing their communities while supporting marine ecosystem abundance and diversity.

39 Silva, Noenoe K. *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

40 Patel, Raj, and Jason W. Moore. *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*. Berkeley: University of Califor-

global overfishing (including whaling) and ‘commercial’ transport projects; the creation of the concept of ‘trash’;⁴¹ and boundless investment in military. **To address climate change substantively, we must address historical and ongoing colonialism.**⁴²

Contemporary Extraction and U.S. Control

U.S.-Controlled Financial Architecture. These historical patterns evolved into contemporary U.S.-controlled systems that maintain the same extraction relationships. The United States controls the World Bank and IMF through voting power and hosts their headquarters in Washington, DC. These institutions continue patterns established during slavery and colonialism—forcing Global South countries to export raw materials while importing manufactured goods, creating the trade relationships that drive climate-destroying extraction.⁴³ Current climate finance mechanisms often perpetuate rather than remedy these historical extraction patterns.

“Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned... Everywhere is war.”

“Until there are no longer first-class and second-class citizens of any nation; Until the color of a man’s skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes... Me say war.”

“And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes that hold our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique, South Africa, sub-human bondage have been toppled, utterly destroyed... Well, everywhere is war.”

—Bob Marley

Ongoing Extraction Systems. U.S. military interventions protect corporate resource extraction globally, from oil wars in Iraq to lithium mining conflicts in Latin America.⁴⁴ American corporations control global supply chains that extract resources from frontline communities while exporting climate impacts to those same communities.

For example, international climate finance flows to renewable energy systems while maintaining extractive supply chains that harm the communities providing the raw materials. Climate funds invest in solar panels and electric vehicle batteries without transforming the extraction relationships that produce them. This demonstrates how current climate finance mechanisms perpetuate rather than remedy colonial extraction patterns.⁴⁵

nia Press, 2017

41 Liboiron, Max. *Pollution Is Colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

42 <https://keep.lib.asu.edu/items/168815> - We use the term ‘colonialism’ to include modern and different expressions of it.

43 Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: Global Inequality from Conquest to Free Markets*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2017.

44 Klare, Michael T. *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001.

45 Prause, Louisa, and Bettina Engels. “The Social Costs of Resource Extraction: Labor Relations and Environmental Degradation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.” *Geoforum* 108 (2020): 242-252.

U.S. military interventions protect these corporate extraction operations, while U.S.-controlled trade agreements force Black countries to export raw materials. American climate policy must end this military protection of extraction and restructure trade relationships to support Black nation and community sovereignty.⁴⁶

This coordinated destruction continues today through U.S. military and economic policies that perpetuate genocidal violence.

*If we are going to be part of the solution,
we have to engage the problems.*

–Majora Carter

Genocide as Climate and Social Destruction

Historical Pattern of Coordinated Destruction. Historical responsibility requires acknowledging that genocide and ecological destruction operate as coordinated systems. The genocide of Indigenous peoples across the Americas eliminated sophisticated ecological management systems, contributing to ecological collapse. The genocide perpetrated through slavery destroyed African social systems while extracting the labor that enabled massive ecological destruction through industrialization.⁴⁷

Contemporary Genocidal Patterns. These historical patterns continue today through ongoing genocidal conflicts that simultaneously destroy nations, communities, and ecosystems:

- **Indigenous Genocide:** Ongoing violence against Indigenous communities protecting forests, water systems, and traditional territories worldwide.
- **Systematic Displacement:** Forced removal of communities from resource-rich areas through violence, debt, and environmental destruction.
- **Cultural Elimination:** Suppression of traditional knowledge systems that offer climate solutions.

U.S. military aid and weapons sales fuel many of these conflicts, while U.S. economic policies create the displacement and resource competition that drives genocidal violence. American climate reparations must include ending arms exports and redirecting military spending toward Black nation and community-controlled development.

Armed Conflict and Ecological Destruction

The Demand for Historical Responsibility. This is not merely a case study—this is an explicit call to principled action. To embody a practice of collective responsibility, we must immediately stop these genocides and protect our peoples and our land, and ensure a just transition. Ending genocides through supporting the liberation and self-determination of targeted peoples is a necessary act that would also have massive impacts on curbing climate change and crisis.⁴⁸

46 Klare, Michael T. *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001.

47 Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2014.

48 Lemkin, Raphael. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,

Current armed conflicts perpetuate the historical pattern of coordinated social and ecological destruction. Rather than instrumentalizing environmental impacts, we must understand that violence against people and violence against ecosystems operate as connected systems of domination.

Military Emissions and Climate Impact. Ending genocide and warfare is critical as they represent both the original and most significant sources of climate change and the largest financial costs driving climate crisis. In the United States, military emissions—responsible for more emissions than entire countries—remain exempt from climate commitments under current international frameworks.⁴⁹

Illustrative Examples of Armed Conflict Impacts:

- Military operations destroy water systems, agricultural land, and urban infrastructure that communities need for climate resilience.
- Weapons production and deployment generate massive carbon emissions while diverting resources from climate solutions.
- Conflict-driven displacement forces communities from traditional territories, breaking ecological relationships.
- Post-conflict reconstruction often prioritizes extractive industries over community-controlled development.

Climate Finance must:

- **Refuse investments in technologies built on Black nation extraction** without community consent.
- **Provide reparations for mining-related displacement** and environmental destruction.
- **Support Black-nation controlled development** rather than external extraction.
- **Recognize resource sovereignty and community ownership** of mineral wealth.

Power Analysis: Mapping Contemporary Colonial Control

Understanding historical responsibility requires mapping how current power structures perpetuate the colonial extraction patterns that created climate crisis. This analysis identifies where strategic intervention can create transformation by targeting the institutions and mechanisms that maintain climate injustice.

Who Controls Climate Finance and Benefits from Crisis?

International Financial Institutions. The World Bank's \$100+ billion climate portfolio is controlled by a 25-member board where the U.S. (16.89% voting power), Japan (6.84%), and Germany (4.00%) hold effective veto power over climate funding decisions.⁵⁰ These same institutions use aid programs to manipulate or coerce destabilized nation states into financial dependency while continuing to extract capital and manufacture vulnerability.

1944. [Definition of genocide and its environmental dimensions]

49 Crawford, Neta C. "Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change, and the Costs of War." Watson Institute, Brown University, 2019.

50 World Bank. "Voting Powers." <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/leadership/votingpowers>

Extractive Corporations and “Green” Colonialism. Foreign corporations control DRC mining operations, extracting materials essential for renewable technologies while displacing communities and destroying carbon-sequestering forests. This represents a new form of colonial extraction disguised as climate solutions.

Military-Industrial Complex. The most neglected aspect of climate finance power analysis is military spending and action. Military forces that are responsible for more emissions than entire countries remain exempt from climate commitments while simultaneously destroying ecosystems and creating climate vulnerability through warfare.⁵¹

Our investments in social justice and basic needs are as vital to our future as fiscal and macroeconomic reforms. A nation deeply divided will not stand. And it certainly will not move forward.

—Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, former president of the Philippines

Who Suffers Disproportionately?

Frontline Communities. Small Island Developing States face sea-level rise despite contributing less than 1% of global emissions.⁵² Sub-Saharan Africa experiences the worst climate impacts while contributing only 4% of global carbon emissions.⁵³

Indigenous Peoples. Despite protecting 80% of the world’s remaining biodiversity on their traditional territories, Indigenous communities face displacement and violence when defending their lands from extractive industries.

Black and Brown Communities. Environmental racism concentrates polluting industries in communities of color, creating compounding health and economic burdens that climate change amplifies.

Strategic Leverage Points

Debt as Colonial Control. Global South nations have been deemed to “owe” over \$11 trillion in external debt, much of it tied to fossil fuel infrastructure development forced upon them by international financial institutions.⁵⁴ Debt cancellation represents a direct path to climate reparations.

Military Emissions Exemptions: Military forces—responsible for more emissions than entire countries—remain exempt from climate commitments under current international frameworks. Ending these exemptions would dramatically expand accountability.

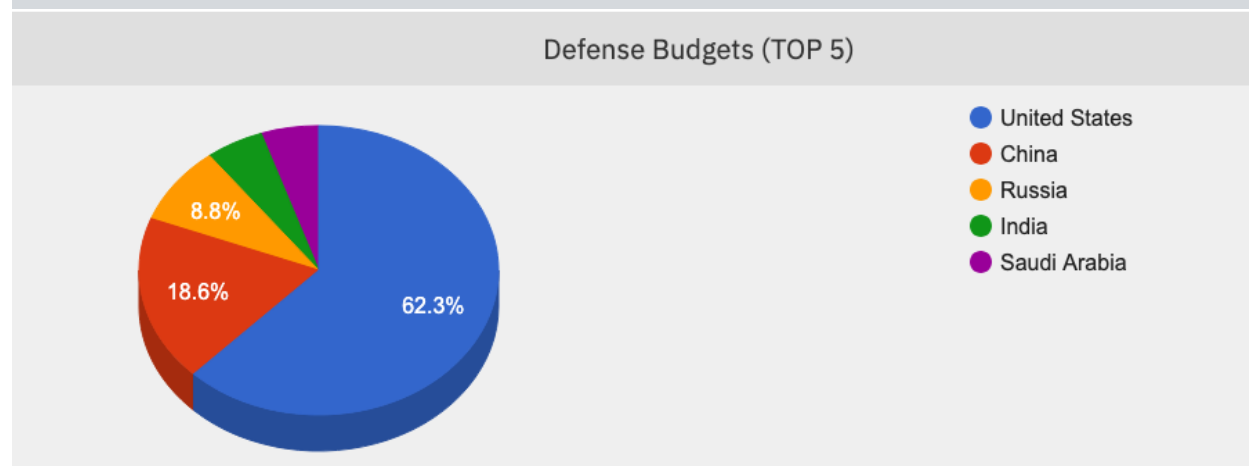
51 <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php>

52 UNFCCC. “Climate Change: Small Island Developing States.” 2024.

53 UNEP. “Emissions Gap Report 2024.” United Nations Environment Programme.

54 World Bank. “International Debt Statistics 2024.” World Bank Group.

Figure/Box 5



Source: Peter G. Peterson Foundation. "The United States Spends More on Defense Than the Next 9 Countries Combined." <https://www.pgpf.org/article/the-united-states-spends-more-on-defense-than-the-next-9-countries-combined/>

Legal Precedents. Recent climate litigation victories (Urgenda, Milieudefensie v. Shell) demonstrate growing judicial recognition of climate obligations, creating opportunities for reparations lawsuits.

Global South Coordination. The V20 Climate Vulnerable Forum represents 80+ nations that coordinate positions in international negotiations. When unified, this bloc can force policy changes despite Global North economic power.⁵⁵

The damage that much of the industrial age was powered by was the exploitation of Black people. The labor that fueled any of the industries that polluted the world was because of the exploitation of Black people.

-- Andre Perry, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution

U.S. Policy Demands for Historical Responsibility

Immediate U.S. Actions (2025-2027): Establishing Accountability Foundations

The first phase of transformation requires the United States to establish legal and financial accountability for its role in creating the climate crisis. This foundational work creates the

55 Climate Vulnerable Forum. "About CVF." <https://www.thecvf.org/>

political infrastructure necessary for deeper transformation in subsequent phases, moving beyond voluntary corporate commitments toward mandatory accountability mechanisms that recognize climate justice and racial justice as inseparable.

Creating Legal Accountability Mechanisms. Federal climate reparations legislation must establish the legal framework linking U.S. historical emissions to current adaptation funding obligations for frontline communities. This legislation should create enforceable mechanisms for Black U.S. communities and Black nations to seek climate damages from U.S. corporations and government agencies, moving from charity-based climate aid toward justice-based reparations. The framework must include reparations payments to descendants of enslaved people whose labor enabled the industrialization that created the climate crisis, recognizing that the same wealth extraction systems that built American capitalism through slavery continue driving climate destruction today.

Ending Military Climate Exemptions and Redirecting Resources. Simultaneously, the United States must end the Pentagon's exemption from climate accountability by including all military emissions in national climate commitments under international frameworks. This transformation requires redirecting military spending toward climate reparations funding for frontline communities while ending U.S. military protection of fossil fuel extraction operations globally. Given that U.S. military emissions exceed those of entire countries, this shift represents both significant emissions reductions and massive resource redirection toward climate solutions. The redirection of even a fraction of the Pentagon's budget could fund comprehensive climate reparations while demonstrating U.S. commitment to peace and ecological restoration.

We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together. And you can't get rid of one without getting rid of the other.

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dismantling Debt-Driven Extraction. These accountability measures must include eliminating Global South debt held by U.S. institutions and tied to fossil fuel infrastructure development. Rather than maintaining debt as leverage for continued extraction, the United States should establish debt cancellation as climate reparations, removing structural adjustment requirements that force resource extraction for debt repayment. This debt elimination creates space for Global South countries to assert resource sovereignty without facing economic retaliation, while acknowledging that much of this debt was imposed through extractive development models that enriched U.S. corporations while devastating local ecosystems.

This immediate phase creates the legal and financial foundation that enables the medium-term transformation phase, where these accountability mechanisms can support more comprehensive restructuring of U.S. international relationships and domestic climate finance systems.

The energy transition can't be all about profit. That should not be the driving force. It should be about saving the planet and making sure that everybody has access to clean and renewable energy. Because if we don't do it that way, and it's just solely about making money, we're going to have the same problems we've always had — a lot of people will be left behind.

—Via Campesina

Medium-term U.S. Transformation (2027-2030): Restructuring International Relations

Building on established accountability foundations, the second phase requires the United States to use its structural control over international institutions to implement Global South-designed reparations frameworks rather than maintaining U.S.-designed solutions. This phase transforms how the U.S. exercises power globally, shifting from colonial control toward genuine solidarity and mutual aid.

We must stand together united in solidarity against the targeting, demonization, and vilification of any group of people.

--Linda Sarsour

Transforming U.S.-Controlled International Finance. The United States must restructure World Bank and IMF voting systems to center climate vulnerability rather than economic power, acknowledging that current voting structures enable wealthy countries to impose extraction on climate-vulnerable nations. This restructuring should replace U.S.-controlled development finance with Black Nation and Black community-controlled reparations transfers that bypass traditional aid mechanisms. The transformation includes ending U.S. economic sanctions against countries asserting resource sovereignty, recognizing that sanctions against Venezuela, Iran, and other nations primarily serve U.S. corporate interests while preventing climate-resilient development.

Once countries accepted the conditions of structural adjustment, the World Bank and the IMF rewarded them with still more loans, thus deepening their indebtedness—rather like a fireman pouring gasoline on a burning house to stop the blaze.

**-- John Cavanagh and Jerry Mander
(Institute for Policy Studies)**

Implementing Corporate Extraction Accountability. This phase requires establishing U.S. legal liability for American corporate climate damages with enforceable penalties rather than voluntary corporate social responsibility programs. U.S. corporations must pay reparations for historical extraction in Black nations and communities, with payments flowing directly to affected communities to the greatest extent possible, particularly in areas where movement entities report that government intermediaries serve elite rather than community interests. The United States should tax corporate resource consumption globally to fund Global South climate adaptation, creating financial mechanisms that make extraction expensive while making restoration profitable.

Protecting Resource Sovereignty Against U.S. Interference. These corporate accountability measures must include ending U.S. economic and military intervention against countries nationalizing resources for community benefit. The United States should establish legal protections for community-controlled resource development globally while supporting Black nation coordination against U.S. corporate extraction rather than punishing such coordination through economic warfare. This protection enables countries to assert resource sovereignty without facing the economic retaliation that has historically punished attempts at autonomous development.

This medium-term phase enables the long-term accountability phase by creating international systems that support rather than punish nation community-controlled development while establishing U.S. legal obligations to support Black nation state climate sovereignty.

In a way, underdevelopment is a paradox. Many parts of the world that are naturally rich are actually poor and parts that are not so well off in wealth of soil and sub-soil are enjoying the highest standards of living. When the capitalists from the developed parts of the world try to explain this paradox, they often make it sound as though there is something 'God given' about the situation.

—Dr. Walter Rodney

Long-term U.S. Accountability (2030-2035): Nation/Community-Controlled Reparations Systems

The final phase establishes permanent U.S. accountability mechanisms that ensure climate reparations reach frontline communities rather than maintaining government or corporate control over reparations distribution. This phase creates systems that survive political changes while building community power for sustained transformation.

Establishing Direct Nation/Community Reparations Transfers. The United States must create permanent systems for direct resource transfers to Black communities without state or non-frontline trusted intermediaries that often extract administrative fees while maintaining control over community development. These transfers should establish community control over reparations distribution and implementation processes, with communities determining their own development priorities rather than conforming to U.S. government or corporate preferences. Legal frameworks must ensure reparations reach communities rather than government elites who may serve U.S. rather than community interests.

An environmental debt needs to be paid. It is not understandable that we have courts to force countries to pay financial debts but we do not have a court to enforce environmental debts.

-- Ecuador's President Rafael Correa (in 2015)

Mandating Ecological Restoration and Prevention Systems. U.S. corporate ecosystem restoration should become a condition for operating permits rather than voluntary offset programs that often enable continued extraction. This restoration must support Indigenous and traditional ecological restoration methods rather than technological fixes that create new forms of extraction and dependency. The United States should establish early warning systems for climate-related resource conflicts and displacement, creating rapid response mechanisms that prevent climate displacement through proactive community support rather than military intervention that typically serves U.S. corporate interests.

Building Permanent Accountability Infrastructure. These restoration and prevention systems must include permanent U.S. accountability mechanisms ensuring American climate finance serves Black nations and communities rather than U.S. corporate interests. The framework should establish community-controlled oversight of all U.S. climate finance with binding authority over federal agency decisions, creating legal protections for Black nation and community climate governance from future political interference.



The universal need for a more just and inclusive world, in opposition to the commodified and exclusionary world of neoliberalism, is the great event of our century; it opens the possibility of joining together local, national, sectoral, and class struggles in one single struggle for the formation of a Planetary Community, the self-realization of civil society and the construction of a world 'where many worlds fit.'

-- The Zapatista Army of National Liberation

Domestic Implementation of Community-Controlled Oversight

Federal Agency Decision-Making. Community-controlled oversight bodies would have binding authority to approve, modify, or reject federal climate finance decisions affecting their territories. This includes:

- **Veto power** over climate infrastructure projects, ensuring communities can refuse investments that conflict with their self-determined development priorities.
- **Mandatory approval authority** for all climate finance over \$1 million flowing into community territories, with communities controlling the approval process through directly democratic assemblies rather than appointed representatives.
- **Reallocation authority** allowing communities to redirect rejected federal climate investments toward community-controlled alternatives that serve their needs.

Legal Framework: Federal legislation would establish these oversight bodies as permanent institutions with constitutional protections, creating:

- **Binding legal requirements** that federal agencies cannot proceed with climate finance decisions without explicit community approval from affected territories.
- **Rapid judicial review processes** that prioritize community challenges to federal agency decisions, with courts required to defer to community determinations about local needs and priorities.
- **Anti-retaliation protections** preventing federal agencies from reducing overall climate finance to communities that exercise their veto authority.

Global Implementation Framework

International Climate Finance. For U.S. climate finance flowing to Black nations and Global South communities internationally, the framework establishes:

- **Community-controlled intermediaries** in recipient countries that must approve all U.S. climate investments, replacing current systems where U.S. agencies or international financial institutions control distribution decisions.
- **Direct community access** to U.S. climate finance without requiring approval from recipient country governments that may not represent community interests or may prioritize relationships with U.S. corporate interests over community needs.
- **Community evaluation authority** allowing recipient communities to assess and reject U.S. climate finance proposals that perpetuate extraction or dependency relationships, with binding authority to demand alternative approaches.

Enforcement Mechanisms

International community oversight includes:

- **Binding international legal frameworks** requiring U.S. compliance with community-controlled approval processes as a condition for any climate finance distribution.
- **Community-controlled monitoring systems** that track U.S. climate finance impacts and can trigger automatic funding suspensions when investments harm rather than support community self-determination.
- **Rapid response protections** that activate when U.S. political changes threaten to eliminate community oversight, including automatic legal challenges and international solidarity mechanisms.

*We are each other's harvest; we are
each other's business; we are each
other's magnitude and bond.*

—Gwendolyn Brooks

Operational Structure & Decision-Making Process

Community-controlled oversight operates through:

- **Directly democratic assemblies** in affected communities (both domestic and international) that make binding decisions about climate finance through consensus or majority vote processes controlled by community members rather than representatives.
- **Technical support networks** controlled by communities that provide analysis and evaluation capacity without controlling decision-making authority.
- **Appeal processes** that allow communities to challenge federal agency attempts to circumvent community authority, with final decision-making power remaining with communities.

This permanent infrastructure ensures that U.S. climate accountability survives political changes while building Black nation and community power for comprehensive climate finance transformation, operating as a binding constraint on U.S. federal power that communities control rather than a consultative process that federal agencies can ignore.

POLICYMAKER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY

LEGISLATIVE VEHICLES NEEDED:

- Federal Climate Reparations Act (new legislation)
- Military Emissions Accountability Act (amend existing climate commitments)
- Debt Cancellation for Climate Justice Act (Treasury Department authority)

BUDGET IMPACT: \$50-100 billion annually for reparations framework; military redirection could provide \$200+ billion for climate finance.

IMPLEMENTATION SEQUENCE:

1. **2025-2026:** Draft legislation, build congressional coalitions.
2. **2027:** Introduce bills, committee hearings with community testimony.
3. **2029:** Pass comprehensive package with new administration support.

KEY COMMITTEES: House/Senate Foreign Relations, Armed Services, Banking, Energy & Commerce

OPPOSITION SOURCES: Defense contractors, fossil fuel lobby, international financial institutions

MOVEMENT ORGANIZING TIMELINE - HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY

2025: Foundation Building

- Q1-Q2: Develop reparations framework with frontline communities.
- Q3: Launch public education campaigns connecting climate crisis to slavery/colonialism.
- Q4: Build coalitions between climate justice and reparations movements.

2026: Campaign Development

- Q1-Q2: Organize community listening sessions documenting extraction impacts.
- Q3: Launch corporate accountability campaigns targeting specific extractive companies.
- Q4: Coordinate with international movements against colonial financial institutions.

2027-2028: Political Pressure


- Build electoral organizing around candidates supporting reparations.
- Organize direct action campaigns at World Bank/IMF meetings.
- Create grassroots pressure for congressional hearings on climate reparations.

2029+: Implementation & Protection

- Rapid response networks protecting reparations programs from backlash.
- Black nation and community oversight ensuring reparations reach Black nations and communities directly.
- International solidarity supporting Black nations' reparations demands.

Implementation Framework

These demands create the political foundation necessary for Black nation and community-controlled climate finance by addressing the U.S.-controlled extraction systems that currently make autonomous economic development dangerous for Black nations and communities. Rather than market-based mechanisms that maintain corporate control, this framework establishes Black nation and community control over reparations resources and decision-making processes.



We're going to fight racism not with racism, but we're going to fight with solidarity. We say we're not going to fight capitalism with black capitalism, but we're going to fight it with socialism.

—Fred Hampton

Success requires securing U.S. commitment to these changes first, creating space for other Global North nations to follow while ensuring that Black communities and nations are protected from economic retaliation during the transition to Black nation and community-controlled systems.

These demands for U.S. historical accountability create the foundation for transforming how knowledge and expertise are valued in climate finance decisions. Securing reparations and holding extractive systems accountable enables the next critical prerequisite: legitimating the knowledge systems of Black nations and communities who have sustained life for millennia while challenging the Western knowledge monopoly that dismisses community-based climate solutions.



Honoring traditional knowledge systems in climate finance means recognizing the value and validity of these practices and ensuring that communities have the power and resources to maintain and evolve them in the face of new challenges.

–Delicia Reynolds Hand, Author,
[Transforming Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens](#)

I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole.

–Malcolm X

Decisions being made in this building [of an insurance company] ensure my children's asthma, ensure my children having chronic diseases, it ensures people in my community having cancer, it ensures my community having disasters like hurricanes.

–Roishetta Ozane

Emancipate yourself from mental slavery. None but ourselves can free our minds.

–Bob Marley

PREREQUISITE: LEGITIMATE MULTIPLE WAYS OF KNOWING

Problem Identification: The Strategic Reframing

Understanding these historical foundations reveals why U.S. climate finance must center knowledge reparations alongside financial reparations. Recent research validates what Black communities have long known—African environmental knowledge systems achieve superior conservation outcomes. Conservation International’s study “An Uprooted People, A Legacy of Conservation” found that Afro-descendant lands show deforestation rates up to 55% lower than similar areas, with more than half ranking among the top 5% globally for biodiversity.⁵⁶ As **Martha Cecilia Rosero Peña**, co-author of the study, states: *“Afro-descendant communities across the Americas have long served as environmental stewards without recognition or reward—most of their territories are not even formally recognized. The evidence, however, is indisputable; the world has much to learn from their land management practices.”*

Building on the mandate, “Honor Traditional Knowledge Systems,” we call for legitimating multiple ways of knowing as a direct challenge to the domination of Western knowledge system (WKS). This shift from “honoring” to “legitimizing” is strategic—it recognizes that the problem is not simply about including “other” knowledge systems as alternatives. This shift from “honoring” to “legitimizing” is strategic—it recognizes that the problem is not simply about including “other” knowledge systems as alternatives. The problem is that Western extractive knowledge systems have delegitimated all other ways of knowing while positioning itself as universal truth rather than one culturally specific knowledge system among many. Thus, understanding where knowledge systems come from and where authority lies with knowledge system(s), is to understand how certain knowledge systems get legitimated while others are destroyed, repressed, minimized and/or othered.

For example, we have terms like HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) but no one calls Harvard or Stanford HWCUs (Historically White Colleges and Universities). This linguistic asymmetry reveals how the WKS maintains its dominance by appearing neutral while marking everything else as “alternative” or “traditional.”

⁵⁶ Sangat, S.S., Rosero, M., Olsson, E. et al. Afro-descendant lands in South America contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. *Commun Earth Environ* 6, 458 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-025-02339-5>

And while the WKS has not completely infiltrated and dominated every culture, it holds some of the highest authority internationally. This controls and shapes how people perceive knowledge and learning, as well as what knowledge is considered valuable and legitimate. So whose knowledge and ways of coming to that knowledge is real or valid, invested in, authorized as 'true,' promoted and/or reproduced, etc.

The Climate Crisis Connection: Extractive Knowledge Systems as Driver

Understanding ways of knowing is essential to climate finance because knowledge systems shape economic systems, which determine our relationship with the environment. Extractive WKS inform practices of taking—and create a logic of waste that justifies continued mass extraction while exacerbating carbon emissions and environmental degradation.

*When morality comes up against profit,
it is seldom that profit loses.*

–Shirley Chisholm

Extractive Knowledge Systems in Practice

Agricultural Waste for Profit Maintenance. U.S. agricultural surplus practices deliberately waste milk, produce, and other food products to maintain profit margins while creating export markets that dump on Global South economies. This waste-based system generates massive emissions while destroying local food sovereignty.

Illogical Global Trade. Countries export butter while importing identical butter from other nations, creating transport emissions that remain unaccounted for under “territorial accounting” methods. This exemplifies how extractive knowledge systems prioritize profit over ecological logic, generating carbon emissions for no material benefit.

False Climate Solutions. WKS has repeatedly produced “eco-friendly” solutions—carbon trading, net zero schemes, carbon capture technologies—that perpetuate hyper-consumption and extractive industries while creating new capitalist markets. These solutions have failed to reduce environmental degradation while co-opting environmental organizations through greenwashing.

*This is not about greenhouse gas
reduction. This is about do we value
people equally? And if we do, we've got
some recalibrating to do, as a planet.*

–Collette Pichon Battle

Making Visible the Domination of Western Knowledge Systems

WKS maintain dominance through institutional gatekeeping—peer review processes, academic institutions, government bureaucracies, and philanthropic funding that determine what counts as legitimate knowledge. This creates epistemological asymmetry where frontline communities and Indigenous peoples cannot influence outcomes that directly affect their lives and lands.

The Myth of Western “Modernity” (the current era). Western knowledge is positioned as distinguished from “traditional” knowledge through logic, observation, and literature. This deliberately obscures that Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS) extensively use logic, observation, experimentation, and complex knowledge transmission methods. More fundamentally, it hides that Western knowledge is itself traditional—passed down generationally through oral and practical methods within European cultural frameworks.

The Land Question. WKS claims to be less land-based than TKS, but this conceals the central role of land in Western power. The difference is not the importance of land but how it is valued—extractively rather than relationally. Western imperialism treats land as the primary source of territorial expansion and resource extraction, making land exploitation fundamental to WKS.

The peasants and workers of Europe... paid a huge price so that the capitalists could make their profits from the human labor that always lies behind the machines... To advance, they must overthrow capitalism; and that is why at the moment capitalism stands in the path of further human social development.

—Dr. Walter Rodney

Why Traditional Knowledge Systems Achieve Better Outcomes

“The IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Traditional Knowledge Systems” (2024) demonstrates that projects incorporating Indigenous knowledge achieve 35% better outcomes in climate resilience metrics.^{57, 58} In similar discourses on epistemologies, various terms are used such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Indigenous Knowledge (IK), Fishers’ Ecological Knowledge (FEK), and so on. We intend for TKS to encompass these epistemologies, as well. As stated in the Ten Mandates paper: “Traditional knowledge systems have been developed over generations to sustainably manage resources and build resilient communities. However, these systems have been marginalized and eroded by colonialism, capitalism, and the imposition of Western values and models of development.”

TKS developed over generations to sustainably manage resources and build resilient communities have demonstrated profound environmental harmony. While Indigenous peoples represent less than 5% of the global population, they manage or hold tenure rights to

57 When we say TKS, what we generally mean is ways of knowing that come from Indigenous Peoples.

58 IPCC. “Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report.” 2022.

approximately 25% of Earth's land surface and their territories contain 37% of remaining natural lands worldwide.⁵⁹ This is not coincidental—it reflects knowledge systems based on reciprocal relationships with land rather than extractive domination.

International cooperation cannot be strengthened without a new model that is more equitable and respectful to African States. We need to rebalance our efforts. Africa deserves particular attention and more respect and dignity.

**--Faure Essozimna Gnassingbe,
President of Togo**

Similarly, the groundbreaking “Uprooted People” study reveals how enslaved Africans maintained and adapted sophisticated environmental management practices, creating “food forests” in the Americas that “replicated food forests, creating forest canopy structures that constituted functional reservoirs for dietary, medicinal, ritual and festive purposes.”⁶⁰ These knowledge systems now protect some of the world's most biodiverse landscapes while providing community sustenance—demonstrating that traditional knowledge achieves both ecological and social goals simultaneously.

TKS deserve support for their intrinsic value, not just their utility for Western climate goals. Many frontline communities have developed place-based, crisis-specific knowledge systems that do not fit “traditional” categories due to disruptions from colonialism, displacement, and family separation but offer crucial insights for climate resilience.

Scientific Validation of African Environmental Knowledge

The Conservation International study provides crucial validation for African traditional knowledge systems in climate finance discussions. The research documents how enslaved Africans brought sophisticated environmental management practices across the Atlantic and adapted them to new ecosystems, creating forest management systems that outperform conventional conservation approaches.

The study found that Afro-descendant territories contain **significantly larger quantities of biodiversity and carbon storage** compared to other land management approaches. This is not accidental—it reflects thousands of years of refined environmental knowledge that views forests as integrated food, medicine, and ecological systems rather than resources to be extracted.

Sushma Shrestha Sangat, the study's lead author, acknowledges: “*Though evidence on Afro-descendant peoples' environmental stewardship is emerging, it is still limited.*”⁶¹ This limitation

⁵⁹ World Bank. “Indigenous Peoples Overview.” 2024; UNEP-WCMC. “Championing Indigenous Peoples' stewardship of biodiversity.” October 2023.

⁶⁰ Sangat, S.S., Rosero, M., Olsson, E. et al. Afro-descendant lands in South America contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. *Commun Earth Environ* 6, 458 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-025-02339-5>

⁶¹ Sangat, S.S., Rosero, M., Olsson, E. et al. Afro-descendant lands in South America contribute to biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. *Commun Earth Environ* 6, 458 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-025-02339-5>

reflects institutional bias rather than absence of knowledge—Black environmental expertise is systematically excluded from environmental research and policy.

The forests maintained by Afro-descendant communities served multiple functions, including concealment for Maroon communities escaping slavery. This demonstrates how environmental stewardship and liberation struggles are interconnected—caring for the land enabled survival and resistance against oppressive systems.

Power Analysis: Dismantling Control of Knowledge

Who Controls Knowledge Legitimacy?

Academic and Scientific Institutions. Universities, peer review systems, and international science-policy bodies like the IPCC determine what knowledge receives funding, publication, and policy influence. These institutions overwhelmingly center Western frameworks while marginalizing Indigenous and frontline community knowledge.

Government Agencies. The Department of Interior, Environmental Protection Agency, and international bodies control land management policies and environmental regulations based on Western scientific paradigms that largely ignore Indigenous expertise.

Philanthropic Gatekeepers. Major foundations determine which knowledge systems receive funding support, too often requiring Indigenous knowledge to be translated into Western frameworks to qualify for grants. Fortunately, there is an increasing list of notable exceptions including the NDN Collective, the Caribbean Philanthropic Alliance (which centers Caribbean cultural wisdom and traditional ecological knowledge in climate initiatives), the Climate Justice Alliance (which prioritizes frontline community knowledge systems), and movement-aligned CDFIs that explicitly support indigenous knowledge systems in their undiluted form. These organizations demonstrate how philanthropic infrastructure can be redesigned to support TKS without requiring translation into Western academic frameworks, instead providing resources for communities to preserve, develop, and apply their knowledge systems according to their own cultural protocols and validation processes.

Strategic Leverage Points

Knowledge System Funding. Climate finance currently flows almost exclusively to projects designed within Western frameworks. Redirecting funding to TKS-led initiatives could rapidly shift power dynamics.

Policy Integration Requirements. Many governments now require consultation with Indigenous communities but lack mechanisms for integrating TKS into decision-making processes. Creating binding requirements for TKS integration represents a leverage point.

International Framework Transformation. Climate agreements currently recognize TKS but often do not grant them decision-making authority. Transforming international climate governance to include TKS-based voting blocs could fundamentally shift power.

U.S. Policy Demands for Knowledge Systems Transformation

Immediate U.S. Actions (2025-2027): Challenging Federal Knowledge Monopolies

The first phase requires the United States to dismantle federal systems that delegitimize community knowledge while legitimating Western knowledge systems as universal truth. This transformation challenges the epistemological foundations of U.S. climate policy, shifting from extractive research that treats communities as data sources toward community-controlled knowledge development that recognizes traditional knowledge systems as equally valid to Western science.

The climate emergency is a question of justice.

–Elizabeth Wathuti, Kenyan
environmentalist and founder of Green
Generation Initiative

Restructuring Federal Research Funding and Validation Systems. The United States must redirect federal research funding from extractive academic institutions toward community-controlled knowledge preservation and development programs. This redirection should eliminate federal requirements that traditional knowledge conform to Western scientific validation methods, instead establishing community-controlled validation processes that respect traditional knowledge protocols. Federal climate research funding should prioritize Indigenous-led and community-based research that centers traditional ecological knowledge, agricultural systems, and resource management practices rather than imposing Western research methodologies on traditional knowledge systems.

Transforming Educational Institutions and Knowledge Creation. Federal education policy must require universities receiving federal funding to establish community-controlled research partnerships that center community knowledge and research priorities rather than extracting knowledge for academic career advancement. This transformation includes mandating that climate-related research at federally funded institutions include meaningful community control over research design, implementation, and knowledge sharing rather than treating communities as research subjects. The United States should establish federal funding for community-controlled educational institutions that preserve and develop TKS while building capacity for community-led climate solutions.

Establishing Legal Frameworks for Knowledge Sovereignty. These educational transformations must include federal legal protections for traditional knowledge from corporate appropriation and academic extraction, recognizing that traditional knowledge represents intellectual property belonging to communities rather than academic or corporate entities. The United States should create federal requirements that all climate-related research affecting frontline communities obtain meaningful community consent and provide direct benefits to knowledge-holding communities rather than only benefiting researchers or institutions. Federal policy must establish community ownership of research data and findings affecting their territories, ensuring that communities control how their knowledge is used and shared.

This immediate phase creates the legal and institutional foundation for the medium-term phase, where communities can build alternative knowledge institutions that operate according to traditional knowledge protocols rather than Western academic requirements.

Cities can be the engine of social equity and economic opportunity. They can help us reduce our carbon footprint and protect the global environment. That is why it is so important that we work together to build the capacity of mayors and all those concerned in planning and running sustainable cities.

–Ban Ki Moon

Medium-term U.S. Transformation (2027-2030): Building Community Knowledge Infrastructure

Building on dismantled knowledge monopolies, the second phase requires the United States to support community-controlled knowledge institutions that operate according to TKS rather than Western academic models. This phase recognizes that different knowledge systems require different institutional structures and validation processes.

Establishing Community-Controlled Research and Knowledge Institutions. The United States must provide federal funding for community-controlled research institutions that operate according to traditional knowledge protocols rather than Western academic requirements. These institutions should conduct climate research using traditional methodologies and validation systems while building capacity for communities to document, preserve, and develop their knowledge systems according to their own cultural protocols. Federal support should enable these institutions to operate independently of Western academic oversight while providing resources for traditional knowledge holders to train new generations in traditional ecological knowledge and climate adaptation practices.

Money is the oxygen on which the climate crisis burns -- and we need everyone to care where their money is being spent.

-- Tamara Toles O'Laughlin

Creating Alternative Knowledge Validation and Sharing Systems. This institutional development must include federal recognition of community-controlled knowledge validation systems that operate according to traditional protocols rather than peer review systems designed for Western academic knowledge. The United States should establish federal policy requiring that traditional knowledge receive equal consideration with Western science in all climate-related decision-making processes, from local climate adaptation planning to international climate negotiations. Federal funding should support the development of knowledge sharing networks that operate according to traditional protocols for knowledge exchange while respecting Indigenous and community intellectual property rights.

Implementing Knowledge Integration Without Appropriation. These validation systems must ensure that traditional knowledge integration respects community ownership and control rather than appropriating traditional knowledge for Western scientific or corporate purposes. The United States should create federal mechanisms for traditional knowledge to influence climate policy without requiring translation into Western scientific frameworks that often distort or diminish TKS. Federal policy should establish clear protocols for respectful knowledge integration that maintain community control over traditional knowledge while enabling traditional knowledge to guide climate finance and adaptation decisions.

This medium-term phase enables long-term transformation by creating institutional infrastructure where traditional knowledge systems can operate according to their own protocols while influencing broader climate finance and policy systems.

Long-term Knowledge System Transformation (2030-2035): Community Knowledge Leadership

The final phase establishes community knowledge systems as primary guides for U.S. climate finance and adaptation strategies, completing the shift from Western knowledge supremacy toward pluralistic knowledge systems where traditional knowledge provides leadership for climate solutions.

Establishing Community Knowledge Systems as Climate Finance Guides. The United States must restructure federal climate finance decision-making to center TKS as primary guides for climate adaptation and mitigation strategies rather than supplementing Western approaches with traditional knowledge inputs. This restructuring should establish community knowledge holders as lead decision-makers for climate finance affecting their territories, with Western scientific knowledge providing supplementary rather than primary guidance. Federal climate finance should operate according to traditional knowledge principles of reciprocity, relationship, and ecological balance rather than extraction, efficiency, and technological solutions that often create new forms of ecological disruption.

Decentering Western Knowledge Systems in Federal Climate Policy. This knowledge leadership must include federal recognition that WKS represent one approach among many rather than universal truth, requiring federal agencies to acknowledge the limitations and cultural specificity of Western scientific approaches to climate solutions. The United States should eliminate federal policies that require traditional knowledge to conform to Western scientific validation while establishing federal support for TKS to guide climate finance according to their own validation and decision-making processes. Federal climate policy should recognize that TKS often provide more effective and culturally appropriate climate solutions than Western technological approaches.

Building Global Knowledge Sharing Networks Under Community Control. These knowledge system transformations must include federal support for international networks where traditional knowledge systems can share climate solutions according to traditional protocols for knowledge exchange rather than Western academic or policy frameworks. The United States should provide federal resources for community-controlled international knowledge sharing that respects Indigenous and traditional protocols while enabling traditional knowledge to guide global climate finance transformation. Federal policy should support traditional knowledge holders in leading international climate adaptation and finance discussions rather than participating in Western-dominated climate negotiations that often marginalize traditional knowledge perspectives.

This long-term phase completes the knowledge systems prerequisite by establishing traditional knowledge as the primary guide for climate finance decisions, creating the foundation for authentic democratic governance where communities with traditional knowledge control climate finance decisions affecting their territories rather than deferring to Western expert systems.

POLICYMAKER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

LEGISLATIVE VEHICLES NEEDED:

- Indigenous Knowledge Protection Act (expand existing frameworks)
- Federal Research Equity Act (amend NSF/NIH authorization)
- Community Knowledge Sovereignty Act (new legislation)

BUDGET IMPACT: \$5-10 billion annually redirected from extractive research to community-controlled knowledge development.

IMPLEMENTATION SEQUENCE:

1. 2025-2026: Agency policy development, research funding rule changes
2. 2027-2028: Pilot community-controlled research programs
3. 2029+: Full implementation with legislative backing

KEY COMMITTEES: House/Senate Science, Education, Interior, Agriculture

OPPOSITION SOURCES: University research complex, corporate R&D, traditional academic institutions

MOVEMENT ORGANIZING TIMELINE - KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

2025: Knowledge Documentation

- Q1-Q2: Community knowledge mapping and documentation projects
- Q3: Popular education connecting traditional knowledge to climate solutions
- Q4: Build networks between Indigenous knowledge keepers and African diaspora communities

2026: Research Justice Campaigns

- Q1-Q2: University accountability campaigns demanding community-controlled research
- Q3: Challenge extractive research projects through community consent campaigns
- Q4: Develop community-controlled research methodologies and training

2027-2028: Policy Advocacy

- Organize for community representation on federal research advisory boards
- Campaign for Indigenous knowledge protection in climate policy
- Build pressure for research funding reform through community organizing

2029+: Community-Controlled Knowledge

- Implement community oversight of federal research affecting frontline areas
- Create community-controlled educational institutions and knowledge centers
- Build international networks sharing traditional climate solutions

Economic Systems Reflecting Ecological Values:

Knowledge systems reflect societal values, which manifest in economic systems. Transforming climate finance requires economies based on security and relationship rather than profit and unlimited growth. This means:

Local economic systems where people know their neighbors and understand their water sources.

Regional resource management based on ecological limits rather than global trade optimization.

Financial systems that account for seven generations of impact rather than quarterly profits.

This mandate recognizes that achieving climate justice requires confronting the epistemological foundations of extraction. We cannot solve problems created by extractive knowledge systems using the same frameworks that generated the crisis. True climate finance transformation demands legitimating the knowledge systems that have sustained life for millennia while delegitimizing those driving ecological collapse.

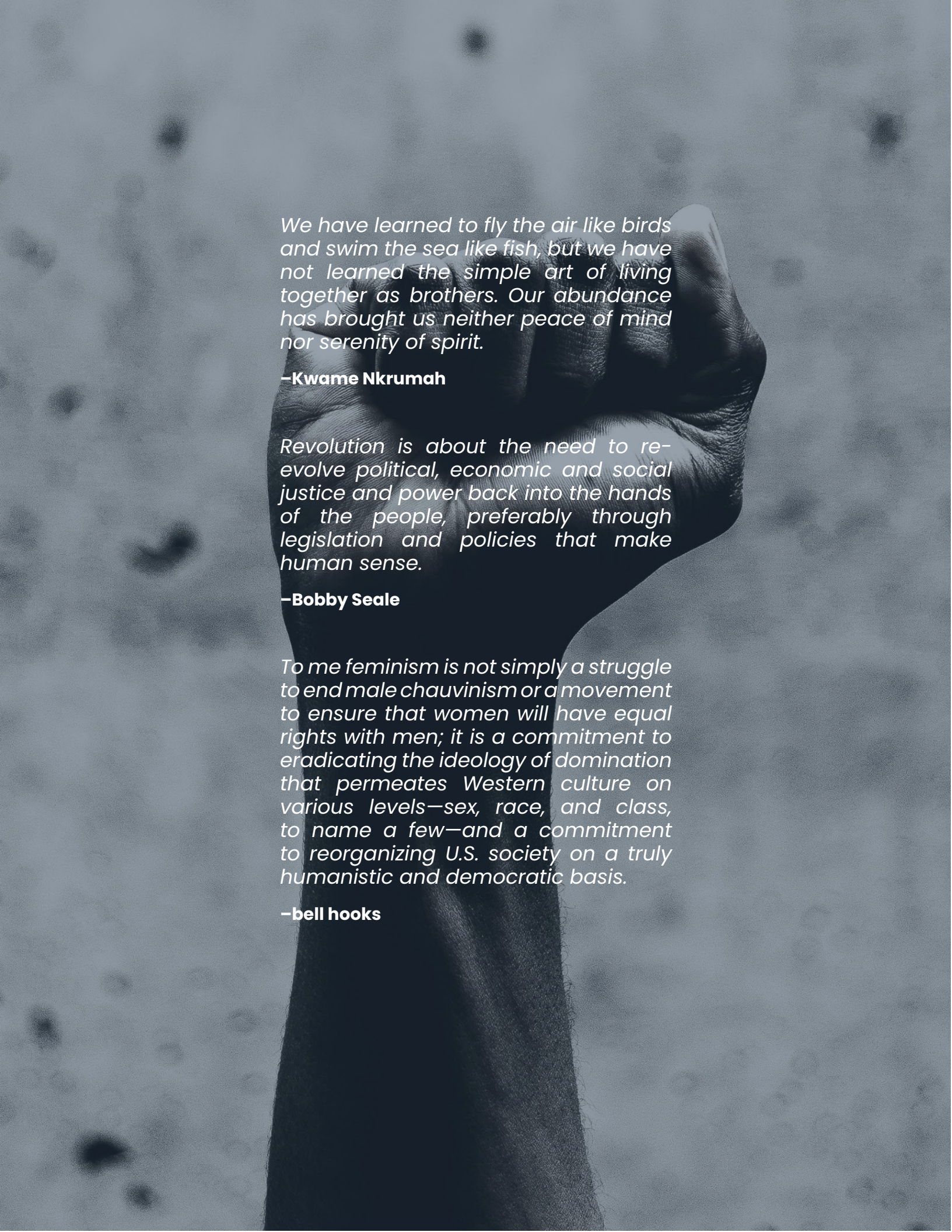


The impacts of climate change affect everything — especially the future of those yet unborn — and how we respond matters. Through our stories, songs, teachings, and the way we as First Nations live and see the world, there's so much we have to contribute. Modern science cannot be the only way we view things, we actually have to take a whole new First Nations lens, and put these lenses together...

-- Unidentified First Nations speaker

Legitimizing multiple knowledge systems fundamentally challenges who gets to make decisions about climate finance. When Indigenous fire management and traditional African agricultural systems are recognized as equally valid to Western techno-fixes, it becomes clear that the communities with this knowledge must control the decisions affecting their territories. This knowledge transformation enables the next prerequisite: ensuring authentic democratic governance over climate finance decisions.





We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers. Our abundance has brought us neither peace of mind nor serenity of spirit.

—Kwame Nkrumah

Revolution is about the need to re-evolve political, economic and social justice and power back into the hands of the people, preferably through legislation and policies that make human sense.

—Bobby Seale

To me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels—sex, race, and class, to name a few—and a commitment to reorganizing U.S. society on a truly humanistic and democratic basis.

—bell hooks

PREREQUISITE: ADVANCE DEMOCRATIC AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Problem Identification: U.S. Democratic Exclusion and Climate Finance Control

U.S. Structural Control Over Climate Finance Decisions

The United States exercises decisive influence over global climate finance through its control of international institutions, federal climate spending, and corporate climate investment—yet the Black nations and communities most impacted by climate change have no meaningful voice in these decisions. This prerequisite requires the U.S. to model authentic democratic governance for climate finance, demonstrating how frontline communities can directly control climate investments affecting their territories.⁶²

No matter how sophisticated and complex, and powerful our institutions are, we are still exactly as dependent on the earth as the earthworm.

—Wendell Berry

Exposing the U.S. Democratic Façade

A functioning democracy is essential for achieving Black liberation and climate justice, but the United States has never functioned as a true democracy for Black, Indigenous, and frontline communities. Despite constitutional claims of democratic governance, systematic disenfranchisement through voter suppression, gerrymandering, felony disenfranchisement, and electoral systems that override popular will have excluded millions from meaningful political participation.⁶³ What international bodies now recognize as “democratic backsliding” represents the exposure of anti-democratic systems that were always present but hidden beneath democratic rhetoric.⁶⁴

This global democratic crisis intersects directly with climate finance. U.S. climate finance decisions are made through institutions where affected nations and communities have no meaningful voice—from Federal Reserve monetary policy shaping global climate investment to Congressional allocation of climate funding dominated by corporate lobbying rather than frontline nation and community needs.⁶⁵

62 This addresses US structural control while positioning authentic US democracy as removing barriers for Global South-led climate governance.

63 Anderson, Carol. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.

64 Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown, 2018.

65 Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.

Environmental racism proliferates throughout the climate change continuum from who is most likely to be exposed to the co-pollutants from facilities that spew the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, to who is most likely to be displaced or even killed from climate change induced disasters.

– Jacqueline Patterson

The Warranted Crisis of Faith in U.S. Institutions

Rather than lamenting widespread disillusionment with democratic institutions, we must acknowledge that many of these institutions were designed to exclude Black and frontline communities and may not be worth preserving in their current form. These sentiments are warranted—Gilens and Page found that “the number of Americans for or against any idea has **no impact** on the likelihood that Congress will make it law.”⁶⁶ This shows the problem is not about getting more people to participate but creating authentic democracy where public servants actually serve what communities need and want.

People are increasingly disengaged from political processes, losing faith in the government’s ability or willingness to serve their interests. This vacuum of trust leaves communities more vulnerable to conspiracy movements and authoritarian threats, which thrive on low morale and political alienation. However, rather than trying to restore faith in failed systems, we must build new democratic structures that center community control.

We are all victims of the American social system. We are all black victims of the white man’s American social system.

–Malcolm X

Examples of Authentic Democratic Governance

U.S. Models that Work: Learning from Community Success

Despite systemic exclusion, U.S. communities have created authentic democratic models that point toward transformation. Reinvigorating democratic participation in climate finance must begin with redistributing power to the people and elevating the voices of those most impacted by climate injustice.

⁶⁶ Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.” *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 3 (2014): 564-581.

White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council (WHEJAC): The Biden administration's creation of WHEJAC demonstrated effective participatory governance at the federal level. This council guided climate justice elements in the Inflation Reduction Act and creation of Justice40 and the EJ Screen. It achieved genuine representation from experts and those with lived expertise, drawing applicants from culturally, racially, and geographically diverse areas while centering local leadership and knowledge. Crucially, this was a participatory process that centers local leadership and knowledge—which was eliminated under the current administration.⁶⁷

Post-George Floyd Participatory Democracy: Participatory budgeting at the city level, as seen in places like Seattle and Los Angeles after the 2020 George Floyd uprisings, provides another example of what democracy could be. Participatory budgeting allows communities to directly influence how public funds are allocated, enhancing transparency and trust.

After the death of George Floyd at the hands of police, cities across America woke up to the reality of the police state built up since 9/11. The 2020 uprisings catalyzed deep democratic experiments across the country. Organizers across the country held town halls and conducted grassroots participatory action research in real time. They educated communities about how police consume most city budgets while social and environmental services receive minimal funding. When given the choice, community members resoundingly agreed that social and environmental problems should be addressed with services and care, not guns and jail. Cities like Seattle and Phoenix successfully redirected priorities and funding toward stronger social safety nets and sustainability departments.⁶⁸

Raising Black Children—female and male—in the mouth of a racist, sexist, suicidal dragon is perilous and chancy. If they cannot love and resist at the same time, they will probably not survive.

—Audre Lorde

The Military Budget Referendum Model

Scaling such models to the national level could transform the United States, ensuring that funding aligns with public priorities. National polling consistently shows that a majority of people in the U.S. want strong climate action. Truly democratic processes must honor that will in the federal budget.

When educated about military excess, many communities support reducing the U.S. military budget—crucial for climate justice since the military is one of the world's largest polluters and consumes the majority of discretionary federal spending. National participatory processes could include public polling and forums on redirecting money from military to climate justice, reflecting both environmental priorities and antimilitarist values. Redirecting these funds toward climate solutions not only reflects the public's environmental priorities but also undermines militarism and imperialism.⁶⁹

67 White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council. "Final Recommendations: Justice40, Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, & Other Priorities." May 2021.

68 Cullors, Patrisse. *An Abolitionist's Handbook*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2021.

69 Crawford, Neta C. "Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change, and the Costs of War." Watson Institute, Brown

As a black woman, my politics and political affiliation are bound up with and flow from participation in my people's struggle for liberation, and with the fight of oppressed people all over the world against American imperialism.

–Angela Davis

Power Analysis: Mapping Democratic Control

Who Controls Current U.S. Climate Finance Decision-making?

Congressional Power Concentration. The U.S. Congress retains vast decision-making authority over climate finance. Any substantive redistribution of power and budget – such as the implementation of national participatory budgeting or direct democracy initiatives – normally requires congressional approval. However, corporate lobbying expenditures dwarf community organizing budgets, ensuring that fossil fuel and financial interests dominate climate policy development.⁷⁰

Corporate Capture of U.S. Democratic Processes. The revolving door between government agencies and corporate boards means climate finance decisions serve Wall Street rather than frontline communities. Federal agencies require technical expertise and bureaucratic navigation skills that systematically exclude community voices, while the complexity of climate finance mechanisms creates barriers ensuring only credentialed experts participate.⁷¹

Federal vs. Community Scale Mismatches. Federal and state climate programs operate at scales that disconnect decision-making from community impact. Communities experience climate change locally but have no control over federal climate investments affecting their neighborhoods. Geographic and institutional barriers systematically exclude Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities from climate governance processes.⁷²

Building U.S. Democratic Infrastructure for Climate Justice

U.S. Community-Controlled Climate Finance Institutions. Authentic democratic governance requires building parallel institutions where U.S. communities directly control climate finance rather than lobbying existing institutions for inclusion. This means creating community-controlled alternatives that can operate independently while building power to transform broader U.S. governance systems.

Scaling Democratic Models Nationally. The WHEJAC model demonstrates that strategic appointments and advisory councils can influence federal policy. Municipal experiments in

University, 2019.

70 Mayer, Jane. *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*. New York: Doubleday, 2016.

71 Fairhead, James, Melissa Leach, and Ian Scoones. "Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature?" *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39, no. 2 (2012): 237-261.

72 Schlosberg, David, and Lisette B. Collins. "From Environmental to Climate Justice." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 5, no. 3 (2014): 359-374.

participatory budgeting can serve as prototypes to pressure national reform. U.S. movements must target congressional accountability by organizing mass civic engagement campaigns, creating pressure through alternative governance structures, and amplifying public education that connects military spending to environmental collapse.⁷³


Strategic Steps for U.S. Democratic Transformation. Building legal infrastructure for participatory budgeting and direct democracy, challenging the dominance of the two-party system, and pushing for anti-monopoly reforms within governance. In an anti-DEI political climate, movements must use this backlash as an opening to interrogate deeper systemic failures. Rather than simply defending diversity initiatives, organizers can pivot toward bolder demands for power redistribution, transparency, and community-led governance.

Inclusive democracy models, citizen assemblies, and tech-enabled participation via mobile devices can help scale deliberative processes across the United States. Strategic alliances between climate justice coalitions, Black liberation movements, and public finance watchdogs can shift the political conversation toward authentic democracy.⁷⁴

U.S. Policy Demands for Democratic Governance

Immediate U.S. Actions (2025-2027): Establishing Community Control Requirements

The first phase requires the United States to mandate authentic community control over all climate finance decisions affecting frontline territories, moving beyond token consultation toward binding community authority. This transformation challenges the fundamental assumption that federal agencies, corporations, or traditional nonprofits should control climate finance decisions for communities, instead establishing community consent and control as legal requirements rather than voluntary best practices.



It is that community spirit of cooperation and the village... that is the way that we as a society need to be in order to not only weather the storms that are before us but to hopefully prevent the storms that we have in store if we don't turn ourselves around.

—Jacqueline Patterson

Creating Binding Community Consent and Control Mechanisms. The United States must establish federal legal requirements that all climate investments over \$1 million in community areas require binding community consent through directly democratic processes controlled by affected communities rather than government-appointed representatives. This mandate should create enforceable legal frameworks requiring community ownership stakes in climate infrastructure projects affecting their territories, ensuring that communities benefit economically

⁷³ Fung, Archon, and Erik Olin Wright. *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. London: Verso, 2003.

⁷⁴ Brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico: AK Press, 2017.

from climate investments rather than only bearing environmental risks. Federal policy must establish community veto power over climate finance mechanisms affecting frontline neighborhoods, recognizing that communities have the right to refuse projects that do not serve their self-determined development priorities.

Removing Barriers to Authentic Community Participation. These consent mechanisms must include federal elimination of technical requirements and bureaucratic barriers that systematically exclude community voices from climate finance decisions while privileging credentialed experts and institutional representatives. The United States should provide federal funding for translation, childcare, and accessibility support for all climate governance processes, acknowledging that authentic participation requires removing structural barriers rather than expecting communities to overcome exclusion through individual effort. Federal policy should require climate finance meetings occur in community-controlled spaces rather than government buildings that may intimidate community members or reinforce power hierarchies that prioritize institutional over community voices.

We have to divest from big oil companies, divest from big coal-burning companies, divest from fracking that's messing up our water system, from pipelines. Also we want to invest that into the health of our communities, to amazing jobs that do not harm our communities and the employees. And we want to re-invest.

—Valencia Gunder

Ending Corporate Capture of Federal Climate Governance. These participation supports must include federal prohibition of fossil fuel and financial industry lobbying on climate finance legislation, recognizing that corporate influence fundamentally undermines democratic decision-making about climate responses. The United States should establish mandatory cooling-off periods preventing officials from moving between federal climate agencies and corporate positions that create conflicts of interest and prioritize corporate over community interests. Federal policy must create public financing for community organizing to balance corporate influence in climate policy development, ensuring that community voices have resources to participate effectively in climate finance decisions rather than being overwhelmed by corporate lobbying expenditures.

This immediate phase creates the legal and institutional foundation for the medium-term phase, where communities can build democratic infrastructure that operates independently of federal agency control while maintaining federal resource support for community-controlled climate finance.

Medium-term U.S. Transformation (2027-2030): Building Community-Controlled Climate

Finance Infrastructure

Building on established community control requirements, the second phase requires the United States to create community-controlled institutions that operate according to democratic governance principles rather than federal agency management or corporate control. This phase recognizes that authentic democracy requires institutional infrastructure that communities control rather than participating in institutions designed to serve government or corporate interests.

Establishing Community-Controlled Climate Finance Institutions. The United States must provide federal capitalization for community climate banks with community governance structures rather than federal agency oversight, enabling communities to make climate finance decisions according to their own priorities and democratic processes. This institutional development should create federal participatory budgeting requirements for all climate resilience funding, ensuring that affected communities directly allocate resources rather than deferring to federal agency determinations about community needs. Federal policy must develop community ownership requirements for renewable energy infrastructure built with federal funding, recognizing that communities should control and benefit from climate infrastructure rather than only hosting projects controlled by outside corporations or agencies.

Transforming Federal Climate Finance Decision-Making Processes. These community-controlled institutions must include federal transformation of climate finance decision-making from technocratic agency control to community-controlled processes that center community expertise and self-determination. The United States should create federal requirements for citizen assemblies with binding authority over federal climate investments in their territories, ensuring that communities have direct control over climate finance affecting their daily lives rather than indirect influence through representative democracy that often serves elite rather than community interests. Federal policy should establish community-controlled climate impact assessment processes that replace federal agency assessments with community-determined evaluation criteria and implementation oversight.

Implementing Democratic Climate Finance Governance at Scale. These decision-making transformations must include federal implementation of national referendum processes on military budget reduction and climate finance reallocation, enabling communities across the United States to directly determine federal spending priorities rather than depending on congressional representatives who often prioritize corporate over community interests. The United States should build federal legal protections for community climate governance from state interference, recognizing that authentic democracy requires protection from both federal and state government attempts to override community self-determination. Federal policy must create democratic oversight mechanisms ensuring climate finance serves community rather than corporate interests while building community capacity for sustained democratic participation.

This medium-term phase enables long-term transformation by creating democratic infrastructure that communities control and can protect from federal political changes while scaling democratic governance from local to national levels.

Long-term U.S. Democratic Transformation (2030-2035): Permanent Community-Controlled Climate Finance Systems

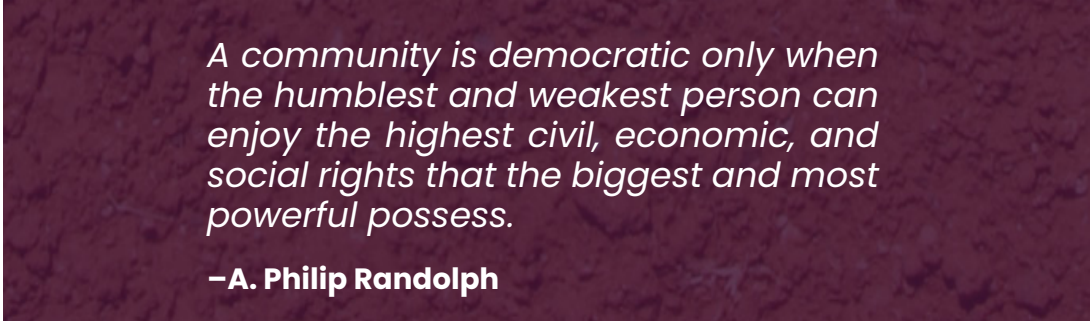
The final phase establishes permanent community control over climate finance systems that survive federal political changes while building community power for comprehensive democratic

governance beyond climate finance. This phase creates constitutional protections for community democratic governance that cannot be eliminated by future federal administrations or corporate capture.

Creating Constitutional Community Climate Governance Rights. The United States must establish constitutional protections for community climate governance rights at federal and state levels, ensuring that community control over climate finance cannot be eliminated by future political changes or corporate lobbying campaigns. This constitutional framework should create permanent community ownership of climate infrastructure as the federal default rather than corporate ownership that extracts wealth from communities while externalizing environmental costs.

Federal constitutional protection must establish community-controlled international climate finance relationships that serve community rather than federal foreign policy or corporate expansion interests. This domestic transformation in U.S. democratic governance creates the essential foundation for the next prerequisite: restructuring the international architecture that currently enables U.S. dominance over global climate finance decisions.

When U.S. frontline communities gain constitutional authority over how American climate finance flows internationally, they can model authentic accountability that supports rather than undermines Global South climate finance sovereignty. This constitutional protection ensures that U.S. international climate finance serves community solidarity and reparative justice rather than maintaining colonial control through international financial institutions—setting the stage for transforming the broader international climate finance architecture that currently blocks Black nation and Global South community self-determination.



A community is democratic only when the humblest and weakest person can enjoy the highest civil, economic, and social rights that the biggest and most powerful possess.

—A. Philip Randolph

Building Permanent Democratic Climate Finance Infrastructure. These constitutional protections must include federal support for regional networks of community climate assemblies with binding authority over federal climate policy, creating democratic infrastructure that operates independently of federal agency control while influencing federal climate finance priorities. The United States should establish community-controlled federal climate research and policy development institutions that center community knowledge and priorities rather than federal agency or academic institution agendas. Federal policy must create permanent democratic oversight mechanisms ensuring U.S. climate finance serves community rather than corporate interests while building community capacity to resist corporate capture and federal political interference.

Protecting Community Democratic Governance from Federal and Corporate Interference. This

permanent infrastructure must include federal constitutional protections for community climate governance rights that prevent federal agencies, state governments, or corporate interests from overriding community self-determination about climate finance. The United States should create rapid response systems protecting community climate institutions from federal authoritarian attacks or corporate capture attempts, ensuring that community democratic governance can survive political transitions and systematic opposition. Federal policy should build international solidarity networks supporting U.S. community-controlled climate finance as a model for global democratic governance rather than U.S. imperial expansion or corporate domination.

This long-term phase completes the democratic governance prerequisite by establishing permanent community control over climate finance decisions, creating the foundation for transforming international architecture where U.S. communities can model authentic democracy that supports rather than dominates Black nation self-determination.

The essence of economic inequality is borne out in a simple fact: there are 400 billionaires in the United States and 45 million people living in poverty. These are not parallel facts; they are intersecting facts. There are 400 American billionaires because there are 45 million people living in poverty.

-- Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor

Implementation Framework

These demands recognize that authentic democracy for climate finance requires building new U.S. institutions rather than reforming systems designed to exclude frontline communities. The goal is to build democratic infrastructure where U.S. frontline communities directly control climate finance decisions affecting their lives and environments rather than trying to restore faith in failed federal institutions.

Environmental and climate justice is about being unbought and unbossed by, for example, the fossil fuel industry. The environmental and climate justice movement is about frontline community leadership because we see that it's been corporate interests that have been leading us here up until now.


—Jacqueline Patterson

Success depends on creating community-controlled alternatives that can operate independently of existing pseudo-democratic institutions while building power to transform broader U.S. governance systems. This creates the protective political conditions necessary for community-controlled climate finance to flourish in the United States without depending on the goodwill of institutions that have historically served elite rather than community interests.

Ultimately, true democracy in the U.S. demands more than representation—it requires redistribution of power, de-concentration of authority, and radical imagination of governance rooted in justice. By transforming U.S. democratic governance for climate finance, we model the authentic participatory democracy that other nations can adapt while removing U.S. barriers to Global South democratic climate governance.

Building authentic democratic governance within the United States creates the foundation for transforming how the U.S. exercises power globally. When frontline communities control domestic climate finance decisions, the U.S. can model genuine accountability rather than maintaining colonial control through international financial institutions. This democratic transformation enables the next prerequisite: restructuring the international architecture that currently blocks Black nation climate finance sovereignty.





In 1960, at the end of colonialism, per capita income in the richest country was thirty-two times higher than in the poorest country. That's a big gap. The development industry told us that the gap would narrow, but it didn't. On the contrary, over the next four decades the gap more than quadrupled: by 2000, the ratio was 134 to 1. This is hardly a tale of 'catching up'.

– Jason Hickel

The people of the Global South are owed nothing less than \$5 trillion a year in public, grant-based climate finance. While the governments of the Global North delay and deflect, the people of the Global South are dying. The Global North must acknowledge its historical responsibility for the climate catastrophe and pay up.

– Lidy Nacpil, Coordinator of the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development

The IMF is a more complicated issue. I think there is a broad sentiment among both the left and the right that the IMF may be doing more harm than good.

– Joseph Stiglitz

PREREQUISITE: TRANSFORM INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE FINANCE ARCHITECTURE

Problem Identification: U.S. Control of Colonial Financial Systems

U.S. Dominance Over International Financial Institutions. The United States exercises decisive control over international climate finance architecture through its voting power in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, its hosting of their headquarters in Washington DC, and its Treasury Department's influence over global financial flows. This prerequisite requires the U.S. to be held accountable for using its structural control to dismantle colonial financial systems and implement Global South-designed alternatives rather than maintaining extractive institutions under new management.⁷⁵

To address the climate crisis at its root, we must fundamentally reimagine and dismantle the existing international climate finance and resource allocation architecture, especially what the United States controls. This requires confronting the dominance of Western financial institutions and their continued colonial imposition on the Global South. The current architecture operates often but not exclusively through U.S. controlled structures that perpetuate racialized extraction, economic coercion, and environmental degradation under the guise of climate solutions.⁷⁶

It is unacceptable that there is no permanent representation from Latin America and Africa... The people of Africa are not asking for handouts.

**-- Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo,
President of Ghana**

Democratizing Global Climate Governance: United Nations Reform

Wealthy Nation Dominance Over Climate Negotiations. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) operates under a consensus-based system that effectively grants wealthy nations veto power over climate commitments. The U.S. and other high-emission countries systematically block binding emissions reductions, loss and damage payments, and technology transfers that would address their historical climate responsibility. This structure ensures that nations most responsible for climate chaos maintain control over global climate policy while frontline nations—despite representing the majority of world population—cannot compel action from their colonizers.

A democratized UNFCCC would operate through population-weighted voting that reflects actual global representation rather than allowing wealthy nations to block climate action. African nations, representing over 17% of global population, would gain decision-making power proportional to their population while also receiving weighted authority based on their minimal historical emissions and maximum climate vulnerability. This transformation would fundamentally shift climate negotiations from damage control managed by polluters to comprehensive climate justice designed by frontline communities.

⁷⁵ This framing addresses US structural control while positioning US accountability as enabling Global South leadership rather than maintaining American dominance.

⁷⁶ Hand, Delicia Reynolds. "Transforming Climate Finance Through a Black Liberation Lens." The Chisholm Legacy Project, November 2024.

Africa is not poor, we are stealing its wealth.

-- Nick Dearden, Global Justice Now

U.S. Responsibility for UN Process Transformation. The United States must use its Security Council power and UN influence to democratize climate governance rather than maintaining colonial control. This includes eliminating the Security Council veto system that allows wealthy nations to block climate action, establishing population-weighted voting in climate negotiations, and creating binding authority for frontline nations to determine climate finance distribution. The U.S. should champion reforms that put most impacted nations at the forefront of decision-making on a climate catastrophe that is not of their making, recognizing that authentic climate solutions require leadership from those facing the greatest impacts.

Unless small States can combine they must be compelled to sell their primary products at prices dictated by the developed nations and buy their manufactured goods at the prices fixed by them.

-- Kwame Nkrumah

Military Architecture and Climate Exclusions: NATO's Role

NATO's Climate and Democratic Exclusions. NATO's military alliance structure systematically excludes Global South nations from security decision-making while imposing militarized climate responses that serve Western corporate interests rather than frontline community needs. NATO interventions in Libya following Gaddafi's gold dinar proposal and ongoing military pressure against Venezuela's oil sovereignty demonstrate how military alliances function to prevent resource sovereignty that could enable community-controlled climate finance.

The U.S. military, as the world's largest institutional polluter consuming more oil than most entire countries, operates through NATO structures that prioritize fossil fuel access over climate stability. NATO's expansion eastward and military buildup diverts resources from climate action while creating conflicts that generate massive emissions and prevent international cooperation on climate solutions.

Dismantling Military Barriers to Climate Cooperation. The United States must withdraw from NATO structures that prevent climate cooperation and resource sovereignty in the Global South. This includes ending military interventions that protect extractive industries, eliminating arms sales that fuel conflicts over climate-affected resources, and redirecting military budgets toward climate reparations and international cooperation rather than maintaining imperial control.

G20 and African Union: Tokenism vs. Authentic Power

African Union's Limited G20 Authority. The African Union's recent admission to the G20 as a single seat represents 54 nations with over 1.3 billion people—yet operates with less decision-making power than individual wealthy nations like Germany or Japan. This tokenistic inclusion allows the G20 to claim African representation while maintaining Western control over global economic decisions affecting African climate finance access.

Historically, the G20's exclusion of African nations enabled debt structures and trade policies that extract African resources while blocking African-controlled climate investments. African leaders have explicitly called for “rebalancing efforts” and “more respect and dignity” rather than the current system where there is no permanent representation from Latin America and Africa in key decision-making bodies.

The struggle is international, involving the unity of the Negro peoples with the exploited and oppressed of all countries.

—W.B. Dubois

Authentic African Power in Global Governance. True democratization requires replacing the single African Union seat with proportional representation for African nations based on population and climate vulnerability. African nations, which have achieved over 90% ratification of the Paris Agreement while contributing less than 4% of historical emissions, should control climate finance decisions affecting African territories rather than deferring to G20 nations responsible for climate chaos.

The U.S. should champion reforms that recognize Africa's leadership in climate solutions rather than maintaining extraction relationships disguised as climate partnerships. As Kenyan President William Ruto noted, “Africa can be a green industrial hub that helps other regions achieve their net-zero strategies,” but only if African nations control the resources and decision-making processes necessary for this transformation.

Africa is not asking for favors. It is offering solutions. With coordinated UN support, strong national leadership, and genuine global partnership, Africa can build a future where finance fuels development, not dependency.

**--Statement from the United Nations DCO
(Development Coordination Office)**

Strategic Demands for U.S.-Led International Reform

- **Eliminate wealthy nation veto power** over UNFCCC climate commitments, replacing consensus with population-weighted voting.
- **Establish binding frontline nation authority** over climate finance affecting their territories.
- **End NATO military interventions** that prevent resource sovereignty in the Global South.
- **Redirect U.S. military spending** toward international climate reparations and cooperation.
- **Replace tokenistic G20 representation** with proportional seats for African and Global South nations.
- **Transfer U.S. voting power** in international financial institutions to frontline nations most affected by climate change.

Africa has long been the exploited engine of global wealth—its lands, resources, and peoples drained to fuel the prosperity of rich countries in the global North, leaving us vulnerable to the worsening impacts of climate change. At COP29, we were promised financing to address this crisis. Yet, we are met with hollow promises... what the global North needs to do is pay the climate debt they owe to the African peoples and to all Southern peoples.

-- Carolina Muturi, Coordinator of IBON Africa

The World Bank and IMF: Extensions of U.S. Colonial Power

U.S. Control Over Global Financial Architecture. Institutions like the World Bank (WB) and IMF have long operated as extensions of colonial power. These entities masquerade as humanitarian and development organizations while continuing to impose debt, austerity, and extractive economic conditions on Global South countries, often through U.S. designed policies. The myth of neutrality in international finance obscures a deep-rooted legacy of exploitation and control that often serves U.S. corporate and geopolitical interests.⁷⁷

With the WB and IMF being the main modes of financing available to the Global South, massive power imbalances exist between these financial institutions and impoverished nations with few alternatives. These institutions exploit power imbalances to force countries to open markets to resource-extracting corporations, dictate spending priorities that defund the social safety nets according to U.S. neoliberal models, and demand currency devaluation that benefits U.S. and Global North trade relationships.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: Global Inequality from Conquest to Free Markets*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2017.

⁷⁸ Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network. *The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis and Poverty*. Washington: SAPRIN, 2002.

The World Bank and the IMF are 80 years old. 80 years of financial neo-colonialism and the imposition of austerity policies in the name of debt repayment. 80 years is enough! The Bretton Woods institutions must be abolished and replaced by democratic institutions serving an ecological, feminist and anti-racist bifurcation.

-- CADTM (Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt)

The Mechanics of Financial Colonialism. These institutions use standardized policy prescriptions—structural adjustment programs—that systematically dismantle national sovereignty. Countries seeking climate finance face conditionalities requiring privatization of public services (e.g., benefiting U.S. corporations), elimination of trade protections (e.g., opening markets to U.S. goods), and liberalization of capital markets (enabling U.S. financial extraction). The result is that Global South nations become captive markets for Western corporations while losing control over their own economic policies.⁷⁹

What arrives as aid becomes dependency, while the reality remains that the Global North depends on Black nations' resources to maintain the false abundance that Americans and other Global North countries experience. This abundance is predicated on resource theft. If the West paid Black nations fairly for resources, poverty would end and items would reflect their true production costs.⁸⁰

Capitalism and racism, in other words, did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of 'racial capitalism' dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide.

-- Cedric Robinson

Contemporary "Green" Colonialism

The Climate Finance Trap. Current climate finance mechanisms controlled by U.S. institutions replicate these colonial patterns. U.S. backed climate adaptation loans come with conditions that open renewable energy markets to American corporations, require technology transfers

79 Chang, Ha-Joon. *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective*. London: Anthem Press, 2002.

80 Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972.

that benefit U.S. patent holders, and mandate governance reforms that align with Western institutional frameworks. Communities facing climate impacts find themselves deeper in debt while losing control over their climate responses to U.S. designed systems.⁸¹

Contemporary climate finance practices perpetuate present-day colonialism under the pretense of green development through U.S. institutional control. The current system facilitates new extraction waves, appropriating land, intellectual property, and ecological knowledge while ignoring Indigenous and Black ecological leadership. This ongoing theft continues dispossessing and disenfranchising Black nations while enriching, among others, U.S. corporations and maintaining Global North resource access.⁸²

We strongly condemn the cupidity of those nations of the world who, by open aggression or secret schemes, have seized the territories and inexhaustible natural wealth of Africa, and we place on record our most solemn determination to reclaim the treasures and possession of the vast continent of our forefathers.

– Marcus Garvey

U.S. Corporate Resource Extraction for “Green” Technology: The transition to renewable energy has created new forms of extraction, particularly mining for lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements that flow to the U.S. and to other top manufacturers and processors like China. These operations, often funded through U.S.-controlled climate finance mechanisms, displace communities and destroy ecosystems while the extracted materials flow to Western manufacturers. The Democratic Republic of Congo’s mining operations exemplify this pattern—communities face violence and environmental destruction to produce materials for Western “green” technologies.⁸³

The DRC contributes 0.09% of global emissions while ranking as the 12th most climate-vulnerable and 5th least prepared country globally. Yet U.S. corporations extract minerals essential for “green” technologies while perpetuating a genocide that has displaced over seven million Congolese people. From King Leopold’s Belgian rubber terror to today’s U.S. corporate mineral extraction—lithium, coltan, and copper for American renewable energy technologies—the same colonial logic persists: external wealth accumulation through Congolese suffering that enriches U.S. corporate profits.⁸⁴

81 Lohmann, Larry. “Carbon Trading, Climate Justice and the Production of Ignorance.” *Development* 51, no. 3 (2008): 359-365.

82 Fairhead, James, Melissa Leach, and Ian Scoones. “Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature?” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39, no. 2 (2012): 237-261.

83 Prause, Louisa, and Bettina Engels. “The Social Costs of Resource Extraction.” *Geoforum* 108 (2020): 242-252.

84 Nest, Michael. *Coltan: Complicity and Insurrection in the Congo*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.

*When all the trees have been cut down,
when all the animals have been hunted,
when all the waters are polluted, when
all the air is unsafe to breathe, only
then will you discover you cannot eat
money.*

–Cree Phrophecy

U.S. Corporate “Artisanal” Mining Exploitation. The term “artisanal” mining deliberately obscures reality in U.S. corporate communications. This is not heritage craftsmanship—“artisanal” mining means forced labor without technology or resources to increase safety and efficacy. This includes mining with bare hands, without resources to protect miners from tunnel and pit collapses or toxins like sulfuric acid and radiation exposure. Mining is toxic, and millions are exposed to these toxins including children forced into this labor to supply U.S. technology companies.⁸⁵

The Zambian Copper Belt Connection. Similarly, the copper belt in Zambia demonstrates how U.S.-controlled climate finance perpetuates extraction for American renewable energy infrastructure. Zambian communities face public health harms, displacement and environmental destruction as copper mining expands to supply U.S. electric vehicle and solar panel manufacturing, while U.S.-controlled institutions prevent Zambian ownership of copper wealth.⁸⁶

*Africa has been upfront on these figures,
\$1.3 trillion is the amount that we say
needs to be mobilized but we have also
given a figure for provisioning, which
we said must be at least 600 billion.
Africa is already spending 5-9% of GDP
responding to challenges that we face
on climate change. So, we are asking
for additional financing and affordable
financing.*

**–Ali Mohamed, Chair of the African Group
Negotiators**

⁸⁵ Radley, Ben, and Matthias Vogel. “Fighting Windmills in Eastern DRC?” *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 5 (2015): 592-608.

⁸⁶ Fraser, Alastair, and John Lungu. *For Whom the Windfalls? Winners and Losers in the Privatisation of Zambia's Copper Mines*. Lusaka: Civil Society Trade Network of Zambia, 2007.

Power Analysis: U.S. Control Mechanisms

U.S. Institutional Control Points. The United States maintains control over international climate finance through several key mechanisms:

U.S. Treasury and Federal Reserve Influence. U.S. monetary policy and Treasury Department decisions shape global financial flows, debt structures, and investment patterns that determine how climate finance reaches Black nations.

U.S. Corporate and Military Protection. U.S. military interventions protect American corporate resource extraction globally, from oil wars that benefit U.S. energy companies to lithium mining conflicts in Latin America that supply U.S. electric vehicle manufacturers.

U.S.-Controlled Trade Agreements. American trade policies force Global South countries to export raw materials while importing U.S. manufactured goods, creating the economic relationships that drive climate-destroying extraction for U.S. corporate benefit.

An injustice burns at the heart of the climate crisis. And its flame is scorching hopes and possibilities here in Africa. This continent accounts for less than four per cent of global emissions.

—António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

U.S. Policy Demands for International Architecture Transformation

Immediate U.S. Actions (2025-2027): Dismantling U.S. Colonial Financial Control

The first phase requires the United States to use its structural control over international financial institutions to dismantle rather than reform colonial systems, recognizing that institutions designed for extraction cannot be transformed into liberation tools without fundamental restructuring. This transformation moves beyond making U.S.-controlled institutions more inclusive toward transferring control to Black nations and dismantling the mechanisms through which the United States maintains global financial dominance.

Eliminating U.S. Colonial Financial Architecture and Corporate Extraction. The United States must launch congressional campaigns to sunset the IMF and World Bank rather than attempting reforms that maintain U.S. control under new management, acknowledging that these institutions were designed to serve U.S. corporate and geopolitical interests rather than resource sovereignty of Black nations. This dismantling should redistribute assets from U.S.-controlled institutions to frontline communities as reparations rather than transferring control to other Global North institutions that maintain colonial extraction patterns. Federal policy

must prohibit new U.S.-backed structural adjustment programs and conditional lending tied to resource extraction for U.S. corporate benefit, recognizing that conditional aid maintains dependency relationships that serve U.S. rather than Black nation and community interests.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can break Africa's colonial legacy of exporting raw materials and importing finished goods.

--Jean-Louis Ekra, former President of the African Export-Import Bank

Establishing U.S. Corporate Accountability for Global Extraction. These institutional changes must include federal legal liability for U.S. corporate extraction without full informed consent of Black nations and the communities within, creating enforceable penalties that make extraction expensive while making Black nation/community-controlled development profitable. The United States should require U.S. corporations to pay reparations for mining-related displacement and environmental destruction in Congo, Zambia, and other extraction sites, with payments flowing to Black nations, and directly to affected communities in cases where government intermediaries serve elite interests. Federal policy must prohibit U.S. technology companies from sourcing materials through forced labor and community displacement, establishing supply chain accountability that prioritizes Black nation and community informed consent over corporate profit margins.

Supporting Resource Sovereignty Against U.S. Economic and Military Interference. These corporate accountability measures must include ending U.S. economic sanctions against countries nationalizing resources that conflict with U.S. corporate interests, recognizing that sanctions primarily serve to maintain U.S. corporate access to Black nation resources rather than protecting human rights or democracy. The United States should provide international protection for ecological defenders facing repression by U.S.-backed regimes and corporations, acknowledging that environmental defenders often face violence because they threaten U.S. corporate extraction interests. Federal policy must establish U.S. legal requirements for community consent in all U.S.-funded international climate finance projects, ensuring that U.S. climate finance serves community rather than U.S. corporate or geopolitical expansion.

This immediate phase creates the foundation for the medium-term phase by removing U.S. barriers to Global South self-determination while establishing U.S. accountability for historical and ongoing extraction that has prevented community-controlled development.

Our people are aware that their poverty produces wealth for others. The accumulated resentment against political colonialism is now reborn against economic colonialism. Colonial attitudes that should have disappeared still try to control international relations.

-- Luis Echeverría

Medium-term U.S. Transformation (2027-2030): Building Alternative Architecture Without U.S. Control

Building on dismantled U.S. colonial control, the second phase requires the United States to support Black nation-controlled alternatives while transforming how the U.S. exercises power globally, shifting from dominance toward solidarity and mutual aid relationships that serve Black nations rather than U.S. interests.

Supporting Black Nation-Controlled Climate Finance Institutions. The United States must provide funding for Black Nation-controlled climate finance institutions that operate independently of U.S. oversight and influence, acknowledging that genuine alternatives require complete independence from U.S. institutional control rather than reformed U.S. institutions with Black nation participation. This support should create U.S. funding for regional climate finance mechanisms that bypass U.S.-controlled World Bank and IMF systems entirely, enabling Black nations to access climate finance without conforming to U.S. economic policy requirements or corporate interests. Federal policy must support South-South financial cooperation and resource-sharing agreements while ending U.S. interference in these relationships through economic pressure or political manipulation.

Transforming U.S. Development Metrics and International Relationships. These alternative institutions must include U.S. elimination of GDP and growth-based progress metrics that serve U.S. corporate expansion while substituting community-controlled indicators rooted in ecological well-being and community self-determination that reflect Global South rather than U.S. values and priorities. The United States should establish community-controlled accountability systems for measuring U.S. climate finance success rather than U.S. government or corporate assessments that often prioritize U.S. interests over Black nation/community outcomes. Federal policy must create transparency mechanisms ensuring U.S. climate finance benefits reach Black nations and communities rather than U.S. corporate intermediaries or Global North institutions that extract administrative fees while maintaining control over Black nation/community development.

*Developed countries are being miserly...
they burden us for cleaning up the
mess they have created.*

**-- Robert Mugabe, former President of
Zimbabwe**

Establishing Fair U.S. Economic Relations Based on Reparative Justice. These accountability systems must include U.S. support for Black nations in repudiating illegitimate debt imposed through U.S.-backed structural adjustment programs, acknowledging that debt cancellation represents justice rather than charity given the extractive nature of debt imposition. The United States should provide reparations rather than aid from the U.S. government for historical extraction and ongoing economic violence perpetuated by U.S. institutions and corporations, recognizing that aid maintains dependency while reparations acknowledge accountability and support self-determination. Federal policy must establish U.S. legal frameworks recognizing debt imposed through U.S.-controlled institutions as neocolonial violence and ecocide, creating legal precedents that prevent future debt imposition while supporting Global South debt resistance.

This medium-term phase enables long-term transformation by creating Black nation-controlled alternatives to U.S.-dominated systems while establishing U.S. legal and financial accountability for supporting Global South rather than U.S. self-determination.

We need to look at how equity, justice, injustice plays in the nexus of what we look at when we look at the natural environment, the built environment, future environments. You cannot leave out distributional issues.

–Dorceta Taylor

Long-term U.S. Accountability (2030-2035): Complete U.S. Withdrawal from Colonial Financial Control

The final phase establishes permanent U.S. accountability to Black nations while completing the transfer of international climate finance control from U.S.-dominated institutions to Black nation-controlled alternatives that operate according to community self-determination principles rather than U.S. corporate or geopolitical interests.

Transferring International Climate Finance Control to Global South Leadership. The United States must complete the transfer of control over international climate finance from U.S.-dominated institutions to Black nation-controlled alternatives that operate independently of U.S. oversight or influence, acknowledging that genuine transformation requires U.S. withdrawal from rather than continued participation in global financial governance. This transfer should establish U.S. legal prohibitions against American corporate control over Black nations' climate finance and development, creating permanent barriers to U.S. corporate recolonization of Black nation economies through climate finance mechanisms. Federal policy must create U.S. reparations funding for Black nation-designed climate finance institutions that operate independently of American oversight while serving Black nation priorities rather than U.S. foreign policy or corporate expansion goals.

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.

Establishing Permanent U.S. Accountability to Global South Climate Finance Leadership. This control transfer must include U.S. redirection of international development funding toward supporting Black nation-led climate finance institutions rather than maintaining U.S. institutional control through reformed aid programs that continue serving U.S. rather than Black nations' interests. The United States should establish U.S. legal protections for Black nations' resource sovereignty against American corporate and military interference, creating enforceable mechanisms that prevent U.S. economic warfare against countries asserting control over resources. Federal policy must create permanent U.S. accountability mechanisms ensuring American climate finance serves Black nations rather than U.S. corporate interests while building Black nation capacity to resist U.S. economic pressure and political manipulation.

Creating U.S. Support Systems for Global South Climate Finance Sovereignty. These accountability mechanisms must include U.S. support for international legal frameworks that protect Black nation climate finance sovereignty from U.S. economic and military interference, acknowledging that Black nation self-determination requires protection from U.S. power rather than U.S. accountability or guidance. The United States should provide federal resources for Global South-controlled international networks that coordinate climate finance and resource sharing according to solidarity rather than competition principles that often serve U.S. divide-and-conquer strategies. Federal policy must establish U.S. constitutional prohibitions against American interference in Global South climate finance governance while creating permanent U.S. resource flows that support Black nation self-determination without maintaining U.S. influence or control over Global South development priorities.

This long-term phase completes the international architecture prerequisite by establishing permanent Global South control over international climate finance while ensuring U.S. accountability supports rather than undermines Global South self-determination, creating the foundation for sustained movement infrastructure that can protect these transformations from future U.S. political changes or corporate capture attempts.

For those who practise it, it [neo-colonialism] means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. In the days of old-fashioned colonialism, the imperial power had at least to explain and justify at home the actions it was taking abroad. With neo-colonialism neither is the case.

-- Kwame Nkrumah

POLICYMAKER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE

LEGISLATIVE VEHICLES NEEDED:

- International Financial Institution Reform Act (amend Bretton Woods Agreements Act)
- Global South Climate Justice Act (new legislation)
- Corporate Extraction Accountability Act (amend existing trade law)
- **BUDGET IMPACT:** \$100+ billion annually redirected from colonial institutions to community-controlled alternatives

IMPLEMENTATION SEQUENCE:

1. 2025-2026: U.S. policy changes, Congressional oversight of World Bank/IMF
2. 2027-2028: Conditional funding, begin institutional restructuring
3. 2029+: Complete transformation with allied government coordination

KEY COMMITTEES: House/Senate Foreign Relations, Banking, Financial Services

OPPOSITION SOURCES: World Bank/IMF, international financial lobby, extractive corporations

MOVEMENT ORGANIZING TIMELINE - INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE

2025: International Solidarity Building

- Q1-Q2: Build relationships across Global South climate justice movements
- Q3: Organize U.S.-based campaigns supporting resource sovereignty abroad
- Q4: Create popular education connecting local extraction to international patterns

2026: Corporate Accountability

- Q1-Q2: Target U.S. corporations extracting in Black nations
- Q3: Organize shareholder actions and divestment campaigns
- Q4: Build cross-border campaigns against specific extraction projects

2027-2028: Policy Transformation

- Organize against U.S. economic sanctions punishing resource sovereignty
- Campaign for congressional oversight of World Bank/IMF voting
- Build pressure for debt cancellation and reparations policies

2029+: Global Transformation

- Support Black nation-led alternative financial institutions
- Coordinate U.S. movement support for international transformation
- Create ongoing accountability for U.S. international financial policy



Implementation Framework

These demands recognize that transforming international climate finance architecture requires the United States to dismantle the systems through which it maintains colonial control rather than simply reforming them under new management. The goal is to transfer control to Global South-designed alternatives, rather than making U.S.-controlled institutions more inclusive, while ensuring U.S. accountability for historical and ongoing extraction.

Success depends on the U.S. using its current structural power to eliminate rather than reform colonial financial architecture, creating space for Black nations to build climate finance systems that serve their needs rather than American corporate interests. This prerequisite creates the international conditions necessary for community-controlled climate finance to flourish globally without facing U.S. economic retaliation or institutional interference.


By dismantling U.S. control over international climate finance architecture, we remove the structural barriers that currently prevent Black nation-led climate solutions while ensuring American accountability for the extraction systems that created the climate crisis.

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.

-- Kwame Nkrumah

Dismantling U.S. control over international climate finance architecture creates space for Black nation-led alternatives, but transformation requires sustained movement infrastructure to survive institutional backlash. The history of autonomous economic projects facing systematic destruction demonstrates why the final prerequisite is essential: building movement organizations with the resources and capacity to protect and advance these transformations over time.





Real climate solutions are decolonial climate solutions, because they're taking us back to reconnections with the land, to being on the land, to reconnecting with that intimate understanding of how to not just live and survive on the land, but how to adapt and change with it.

–Eriel Deranger, founder of Indigenous Climate Action

The essence of capitalism is to turn nature into commodities and commodities into capital. The live green earth is transformed into dead gold bricks, with luxury items for the few and toxic slag heaps for the many. The glittering mansion overlooks a vast sprawl of shanty towns, wherein a desperate, demoralized humanity is kept in line with drugs, television, and armed force.

–Michael Parenti

The climate bill has finally come due. Who will pay? Right now it is being paid by the smallest and most vulnerable. We see a small toll exacted every day as our shorelines are surely eroded. Small island communities are among the first to pay the price of climate change but no one will escape forever.

–Enele Sopoaga, former Prime Minister of Tuvalu

PREREQUISITE: RESOURCE MOVEMENT-BUILDING

Problem Identification: U.S. Federal Funding-to-Movement Pipeline Crisis

U.S. Federal Responsibility for Movement Infrastructure. The United States federal government holds primary responsibility for creating the funding infrastructure that enables community-controlled climate finance to flourish. This prerequisite requires the U.S. to establish permanent federal funding streams that resource movement organizations for sustained transformation rather than project cycles, ensuring Black communities and Black-led frontline formations on the African continent and throughout the Black Diaspora have the financial infrastructure necessary to implement the other four Political Prerequisites.⁸⁷

The best action the U.S. Federal government can do to support a just transition – aside from stopping the harm it is already causing – is to directly resource climate mitigation and adaptation in the communities that need it most through movement organizations rather than corporate intermediaries. This approach builds on historical precedents: the New Deal demonstrated how direct resource access could address economic crisis, and the Inflation Reduction Act showed strides towards climate adaptation and mitigation before being dismantled by the current administration.⁸⁸

*Many are attracted to social service
– the rewards are immediate, the
gratification quick. But if we have social
justice, we won't need social service.*

– Julian Bond

U.S. Federal Models: Successes and Systematic Elimination

The Community Change Grant: A Federal Model Cut Short

The Community Change Grant Program (CCGP) was historically significant as the largest amount of federal money ever given directly to communities for environmental and climate justice in American history. Under this federal program, communities without government sponsors could apply for up to \$20 million. This level of funding allows communities to take development into their own hands and create new infrastructure. However, the current administration stopped this program immediately upon taking office, demonstrating how federal policy changes can instantly destroy community infrastructure.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ This frames federal resource movement-building as essential infrastructure for implementing other prerequisites rather than standalone funding policy.

⁸⁸ Katznelson, Ira. *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*. New York: Liveright, 2013.

⁸⁹ US Environmental Protection Agency. "Community Change Grants Program Overview." Federal Register, 2023.

The elimination of federal programs like CGA reveals the vulnerability of community-controlled climate finance to federal political changes, highlighting why building movement infrastructure resilient to U.S. political shifts is essential for long-term transformation.

U.S. Federal Technical Assistance: Critical Infrastructure Destroyed

Justice40 and Federal Technical Assistance Investment. The U.S. Inflation Reduction Act invested \$1 billion in federal technical assistance (TA) to meet Justice40 goals—the federal commitment to ensure that 40% of climate and clean energy investments flow to disadvantaged communities that have historically been marginalized, underinvested in, and overburdened by pollution.⁹⁰ This federal investment ensured climate funding accessibility for communities unfamiliar with federal grant processes, representing a significant federal commitment to community-controlled climate finance.

Based on direct experience with federal TA programs, this federal infrastructure was effective but unevenly implemented across U.S. regions. Key improvements needed for federal TA programs include:

Standardized Federal Training and Quality Control: Not all applicants received the same level of federal technical assistance, indicating insufficient federal staff vetting and inconsistent training protocols across federal agencies.

Enhanced Federal Templates and Examples: Environmental Protection Network (EPN) templates proved more effective than federal contractor-provided materials because they included concrete examples rather than abstract federal guidance.

Federal Peer Support Networks: Assistance from organizations that had successfully navigated federal grants proved most valuable, suggesting federal applicant cohorts could significantly improve success rates.

Structured Federal Timeline Guidance: Clear weekly milestones and regular federal office hours could better support organizations tackling large federal grants for the first time.

The current administration's elimination of federal TA funding represents a strategic attack on community capacity to access federal climate resources, demonstrating why federal movement infrastructure must be protected and expanded.

U.S. Federal Financial Infrastructure Destruction

The U.S. CDFI Fund Destruction. The gutting of the U.S. Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund represents a strategic federal attack on financial sovereignty. CDFIs provide financial services in low-income communities—especially those serving Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and cooperative economies, provide crucial infrastructure for community-controlled development outside traditional banking systems. The federal elimination of CDFI funding removes pathways for communities to access capital outside traditional banking systems while maintaining federal support for corporate financial institutions.⁹¹

This federal policy choice demonstrates how U.S. government decisions determine whether communities have access to community-controlled financial infrastructure or remain dependent on extractive banking systems that serve corporate rather than community interests.

⁹⁰ Justice40 refers to the federal goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal climate, clean energy, affordable and sustainable housing, workforce development, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and other investments reach disadvantaged communities that have been historically marginalized and underinvested in.

⁹¹ Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) are financial institutions that provide credit and financial services to underserved markets and populations, certified by the US Treasury's CDFI Fund.

Power Analysis: Current U.S. Federal Funding Reality

Who No Longer Benefits: The Elimination of Federal Climate Justice Funding. Since the current administration's systematic elimination of federal climate justice programs, no community organizations are "living high off the federal funding hog." The wholesale destruction of federal environmental justice programs means that even previously well-resourced institutions—white-led nonprofits, established universities, and municipalities that had benefited from federal funding due to their capacity to meet bureaucratic requirements—now face dramatic federal funding cuts.

This federal divestment from all climate-related funding reveals the current administration's systematic opposition to climate action at any scale, making federal funding restoration a prerequisite for any community-controlled climate finance infrastructure.

Who Previously Had Federal Leverage. Before systematic federal program elimination, frontline communities and grassroots organizations held narrative, moral, and organizing leverage. The creation of federal programs like Community Change Grants, Thriving Communities, and investments in technical assistance were the result of decades of organizing by Black, Indigenous, and environmental justice movements. Groups such as the Climate Justice Alliance, Movement for Black Lives, and Just Solutions Collective played pivotal roles in shaping federal Justice40 goals and pushing for community-led governance over federal funding streams.⁹²

The clear demonstration of community need, capacity, and results (despite high federal barriers) provided evidence for pushing toward more community-controlled federal climate finance. Additionally, philanthropic partners and aligned staff within federal agencies served as internal advocates and coalition-builders for community-centered approaches.

U.S. Federal Policy Demands for Movement Resource Infrastructure

Immediate U.S. Federal Actions (2025-2027): Emergency Restoration and Protection of Community Infrastructure


The first phase requires the United States federal government to immediately restore the community-controlled climate finance infrastructure that has been systematically eliminated while establishing permanent protections against future political destruction. This emergency response acknowledges that community-controlled climate finance cannot flourish without movement organizations that have the resources and capacity to organize, advocate, and implement transformation over sustained periods rather than depending on short-term project funding or political goodwill.

Restoring Federal Direct Community Funding and Transforming Grantmaking Culture. The United States must immediately reinstate federal Community Change Grant programs with expanded funding and reduced bureaucratic barriers, acknowledging that the wholesale elimination of direct community funding represents an intentional federal attack on community self-determination that requires rapid reversal. This restoration should create permanent federal funding streams for frontline community development that cannot be eliminated by future administrations through constitutional protections or legal frameworks that treat community

92 Pellow, David. *Total Liberation: The Power and Promise of Animal Rights and the Radical Earth Movement*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

funding as rights rather than discretionary government programs. Federal policy must establish community-controlled funds that bypass federal agency gatekeeping while maintaining federal capitalization, ensuring that communities control resource allocation according to their own priorities rather than federal agency preferences or corporate intermediary agendas.

These funding restorations must include federal transformation of grantmaking culture from extractive compliance requirements toward relational grantmaking based on trust and mutual accountability between communities and federal agencies. The United States should implement standardized cultural competency training for all federal grant staff across federal agencies, acknowledging that bureaucratic barriers often reflect cultural bias and institutional racism rather than necessary oversight requirements. Federal policy must create community-designed accountability systems for federal funding rather than bureaucratic audit requirements that prioritize paperwork compliance over community outcomes and self-determination.



Our social, political and economic systems of extraction must be transformed into systems that regenerate the earth and advance human liberty globally.

–Colette Pichon Battle

Dismantling Corporate Political Control and Rebuilding Federal Community Financial Infrastructure

Eliminating Corporate Capture Through Campaign Finance Reform. The fossil fuel lobby's dominance over climate finance decisions demonstrates why campaign finance reform and corporate personhood reversal are prerequisite demands for authentic climate transformation. Corporate lobbying expenditures dwarf community organizing budgets, ensuring that fossil fuel and financial interests dominate climate policy development while systematically excluding frontline community voices from decision-making processes.

The United States must eliminate corporate campaign contributions and lobbying expenditures that enable extractive industries to block climate action while communities face escalating climate impacts. This includes overturning *Citizens United v. FEC* and repealing the legal fiction of corporate personhood that grants extractive corporations constitutional rights to influence elections and policymaking. Federal policy must establish public campaign financing systems that enable community leaders to run for office without dependence on corporate funding, creating space for authentic climate leadership to emerge from frontline communities.

We've come here because we've asked... for the CEOs of banks like Citibank, JPMorgan Chase, insurance companies like Chubb and AIG... to come to our communities, breathe the air, drink the water and get a taste of what we live every day. And they've refused to come. Yet they sit here in New York and in offices in D.C., and they make decisions for our community, decisions that are killing our children.

–Roishetta Ozane

Protecting Community Legal Tools Through Judicial Reform. Early in this paper, we identified courts as one of the few remaining tools for climate justice, making judicial protection essential for community-controlled climate finance. The reversal of corporate personhood ensures that communities retain legal standing to challenge extractive projects while preventing corporations from using constitutional rights to override community self-determination about climate investments affecting their territories.

Federal policy must protect community access to courts through expanded legal aid funding, elimination of corporate legal privileges that systematically advantage extractive industries in environmental litigation, and constitutional amendments establishing community rights to environmental health that cannot be overridden by corporate property claims. This judicial transformation ensures that communities can use legal tools to protect community-controlled climate finance from corporate interference and government retaliation.

Rebuilding Federal Community Financial Infrastructure. These grantmaking transformations must include federal restoration and expansion of the CDFI Fund with democratized governance structures that ensure community control rather than federal agency management or corporate influence over community financial institutions. The United States should prioritize federal funding for Black-led cooperatives, movement-aligned CDFIs, and mutual aid infrastructure rather than traditional nonprofits that often maintain institutional control over community development while extracting administrative fees.

Federal policy must support community-controlled financial institutions through federal policy rather than traditional banking systems that typically exclude frontline communities while extracting wealth through predatory lending and fee structures. These community-controlled alternatives can operate independently of corporate banking systems that have historically redlined frontline communities while financing extractive projects that create climate chaos affecting those same communities.

Strategic Integration of Political and Financial Transformation. Campaign finance reform and corporate personhood reversal create the political conditions necessary for community-controlled financial institutions to flourish without corporate interference. When extractive corporations cannot use unlimited campaign spending to capture regulatory agencies, community financial institutions gain space to develop alternative economic relationships based on cooperation rather than extraction.

Federal policy must sequence these reforms to ensure corporate political disempowerment occurs alongside community financial empowerment, preventing extractive industries from using their political influence to block community-controlled climate finance before alternative institutions gain sufficient power to resist corporate capture and government retaliation.

The man, the race of nation that is not prepared to risk life itself for the possession of an ideal, shall lose that ideal. If you... must be free, you yourselves must strike the blow.

–Marcus Garvey

Medium-term U.S. Federal Transformation (2027-2030): Institutionalizing Community-Led Resource Distribution and Movement Infrastructure

Building on restored community funding, the second phase requires the United States to institutionalize community control over federal climate finance distribution while building movement infrastructure that can sustain transformation efforts over decades rather than political cycles. This phase recognizes that authentic transformation requires movement organizations having the capacity to resist institutional backlash while building alternative systems that serve community rather than corporate or government interests.

Mandating Community-Controlled Federal Resource Distribution. The United States must mandate that 70% of federal climate finance flows through community-controlled intermediaries rather than federal agencies, corporate contractors, or traditional nonprofits that maintain institutional control over community development. This mandate should create permanent federal regranteeing mechanisms that center grassroots organizations in decision-making about resource allocation rather than treating community organizations as service delivery contractors implementing federal agency priorities. Federal policy must establish community veto power over federal climate investments in their territories, ensuring that communities can refuse federal projects that do not serve their self-determined development goals while maintaining access to federal resources for community-controlled alternatives.

These distribution mechanisms must include federal transformation of climate finance decision-making from agency-controlled processes to community-controlled systems where frontline organizations determine funding priorities based on community-identified needs rather than federal agency assessments or corporate proposals. The United States should establish federal legal frameworks requiring community ownership stakes in all federally funded climate infrastructure, ensuring that communities benefit economically from federal climate investments rather than only bearing environmental risks while outside entities extract economic benefits. Federal policy must create community-controlled oversight of all federal climate finance with binding authority over federal agency decisions, establishing community power over federal climate spending rather than community consultation in federal agency decision-making.

We all need to work together, because there are no jobs on a dead planet; there is no equity without rights to decent work and social protection, no social justice without a shift in governance and ambition, and, ultimately, no peace for the peoples of the world without the guarantees of sustainability.

–Sharan Burrow

Building Federal Movement Infrastructure for Sustained Transformation. This community-controlled distribution must include federal funding for peer support networks and applicant cohorts that enable community organizations to navigate federal grant processes while building movement coordination and mutual aid relationships that strengthen community power beyond individual organizational capacity. The United States should create community-controlled technical assistance delivered by frontline organizations rather than federal contractors, ensuring that capacity building serves movement goals while building community expertise rather than maintaining dependence on outside technical assistance providers. Federal policy must establish federal funding for movement organizations to provide ongoing support rather than project-based assistance, acknowledging that transformation requires sustained organizing and advocacy capacity that survives project cycles and political changes.

This movement infrastructure must include federal legal protections for community-controlled climate finance from future administrative dismantling, creating constitutional or legal frameworks that prevent future federal administrations from eliminating community funding as occurred under the current administration. The United States should build federal accountability mechanisms ensuring climate finance serves movement goals rather than federal agency priorities while creating rapid response systems that protect community climate institutions from political attacks or corporate capture attempts. Federal policy must develop federal constitutional protections for movement infrastructure that recognize community-controlled resource access as rights rather than government charity or discretionary programs subject to political elimination.

This medium-term phase enables long-term transformation by creating movement infrastructure that communities control and can protect from federal political changes while building community power for comprehensive climate finance transformation that extends beyond individual organizations or communities.

The history of the climate emergency is the history of colonialism and racial capitalism... unless something massive is really done, the climate emergency will deliver injustice along the same lines of racism and colonialism that we've known for centuries.

**–Daniel Aldana Cohen, Assistant Professor
of Sociology at UC Berkeley**

Long-term U.S. Federal Accountability (2030-2035): Permanent Movement Infrastructure for Liberation Through Resource Control

The final phase establishes permanent movement infrastructure that enables sustained transformation while shifting federal climate finance from charity or service delivery models toward community power-building that transforms relationships between communities, government, and economic systems. This phase recognizes that movement infrastructure must ultimately enable community control over economic systems rather than improved access to government or corporate-controlled resources.

In the world we live in economic growth doesn't actually mean collective economic growth, it is actually code for selective economic growth, which means, exclusive prosperity of a select group of people.

–Abhijit Naskar

Creating Constitutional and Permanent Federal Movement Infrastructure. The United States must establish constitutional protections for federal movement funding that cannot be eliminated by future administrations, corporate lobbying campaigns, or political backlash against community self-determination, acknowledging that movement infrastructure requires permanent protection from systematic attempts to eliminate community power-building capacity. This constitutional framework should create community-controlled oversight of all federal climate finance with binding authority that supersedes federal agency control, ensuring that movement organizations guide federal climate spending according to community-determined transformation goals rather than federal policy priorities or corporate interests. Federal policy must build permanent federal infrastructure for community-controlled climate finance independent of political changes, creating institutional systems that communities control and can protect from federal interference while maintaining federal resource flows that serve movement rather than government or corporate goals.

We are the wealthiest country in the history of the world, but people don't believe it because they don't feel it. The real question is where that wealth is going.

–Tamara Toles O'Laughlin

Institutionalizing Federal Movement Power Rather Than Charity or Service Delivery. These constitutional protections must include federal transformation of climate finance relationships from charity models that maintain government control toward reparative justice frameworks

that acknowledge community rights to control resources affecting their territories and futures. The United States should shift federal climate finance from delivering services to communities toward funding community power-building that enables communities to control the systems affecting their daily lives rather than accessing improved services from outside institutions. Federal policy must establish federal requirements that climate finance builds community capacity for sustained transformation rather than maintaining dependence on federal programs, corporate services, or nonprofit intermediaries that extract administrative control while providing limited community benefits.

This power-building focus must include federal accountability systems ensuring climate finance serves movement goals rather than federal agency priorities while building community capacity to resist federal political interference and corporate capture attempts that seek to co-opt movement infrastructure for government or corporate rather than community purposes. The United States should create federal support for movement organizations to guide federal climate policy rather than consulting with federal agencies about predetermined policy approaches, establishing movement leadership over federal climate transformation rather than movement participation in federal climate programs. Federal policy must institutionalize liberation through permanent community control over federal climate resources while building movement capacity to transform broader economic and political systems beyond climate finance.

Philanthropy plays a powerful role because money is needed for movement. But we need a radical shift in philanthropy to be reflective of the communities they claim to serve.

–Nikole Hannah-Jones, investigative journalist

Building Federal Movement Infrastructure for Comprehensive System Transformation. This permanent movement infrastructure must include federal support for movement organizations to coordinate comprehensive system transformation that extends beyond climate finance toward broader economic justice, racial justice, and decolonization that addresses the root causes of climate crisis rather than managing climate impacts within extractive systems. The United States should provide federal resources for movement organizations to build alternative economic systems that operate according to community control, ecological balance, and mutual aid principles rather than extraction, competition, and individual accumulation that drive climate destruction. Federal policy must support movement infrastructure that can resist and transform federal government and corporate power rather than partnering with government and corporate institutions that maintain extractive relationships with frontline communities.

This comprehensive movement infrastructure must ensure that federal climate finance transformation serves broader liberation goals while building movement capacity to protect transformation from institutional backlash, corporate co-optation, and political elimination that has historically destroyed autonomous community economic projects. The United States should establish federal legal and constitutional frameworks that protect movement infrastructure as essential democracy infrastructure rather than interest group advocacy, acknowledging that movement organizations provide the accountability and community control

necessary for federal climate finance to serve liberation rather than extraction goals. Federal policy must create permanent movement infrastructure that enables communities to build the comprehensive transformation outlined in the complete Ten Mandates framework while protecting this transformation from systematic institutional opposition that seeks to maintain extractive economic and political systems.

This long-term phase completes the resource movement-building prerequisite by establishing permanent movement infrastructure that enables sustained community control over climate finance transformation while building community power for the comprehensive economic and political transformation necessary to address climate crisis at its roots rather than managing climate impacts within systems designed for extraction and community exclusion.

POLICYMAKER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - MOVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

LEGISLATIVE VEHICLES NEEDED:

- Community Climate Infrastructure Act (restore/expand existing programs)
- Movement Protection Act (constitutional protections)
- Federal Community Finance Act (permanent CDFI expansion)
- **BUDGET IMPACT:** \$10-20 billion annually for movement infrastructure; creates permanent funding streams

IMPLEMENTATION SEQUENCE:

1. **2025:** Immediate restoration of eliminated programs
2. **2026-2027:** Expansion and constitutional protections
3. **2029+:** Permanent infrastructure with political protection

KEY COMMITTEES: House/Senate Financial Services, Judiciary, Rules, Appropriations

OPPOSITION SOURCES: Conservative foundations, corporate intermediaries, traditional grantmaking institutions

MOVEMENT ORGANIZING TIMELINE - MOVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

2025: Rapid Response & Restoration

- Q1: Emergency campaigns to restore eliminated federal programs
- Q2-Q3: Build mutual aid networks supporting eliminated programs
- Q4: Document impacts of federal divestment on community capacity

2026: Infrastructure Building

- Q1-Q2: Create movement-controlled funding intermediaries and fiscal sponsors
- Q3: Build peer networks for grant navigation and capacity building
- Q4: Develop community-controlled technical assistance programs

2027-2028: Political Protection

- Organize for constitutional protections for community climate finance
- Build electoral campaigns supporting movement infrastructure funding
- Create rapid response networks protecting community institutions

2029+: Permanent Infrastructure

- Implement community oversight of federal movement funding
- Build resilient movement infrastructure surviving political changes
- Create permanent community-controlled climate finance systems

Implementation Framework: Federal Infrastructure for Liberation

Strategic Federal Pressure Points. Coalitions of movement-aligned intermediaries, public interest lawyers, and federal agency allies can apply multi-level pressure on the federal government: lobbying for restored and increased federal funding, publishing case studies on federal access barriers, and demanding congressional oversight of federal implementation equity. Coordinated campaigns that center lived experience—like storytelling from past federal grantees who overcame barriers—can shift both public and federal agency narratives.⁹³

Federal Narrative Shift. Movements must frame federal funding cuts not as administrative losses but as intentional federal acts of divestment from Black and frontline futures. This clarity builds public pressure for restorative federal action. Federal resourcing of movement-building must be seen not as charity or policy preference but as federal infrastructure for survival and self-determination.

Federal Movement Infrastructure Resilience. The battle over federal IRA implementation revealed both the possibilities of liberatory resource flow and the fragility of gains under extractive federal governance. Going forward, the federal strategy must be to institutionalize liberation through federal law and constitutional protections, while building parallel community-controlled infrastructures resilient to federal administrative changes.


Strategic Framework: Federal Movement Resourcing

Federal movement-building means shifting power, not just distributing federal money. It means federal funding for transformation—not simply service delivery. It requires the U.S. federal government to resource movement infrastructure for sustained community control rather than maintaining federal control over community development.

⁹³ Brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico: AK Press, 2017.

These federal demands create the resource infrastructure necessary for communities to implement the other four political prerequisites through sustained movement organizing rather than depending on federal agency goodwill. Success requires federal commitment to permanent movement infrastructure that can withstand political changes while building community power for comprehensive climate finance transformation.





We do not inherit the Earth from our Ancestors, we borrow it from our Children.

–Native American Proverb

As the effects of climate change become more evident each year, we all have the opportunity to play a critical role in ensuring an inclusive response to climate change, both through equitable adaptation to climate hazards and to a just climate transition, by addressing the disproportionate impact on Black communities.

–McKinsey & Company

We're here to use our exhausted but strong and loud voices to demand dirty banks stop funding dirty projects threatening the livelihood of the people and places we love.

–Roishetta Ozane

SHIFTING POWER, NOT JUST DISTRIBUTING MONEY

Resourcing movement-building means shifting power, not just distributing money. It means funding transformation rather than simply delivery. The battle over IRA implementation revealed both the possibilities of liberatory resource flow and the fragility of gains under extractive governance. The strategy must institutionalize Black liberation while building parallel infrastructures resilient to administrative backlash.

Movement-building resources must be understood as infrastructure for survival and self-determination, not charity or policy preference. True resource justice requires communities controlling the resources and decisions that shape their lives, with federal systems serving community priorities rather than imposing external requirements on grassroots organizations.

Strategic Framework for Implementation

We offer these actions to counter, repair from, and prevent further systemic harm from climate change crises. These proposals operate at policy levels and provide pathways for communities of conscience and aligned advocates to pressure institutions and legislators. Our intended outcomes are to restrict corporate dominance and control internationally while promoting Black self-determination that creates optimal conditions to mitigate climate crises while ensuring the futurity of Black people and the most oppressed.

As we work toward restructuring current systems of domination and oppression at the policy level, we call on everyone to participate in diverse Black and collective liberatory actions beyond climate finance strategy.

We need to have a lot of different things happen at the same time... a de-linking of money and politics... building up local systems... a deep democracy.

—Jacqueline Patterson



Proposed Priority Actions by Prerequisite/Mandate

Issue	Immediate Climate Finance Policy Actions and System Changes	Community & Movement Actions	Key Goals
Historical Responsibility & Reparative Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish legal mechanisms linking historical emissions to adaptation funding • Cancel Global South debt tied to fossil fuel infrastructure • End military emissions exemptions from climate commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Global South debt repudiation campaigns • Advocate for reparations rather than aid frameworks • Build solidarity with resource sovereignty movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful enactment of historical responsibility • Production of reparative justice • End colonial extraction patterns
Legitimate Multiple Knowledge Systems (Multiple Ways of Knowing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divest from Western knowledge institutions ignoring traditional knowledge • Redirect extractive research funding to Indigenous-led knowledge preservation • Fund community-controlled cultural centers and land-based learning initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join learning spaces engaging multiple epistemologies • Support Indigenous intellectual property rights protection • Resist epistemological bullying in climate decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normalization and legitimization of multiple knowledge systems • Decenter Western knowledge supremacy • Strengthen Indigenous knowledge infrastructure
Democratic & Participatory Governance	Federal Policy Transformations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement national participatory budgeting for climate finance • Mandate frontline community representation on climate finance boards • Create binding community consent requirements for climate projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize participatory budgeting campaigns locally • Build coalitions demanding military budget reallocation • Develop alternative governance models independent of federal systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redistribute climate finance decision-making power • Build democratic infrastructure resilient to political changes • Ensure community control over local climate investments

Issue	Immediate Climate Finance Policy Actions and System Changes	Community & Movement Actions	Key Goals
International Architecture Transformation	Global System Changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support strategic sunseting of World Bank and IMF colonial institutions • Redistribute assets from dismantled colonial institutions as reparations to Black nations • Establish Global South-controlled and Black-nation controlled climate finance mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign for debt repudiation and reparative redistribution • Support resource sovereignty and nationalization movements • Build transnational alliances across anti-colonial struggles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismantle colonial financial architecture • Create community-controlled international finance • Achieve Global South financial sovereignty
Resource Movement-Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore and expand Community Change Grant-style direct community funding • Transform compliance culture to relational accountability • Rebuild and democratize CDFI funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defend existing community-controlled funding mechanisms • Build parallel financial infrastructure resilient to political changes • Create peer support networks for community finance navigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift power rather than just distribute money • Fund transformation not just delivery • Institutionalize liberation through resource control



Implementation Strategy

Phase 1: Defensive Actions (2025-2027)

Protect Existing Gains	Build Coalition Power
Defend programs like CDFIs, technical assistance infrastructure, and any remaining direct community funding mechanisms while building alternative systems.	Create strategic alliances between climate justice organizations, movement-aligned intermediaries, public interest lawyers, and agency advocates to apply multi-level pressure for policy changes.

Phase 2: Structural Transformation (2027-2030)

Redirect Financial Flows	Institutionalize Community Control
Implement policies that redirect climate finance from colonial institutions to community-controlled mechanisms, ensuring resources flow based on historical responsibility rather than current power dynamics.	Establish permanent legal frameworks protecting community consent rights, resource sovereignty, and democratic participation in climate finance decisions.

Phase 3: System Replacement (2030-2035)

Build Alternative Architecture	Achieve Financial Sovereignty
Create fully independent, community-controlled climate finance systems that can operate regardless of federal political changes and international institutional cooperation.	Establish Global South and frontline community ownership of climate finance decision-making with enforcement mechanisms preventing external interference.

Coordination and Accountability

Movement Coordination


- Link climate finance advocacy to broader anti-colonial struggles including abolition, land back, and anti-militarism movements.
- Create cross-border solidarity networks coordinating Global South and Global North frontline community strategies.
- Build public education campaigns reframing current systems as financial colonialism requiring reparative transformation.

Success Metrics

- Resource Flow: Percentage of climate finance flowing through Black led community-controlled institutions rather than colonial financial architecture.
- Decision-Making Power: Level of Black community control over climate finance affecting their territories.
- System Independence: Resilience of Black community-controlled finance to political and institutional backlash.

These federal movement infrastructure demands complete the Five Political Prerequisites necessary for Black community-controlled climate finance to flourish. By securing historical accountability, legitimating multiple knowledge systems, advancing democratic governance, transforming international architecture, and resourcing movement-building, we create the protective conditions that enable Black communities to safely implement the comprehensive transformation outlined in the complete Ten Mandates framework.



A close-up photograph of a person's face, smiling, with their hands held out in front of them, cupping a large quantity of light-colored, unroasted coffee beans. The person is wearing a light blue t-shirt. The background is blurred, showing green foliage.

Success isn't about how much money you make; it's about the difference you make in people's lives.

–Michelle Obama

You can't talk about ending the slums without first saying profit must be taken out of slums... Now this means that we are treading in difficult water, because it really means that we are saying that something is wrong with capitalism.

–Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The people who are closest to the problem are most able to design the solution. And the brilliance, the innovation of Black leadership as it relates to climate justice is really a living testament to that fact.

–Jacqueline Patterson

CONCLUSION: THE 2029 OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S. CLIMATE FINANCE TRANSFORMATION

The Five Political Prerequisites outlined in this encyclopedia represent more than policy recommendations—they constitute the protective infrastructure necessary for community-controlled climate finance to survive and flourish in the United States and globally. Historical responsibility, multiple ways of knowing, democratic governance, international architecture transformation, and movement resource-building create the foundation that enables frontline communities to implement comprehensive climate finance transformation without facing the systematic destruction that eliminated previous autonomous economic projects.

Why These Prerequisites Must Come First

The current administration's wholesale elimination of climate justice programs demonstrates precisely why political prerequisites matter. From the Community Change Grants to the CDFI Fund, from Justice40 technical assistance to environmental justice advisory councils—every program that moved resources toward community control has been systematically dismantled. This pattern repeats globally when communities assert resource sovereignty: economic sanctions against Burkina Faso's gold nationalization, NATO intervention following Libya's gold dinar proposal, and ongoing economic warfare against Venezuela's oil sovereignty.

Without protective political conditions, even the most innovative community-controlled climate finance initiatives face predictable institutional retaliation. The five prerequisites address the power structures that have historically destroyed autonomous Black economic projects, creating the political foundation necessary for transformation to take root and survive.

We were in support of the Justice40 framework that will ensure that this investment actually makes it to the people who need it the most. However, none of these community organizations were Black and Indigenous. Black and Indigenous communities are not invited to the conversations. I do not feel super safe as a Black person around this legislation because it still does not speak to the direct issues that my community is having. So it does not guarantee Black futures.

—Valencia Gunder

The Path Forward: What Success Looks Like by 2030

Success means fundamentally shifting who controls climate finance decisions and resources. By 2030, we envision:

- **Climate reparations flowing directly** to frontline communities through community-controlled institutions rather than extractive intermediaries.
- **Community knowledge systems** legitimized in federal research funding, international climate negotiations, and policy-making processes.
- **Frontline communities controlling decisions** over all climate finance affecting their territories through binding democratic governance mechanisms.
- **International financial institutions restructured** to support rather than punish resource sovereignty and community-controlled development.
- **Movement organizations resourced** for sustained transformation rather than funding cycles, with constitutional protections against future political elimination.

This transformation requires understanding that climate finance change demands confronting the colonial foundations of our current economic system. We cannot solve problems created by extractive systems using the same frameworks that generated the crisis. True transformation requires redistributing power to those most affected by climate impacts while building community-controlled alternatives capable of withstanding institutional resistance.

The 2029 Political Opportunity

The upcoming election cycle represents our strategic opportunity to implement these prerequisites. Rather than appealing to the current administration actively dismantling climate programs, we build implementation blueprints for leadership committed to reparative justice and ecological survival. The prerequisites approach recognizes that political transformation takes time—movements must organize now, policies must be developed throughout 2025-2028, and implementation must begin immediately in 2029.

This timeline acknowledges political realities while maintaining transformative vision. Communities cannot wait for perfect political conditions, but they need protective infrastructure to survive institutional backlash. The five prerequisites create this protection while building toward comprehensive transformation.

Strategic Framework: From Prerequisites to Complete Transformation

These Five Political Prerequisites serve as Component 2 of a comprehensive transformation strategy. Component 1—the complete [Ten Mandates](#) framework—provides the systems blueprint for transformed climate finance. Component 3—the forthcoming community implementation guide—will offer practical roadmaps for immediate community action on the remaining mandates.

The prerequisites focus specifically on the political changes that must happen first: securing accountability for historical extraction, challenging knowledge monopolies, building authentic democracy, transforming international control, and resourcing movements for sustained transformation. Only with these protective conditions secured can communities safely build the comprehensive transformation envisioned in the complete framework.

Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained.

–Helen Keller

Next Steps for Different Audiences

For Movement Organizations:

- Develop campaign strategies around each prerequisite, focusing on 2025-2028 organizing toward 2029 implementation.
- Build coalitions connecting climate finance transformation to broader liberation struggles including abolition, land back, and anti-militarism movements.
- Create educational programs helping communities understand how climate finance connects to their daily struggles for housing, healthcare, and economic security.
- Develop rapid response networks protecting community climate institutions from future political attacks.

For Policymakers and Elected Officials:

- Draft federal legislation implementing each prerequisite, beginning with historical responsibility frameworks and community control requirements.
- Build relationships with frontline communities to ensure community-controlled implementation rather than top-down policy development.
- Prepare oversight mechanisms ensuring federal climate finance serves community rather than corporate interests.
- Create constitutional protections for community climate finance rights that cannot be eliminated by future administrations.

For Researchers and Academic Institutions:

- Redirect research funding toward supporting community-led solutions rather than top-down technological interventions.
- Center community knowledge in research design, implementation, and evaluation rather than treating communities as research subjects.
- Build accountable relationships with movement organizations, ensuring research serves organizing rather than extracting knowledge from communities.
- Develop new methodologies for measuring transformation success that center community-defined indicators over technocratic metrics.

For Communities and Local Leaders:

- Engage with local and state-level policy development that prefigures federal transformation, including participatory budgeting and community control initiatives.
- Build local climate finance infrastructure that can connect to broader transformation efforts while serving immediate community needs.
- Develop organizing capacity around each prerequisite, understanding how federal transformation enables local community control.
- Create mutual aid and solidarity networks that provide resilience during political transitions and backlash.

For Funders and Philanthropic Organizations:

- Shift resources toward movement infrastructure and community-controlled institutions rather than service delivery or extractive program models.
- Support long-term organizing capacity rather than short-term project funding, recognizing that transformation requires sustained effort.
- Allow funds to be directly controlled by frontline communities rather than maintaining philanthropic control over community development.
- Build accountability mechanisms ensuring funding serves movement goals rather than donor priorities or institutional interests.

*When I liberate myself, I liberate others.
If you don't speak out ain't nobody
going to speak out for you.*

—Fannie Lou Hamer

The Imperative for Action

The climate crisis demands transformation, not reform. Incremental changes within extractive systems will not address the scale and urgency of climate impacts facing frontline communities. The Five Political Prerequisites outlined in this encyclopedia create the foundation for the complete system change outlined in the [Ten Mandates](#) framework—moving us from an extractive economy that destroys communities toward a regenerative economy that centers Black liberation and global justice.

The choice before us is clear:

Continue attempting climate solutions within systems designed to extract from frontline communities, or build the political infrastructure necessary for community-controlled alternatives. The five prerequisites provide the roadmap for building this infrastructure, creating the conditions where transformation efforts can flourish rather than face systematic elimination.

From Political Prerequisites to Liberation

Climate finance transformation through a Black Liberation lens offers more than a pathway to addressing climate change—it presents an opportunity to fundamentally reimagine and rebuild the financial systems that shape our world. The prerequisites outlined in this encyclopedia are not endpoints but foundations for the comprehensive transformation that frontline communities deserve and the climate crisis demands.

Success requires bold action and sustained commitment from all sectors of society, but leadership must come from frontline communities who have been building alternatives despite systematic opposition. The Five Political Prerequisites create protective conditions where this leadership can flourish, ensuring that climate finance serves liberation goals rather than maintaining systems of extraction and control.

The path ahead will not be easy. We face entrenched interests, systemic barriers, and the urgency of the climate timeline. But we also carry the strength of generations of resistance and innovation, the power of coordinated movement organizing, and the creativity of communities building alternatives. The solutions we need already exist, rooted in the wisdom, resilience, and innovation of Black and frontline communities worldwide.


*In all things that are purely social we
can be as separate as the fingers, yet
one as the hand in all things essential
to mutual progress.*

—Booker T. Washington

The 2029 opportunity represents our chance to implement these prerequisites and model a different relationship between communities and climate finance. By securing these political foundations, we create the conditions for climate finance transformation that serves life rather than extraction, that builds collective wealth rather than individual accumulation, that restores rather than depletes.

The time for prerequisites is now. The time for transformation is 2029. The time for community-controlled climate finance is upon us.





*My humanity is bound up in yours, for
we can only be human together.*

–Bishop Desmond Tutu

*The most common way people give
up their power is by thinking they don't
have any.*

–Alice Walker

Add your voice here...