RACISM

The Racism That Upends the Cradle
Black Children Caught in the Syndemic Crosshairs

25 Ways That Historic and Persistent Inequities Compound Jeopardy for Black Children Amidst Climate Change, COVID-19, and the Economic Crisis

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Systemic Racism Paves Multiple Routes of Vulnerability

The definitive atrocity, slavery -- in which Black people were commoditized and women were viewed as property, critical for breeding more slaves or for serving as nursemaids to white women's babies or sexual slaves to the owners -- laid the foundation for the struggles faced by Black communities today. Slavery is not a thing of the past, but a persistent reality for more than 40 million people around the globe.

> # "The slave went free. Stood a brief moment in the sun. Then moved back again towards slavery."
>
> ## W.E.B. Dubois

The pervasive ways that systemic racism continues to oppress and enslave proliferate, including: the poisoning of our communities with toxins rendering our air unbreathable, our water undrinkable, our soil unsafe to grow food or serve as a playground for children. The war on drugs that turned our communities into battlegrounds. The income and wealth disparities. The poor housing, childcare, and school environments. The exploitive labor conditions. The dearth of healthy and nutritious foods in our communities. The high rates of maternal and infant mortality. The cancer and asthma clusters. The racial profiling, police brutality, incarceration, and state sponsored murder of Black men and boys in particular. The caging of those whose lands become uninhabitable and who come seeking refuge. The list goes on. And Black children, the most vulnerable and powerless in our systems, bear the brunt of these inequities.

Black children experience the trauma of racism even before they are born.

Children born of families that experienced enslavement bear the genetic vestiges of trauma. Generations of Black children in the United States were born to parents who were enslaved, working under harsh conditions, beaten into compliance, and murdered for defiance. Some were birthed in the fields while their mothers were picking cotton -- not even afforded the time to go home, much less go to a hospital. Or they were born in slave quarters, without proper temperature control or sanitation or any of the trappings of respected and treasured humanity. Or they were born to parents on the run, suffused with terror for their lives in a forest or otherwise, as they evaded capture. Through the subsequent generations, that trauma has left scars in the DNA of Black children. And each generation is reinjured anew by continuous systemic and interpersonal racism.

Maternal stress. The cruelties of structural racism are inscribed on the bodies and in the psyches of Black mothers. They are reinforced afresh every day, resulting in an accumulation of stress that sabotages Black women's health and the health of their infants. The findings are stark: Black women exhibit high levels of stress at twice the rate of white women and are five times more likely to report adverse physical and emotional symptoms. There is nothing inherently different between Black mothers and white mothers: the "weathering hypothesis" points to a lifetime of enduring socioeconomic disadvantage as the culprit.[1]

Infant mortality. The deleterious effects of structural racism on Black mothers are passed on to their children: Black infants are twice as likely to die as white infants. This disparity is not explained by differences in income, education or even access to health care. It is an accumulation over generations of physical and emotional stress -- a mix of all these things coming to a devastating, deadly head.[2]

Black children are shackled, tracked, and herded from birth onward.

Post birth, Black children are constrained by literal, figurative, and systemic confinement. This limits children's personal horizons and renders them more vulnerable to the societal shocks that we are experiencing today. And, by limiting the potential of Black children, these constraints impede progress for the nation as a whole.

Lack of economic mobility. The dubious promise of economic mobility in the U.S. is rarely extended to Black children. In fact, Black children born in the top fifth of income distribution have only an 18% chance of staying there into adulthood, while their white counterparts have a 41.1% chance. On the flip side, when starting in the bottom fifth of household incomes, 10.6% of white children manage to make it to the top fifth. By contrast, only 2.5% of Black children born in the same position attain that economic summit.[3]

Segregation and redlining. Many Black children grow up within the confines of impoverished, segregated neighborhoods, a legacy of racist federal "redlining" policies. Formerly redlined neighborhoods are associated with a broad range of harms, including exposure to extreme heat and air pollution,[4] food insecurity,[5] flooding, [6] housing insecurity and displacement,[7] segregated schools,[8] and more. These harms touch Black children at every stage of development and may linger for life, even if they are able to extract themselves from the circumstances of their childhood.

Born to imprisoned mothers. Black children are subjected to the destabilizing and life-altering effects of the profit-motivated mass incarceration system in the U.S. The mainstream conversation often considers the impact on children of an incarcerated father but overlooks the particular impact of incarcerating Black women who are mothers or are expecting. Mandatory minimum sentencing often guarantees that incarcerated mothers will be absent from formative years in their children's lives. While Black women overall are twice as likely to be imprisoned as white women, Black women ages 18 to 19 are three times more likely to be imprisoned as their white counterparts. If current incarceration trends continue, 1 in 18 Black women will be imprisoned at some point in their lifetime.[9] Furthermore, the vast majority of incarcerated women are also mothers—mostly to young children.[10] Prior to incarceration, most of these women were the primary caretakers of their children.[11] Half are confined in facilities located more than 100 miles from their families, and more than one-third (38%) will not see their children even once while incarcerated.[12] The myriad risk factors that affect Black children may have greater impact for those who lose the protective presence of a mother. Children of incarcerated parents are more vulnerable to negative outcomes such as mental health challenges, delinquency, and victimization. On top of this, social support is less available to children of incarcerated parents than to those who are separated from a parent due to death or divorce.[13]

Siwatu-Salama Ra was convicted on felonious assault and felony firearm charges in 2018 after she waved an unloaded, registered gun to fend off an attack on herself and her family. She was incarcerated in her third trimester of pregnancy. Ra's case drew national attention and outrage over the conviction of a black woman with no prior offenses who claimed self-defense in a "Stand Your Ground" state. An environmental and racial justice advocate, Ra is also a registered gun owner with a concealed-carry permit and has said she used the gun to ward off a woman who was trying to hit her and her mother with a car. While her attorneys attempted to have Ra released on bond until her son's birth, the Wayne County, Michigan Circuit Court kept her incarcerated through her high-risk pregnancy."[14] As David French of the National Review states, "She gave birth while imprisoned, and her child was taken from her two days later. She spent months separated from her newborn – after a conviction under the wrong legal standard."[15]

"Teachers hold you back, and want you to know your place...you score good grades, you are accused of plagiarism... they assume we are dumb."

Anonymous Black Youth

--Valuing Voices: Focus Groups of Students and Parents[16]

School tracking. Black children are frequently confined to restrictive and limiting academic paths. Unlike ability groups, in which small groups of students are temporarily grouped according to subject-specific mastery, "tracking" has long-term, permanent implications for students. School tracking can be traced back to Reconstruction as a tool to perpetuate racial segregation and to limit educational and professional possibilities. In a contemporary setting, tracking uses problematic standardized measures to determine students' intelligence; students and their families have very little input on this. Students of color are disproportionately placed in non-college tracks with teachers who are less invested in their education, and their economic mobility suffers for it.[17]

School-to-prison pipeline. School disciplinary policies target Black children and teenagers, resulting in early contact with the criminal justice system. Zero-tolerance policies empower overtly and subconsciously biased teachers and school resource officers to punish Black students. Take, for example, the fact that white students are mostly punished for documentable offenses while Black students are often punished for such subjective missteps as "disrespect," "defiance," and "profanity." Study after study shows that Black children are disproportionately disciplined, which often correlates with repeating grades, dropping out, and delinquency. There have been no studies to suggest that Black students are more likely to misbehave than non-Black students.[18]

> *"America paints a very clear picture of how I should view myself. America shows me that my Blackness is a threat, and I am treated as such. I actually didn't learn about being Black and what that would mean for me until I was seven years old."*
>
> *—Lonnie Chavis, 12-year-old actor on "This is Us."[19]*

Immigration. With only 4% of the global population, the U.S. accounts for 25% of the emissions that drive climate change.[20] Yet it is the countries of the global South, which have done the least to cause the climate crisis, that suffer its worst impacts.[21] Increasing numbers of refugees are fleeing climate-related drought and disaster – as well as political turmoil caused by U.S. support for corrupt regimes – in Haiti, Central America, and parts of Africa. But when people come to the U.S. border after being driven from their lands, they are not offered refuge. Instead, their children may be put in cages, as immigration officials on horseback use their reins as whips to corral and herd families.[22]

"Black migrants face a lot of challenges that other migrant groups do not face or don't face to the same degree, much of that rooted in the racial inequality, the anti-Blackness that is inherently part of this country. When we see who, for example, is being let into the United States and we look at Black migrants, we don't have the same numbers. We're very dependent upon visas, such as diversity visas. And we find that over time, there's always been these attacks on the types of visas that allow Black migrants to be connected to their families here in the United States. But as Black migrants, we find ourselves separated through the criminal sanction system, through child services and the social services system, separated in detention, separated by deportation.

-- Nana Gyamfi, Executive Director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration.[23]

Lack of broadband access. Access to information is also constrained for Black children. The "digital divide" refers to the fact that many people of color, lower-income families, and rural residents lack access to a reliable internet connection. Indeed, one in three Black, Latino, and Native American kids lack internet access. This impacts educational attainment, socialization, and access to various resources, including employment services and telehealth. This is not a new issue, though its implications were highlighted when schools adopted hybrid and fully remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The divide is exceptionally pronounced in Southern, rural areas with higher Black populations where internet service providers are disinclined to invest in infrastructure, considering it to be unprofitable.[24]

Lack of transit access. Transit is beneficial for public health and the environment, but many low-income neighborhoods lack access to reliable transit options. This limits mobility – geographic, social, and economic – for Black families.[25] Black families are more dependent on public transportation, because they are three times less likely to have a vehicle at home than their white counterparts, and four times as likely to use mass transit. But in many areas, Black families lack access to fast, convenient rail service, relying instead on slower and less-reliable bus systems.[26] This means that workers of color are disproportionately subjected to commutes of 60 minutes or longer each way, trapping them close to home, and burning through their free time.[27]

Disproportionate impact of climate change and climate grief. Last year, the EPA detailed the myriad ways that climate change disproportionately impacts communities of color, especially Black communities.[28] Recently, there has been a rise in examination of how impacts of climate change directly tie to the proliferation of climate grief and other mental health concerns for children in particular. For Black children, this means there is double jeopardy. Climate anxiety is a very real illness for young people: a study published in *The Lancet* in 2021 found that half of people aged 16-25 reported climate distress or anxiety that affected their daily lives.[29] Children are uniquely vulnerable to environmental exposures and disasters.[30,31] Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and unpredictable, destroying homes and livelihoods. That, in turn, can lead to psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and PTSD in children (and adults). Young people under the age of 14 years make up about 41% of the global population,[32] and nearly half of the world's 2.2 billion children are at an extremely high risk from climate change impacts.[33]

"Black people are 40 percent more likely than other groups to currently live in places where extreme temperatures driven by climate change will result in higher mortality rates. In addition, African Americans are 34 percent more likely to live in areas where childhood asthma diagnoses are likely to be exacerbated by climate change."

– Darryl Fears and Dino Grandoni, Washington Post[34]

Black children are underserved by systems and excluded from the commons, increasing their vulnerability to shocks and stresses.

Driven by conditions such as the racial wealth divide and race-based discriminatory practices, including the legacy of redlining, Black children have unequal access to the commons. As such, they experience differential quality and affordability of basic goods and services -- from food, water, and education, to energy, housing, health care, and more. Material conditions and systemic targeting have resulted in circumstances that have stacked the deck against Black children.

Access to active mobility. While car alternatives are in vogue for white and higher-income people, walking and bicycling are already prevalent among low-income people and people of color -- by necessity. Black and Latino children are more likely to bike or walk to school than white students. And yet, because low-income neighborhoods and communities of color are less likely than high-income neighborhoods to have bicycle lanes, sidewalks and greenways, these mobility options are fraught with danger. While active transportation has positive health outcomes in safe situations, the lack of safety measures in Black and low-income areas make this practice potentially fatal. Fatality rates for Black cyclists are 30% higher than for their white counterparts. Fatality rates for pedestrians are twice as high in low-income metro areas than in affluent neighborhoods nationally. In a study of one metropolitan region, pedestrians in the poorest census tracts were 6.3 times more likely to become injured than those in the richest.[35]

Food insecurity. Black American households face hunger at a rate more than twice that of white, non-Hispanic households. And getting enough to eat is a constant struggle for 1 in 4 African American children. Eight of the 10 counties with the highest food insecurity rates in the nation are at least 60% African American. According to the USDA,[36] 26% of Black American households and 18.5% of Hispanic households are food insecure, both of which are higher than the national average of 12.3%. Persistent hunger in children can have devastating effects such as: prolonged stress and feelings of shame; chronic illness; malnutrition; impaired cognitive function and brain development; lessened academic achievement; and even suicidality.[37]

Polluted air. Nonwhite populations, especially Black Americans, face higher risks from particle pollution.[38] Exposure to air pollutants, including fine particulate matter (PM2.5), results in higher incidence of premature death in Black children[39,40] and predisposes

them to heart attacks, strokes, impaired brain development, lung disease, obesity, and cancer.[41,42] Asthma is the leading chronic illness of childhood in the United States and the leading cause of school absenteeism.[43] Because of their disproportionate exposure to air pollution, Black children are four times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma, and 10 times more likely to die of asthma than white children.[44]

Rochelle is a 35-year-old Black woman who grew up in a rural area of South Carolina just off Interstate 85. Like her siblings, Rochelle was diagnosed with asthma before she entered kindergarten. And, as with her siblings, Rochelle's parents held her back from trying out for sports teams and kept her inside in the warmer months. While they were a middle-class family with what they thought was decent health insurance, they still shouldered a heavy economic burden, including co-pays for urgent-care visits, inhalers, nebulizers, albuterol, periodic hospital stays, days out of school and days off from work. Rochelle and her siblings got used to their chronic illness and the stress that came with it. But when Rochelle studied nursing at Columbia University, she learned that asthma onset and severity are linked to proximity to major highways. She thought back to her childhood home, where thousands of cars and trucks passed by her neighborhood daily. Rochelle also connected the dots to the heart disease that her mother, uncle, and an older sibling were diagnosed with, along with the cancer treatments her cousins were undergoing. She began to wonder about her own future health and became more determined than ever to utilize her public health training to educate and protect her community.

Polluted water. Clean, safe, accessible, and affordable water is essential for life, and the right to water is enshrined in international law and United Nations declarations. However, clean water is not accessible to everyone -- especially Black children. Aging water systems, inadequate wastewater disposal,[45] industrial sites leaking contaminants into the water supply, and the climate crisis present a myriad of challenges to clean water access. Violations of the Safe Drinking Water Act are more common in low-income communities and communities of color.[46] In part because of lead-contaminated drinking water, Black children are three times more likely than white children to have elevated blood lead levels. Bottle-fed infants, who consume mostly formula mixed with tap water, can ingest high levels of lead. Rates of breastfeeding longevity and exclusivity are lower[47] among Black mothers, placing their children at high risk for waterborne contamination. Exposure to contaminated water contributes to a maternal and infant health crisis that impacts women of color most.[48] Discriminatory land use, segregation, and unfair zoning policies have forced many Black communities into areas near polluting industrial facilities that contaminate drinking water.

"The Black Women's Health Imperative is deeply aware of how contaminated water impacts the health of pregnant mothers and children. In Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and other states, the deteriorating municipal water infrastructure is having a devastating effect on African American women and children."[49]

Amir and his wife Nina have lived in a suburb outside of Flint, Michigan most of their lives. Nina was pregnant with their second child when the Flint water injustice was uncovered. Both parents were very nervous about any potential lead exposure to their unborn child and brought their concerns to Nina's prenatal care provider. On two different occasions, Amir and Nina were assured that the baby was fine and that her risk of lead exposure through their drinking water was low. Unfortunately, when Nina gave birth to their son, his blood lead levels were very high. Worried about their three-year-old daughter, who had begun to show some developmental delays, Amir and Nina had her tested for poisoning; she also had high blood lead levels. The scenario for this Black Michigan family could and should have been prevented.

Lack of quality childcare. With many infants and young children spending up to 50 hours in childcare weekly,[50] this environment is very important to children's growth and development. But Black families face significant challenges in finding – and affording – quality childcare.[51] As a result, Black children are more likely to experience poor quality care.[52] Childcare quality is known to influence development and well-being throughout childhood and beyond.[53] Perhaps as a result, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study found cognitive gaps among Black children as early as nine months of age, and those gaps widen by 24 months.[54]

Unhealthy schools. Air pollution around schools is linked to poorer student health and academic performance. Black children comprise 81% of students at schools in communities with the top 10% most polluted air.[55] Children at schools in the areas with the highest pollution levels also have the lowest attendance rates and the highest number of students failing to meet the state's educational testing standards.[56] It is likely that poor air quality affects students' health, which leads to missed school days and diminished academic performance.

Bias in school. Black boys in particular grow up adversely impacted by a society that consistently sends negative, biased messages about their behavior, identity, and prescribed future.[57] As young as age 10, Black boys are generally viewed as older than they actually are and as less innocent than white boys. In a similar pattern, Black teens are viewed as adults.[58] This implicit bias shows up early in life: Black children make up only 19% of preschool enrollees, but account for 47% of preschoolers suspended one or more times.[59,60]

Under-resourced schools. Decades of under-investment in Black communities means that Black children are more likely to attend schools with fewer economic resources and less technology to support remote instruction.[61] This deficit was especially harmful during the pandemic: during the 2020-2021 school year, one survey found that Black children connected with teachers less than once per week.[62] With Black parents more likely to be essential workers with limited or no ability to work from home, their children received less academic supervision during remote learning.[63]

Ahian is a Black five-year-old boy growing up in Louisiana. His family sends him to the childcare facility that is closest and most affordable. Just about every day Ahian enjoys recess time outside with his friends, a simple activity that places him a great risk. Because the childcare facility is located a half mile from a chemical plant, Ahian and his friends are exposed to harmful air emissions from the facility. As he prepares to attend elementary school, his health risks will only magnify. His elementary school is also close to the chemical plant and is positioned between two additional industrial facilities that have been investigated for water supply contamination.

Persistently substandard health care. In 2018, 4.3 million American children were uninsured,[64] with the majority living in the South. With the Affordable Care Act and increased coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), that number has been reduced to an estimated .5 million children. However, Black children are more likely than their white peers to lack continuous health care coverage.[65] When combined with high rates of substandard health care, the negative public health implications are many. Black Americans are more likely to be underinsured and receive low-quality health care. Health care "deserts," where primary care providers are few, are predominantly found in Black neighborhoods.[66] This is a critical point as primary health care professionals are key in the delivery of preventive check-ups and care. One reason for this gap in care could be the challenge of financially sustaining a practice in Black neighborhoods, where many families are uninsured or covered by Medicaid.

Unhealthy neighborhoods. In 1987, the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice published the groundbreaking study and report *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*, which showed that race was a major factor in the placement of hazardous waste facilities.[67] Follow-up reports in 2007 and 2019 revealed that little had changed with regard to the racial and socioeconomic disparities of commercial hazardous waste facility siting.[68,69] Black families are more likely to reside in inadequate and unsafe housing[70] and in neighborhoods that are closer in proximity to polluting industrial facilities and high-traffic roads.[71,72] Moreover, Black children often grow up in neighborhoods with less access to healthy green space, which is critical to child development.[73,74]

"The climate movement needs to address issues of environmental racism because it is a huge part in the climate movement, yet it is treated by most as a nonissue."
—Amariyanna "Mari" Copeny, 12-year-old Flint, MI resident.[75]

Housing insecurity. The current housing crisis has been predominantly fueled by intentional disinvestment in affordable housing and rental assistance programs.[76] A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, 40% of Black households with children reported housing insecurity – meaning they had little or no confidence in their ability to make their next housing payment.[77] Before the pandemic, Black families accounted for 40% of the nation's homeless, though they comprise only 14% of the U.S. population; half of those homeless families have children.[78,79]

Adrienne is a 12-year-old Black girl who has lived in a fence line community all her life. Her Detroit neighborhood abounds with concrete and polluting industries, with very limited access to parks or recreational green space. Adrienne struggles with her weight, asthma, and a learning disability that has made her educational journey much harder than it should be. Her parents and a few other family members have worked at a local industrial facility for years, making it challenging to hold the company accountable for its contributions to air and water pollution. In addition to concerns about health and safety, Adrienne's family has often struggled to pay the mortgage, adding to the household's stress and anxiety.

Energy burden. Energy is essential for heating, cooling, illumination and more. It is necessary to keep food and medicine at the correct temperature, to operate medical equipment, to prepare food, to read, and to access information technology. Black households account for almost half of the energy-poor households in the U.S., putting them at far

greater risk of utility shutoffs than any other racial group.[80] This is due, in part, to racist housing policies that push Black families into older, energy-inefficient homes that require more energy to heat and cool – resulting in a greater "energy burden" than higher-income and white families.[81] When families cannot access affordable energy, they are forced to make choices that may deprive them of critical life resources, causing extreme stress. Black households in the U.S. make serious sacrifices to pay utility bills – forgoing health care or education, for example – at a rate three times that of white households.[82] Some families compensate for energy deprivation by using space heaters, candles, and generators -- with deadly results.

Parents imprisoned by the carceral state. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, and the overwhelming burden of contact with the system has fallen on communities of color, especially Black Americans.[83] As a result, Black children are twice as likely as their white counterparts to have an imprisoned family member. As many as one in ten Black students has an incarcerated parent; one in four has a parent who is or has been incarcerated. Independent of other social and economic characteristics, children of incarcerated parents are more likely to: drop out of school; develop learning disabilities, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); misbehave in school; suffer from migraines, asthma, high cholesterol, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder; experience housing instability or homelessness; lack food and health care; and have developmental, emotional, and behavioral problems.[84] The discriminatory incarceration of African American parents is an important cause of their children's lowered performance, especially in schools where the trauma of parental incarceration is concentrated.

Traumatic childhood events. Black children endure more frequent and sustained frightening or threatening situations than white children. This is compounded by the fact that they often have fewer resources to protect themselves, reduce stress, or mitigate stress to a tolerable level. This was already the case before the recent pandemic and accompanying economic crisis, which deepened a preexisting economic divide. Climate change and its impacts, including disasters and shifts in agricultural yields, adds more layers of trauma. When a frightening or threatening experience is severe, frequent, or sustained, it turns into "toxic stress," which disrupts the brain and body's responses. Traumatic events can be psychological, physical, and sexual abuse; parental incarceration; witnessing domestic or neighborhood violence; experiencing financial hardship or homelessness; experiencing discrimination; being removed from the natal home and placed in foster care; experiencing a loss or damage of property from burglary or a house fire; or having a family member pass away. Black children are 45% more likely to be exposed to one example of the above, 29% more likely to be exposed to two experiences, and 21% more likely to experience three or more.[85] Overall, Black children are more likely than white children to experience trauma that could lead to toxic stress.

"I'm often contemplating girlhood and Black girlhood and what it means to attempt to find joy and family and community in situations that call for basic survival."

–Leila Mottley, sophomore at Smith College.[86]

HOPE: Resistance and Resilience Borne of Struggle

Though it shouldn't have to be this way, Black families have well-honed resilience rooted in the culture and heritage of African tradition. That resilience was further conditioned by oppression experienced at the hands of colonizers and subsequently by corporate, governmental, and other entities that drive racism. It is egregiously unjust that our families are forced time and time again to bounce back, only to face the continued assaults of racism.

However, our communities have endured through neighborhood solidarity, faith houses, strong family ties, fraternities and sororities, and other civic organizations. Strong community ties began in our lands of origin and carried through with the Underground Railroad, mutual aid, and other cooperative practices and institutions we've developed and nurtured. We know how to live in harmony with the land and with each other. We know how to organize and build power, whether it is for equal education or democracy and beyond. We know how to resist injustice and to push for what's right!

SOLUTION: Deeply Rooted, Systemic Inequities Require Bold, Transformational Shifts

Given the intersectional, historical, and systemically pervasive disparities summarized above, real solutions call for radical systems change. We won't be successful if we merely tweak or even reform a system that is doing exactly what it is designed to do, which is to enclose wealth and power in the hands of a few through extraction and exploitation. We must build new systems that center regeneration, cooperation, deep democracy, and caring for the sacred -- including our relationships with each other and with Mother Earth.

As such, we recommend five key areas of focus to restructure systems and society to advance principles of the Just Transition Framework:

Deconstruct societal and systemic racism.

- Integrate anti-racism and pro-Black Liberation principles/standards/ accountability measures, as well as monitoring and enforcement, in all corporations, organizations, and institutions and other formal and informal groups utilizing tools such as the GARE Racial Equity Toolkit. racialequityalliance.org

- Establish Showing Up for Racial Justice groups in all communities to provide avenues for allyship. surj.org

- Standardize anti-oppression training as part of all organizing. organizingforpower.org

Establish a solid, unassailable system for environmental protection.

- Ensure that there are stringent standards and adequate investment in monitoring and enforcement of:

  - Clean air;
  - Clean water;
  - Uncontaminated soil;
  - Toxin-free building materials;
  - Toxin-free household products; and
  - Toxin-free early learning and K-12 environments.

Dismantle the corporatocracy and advance deep democracy.

- Enact campaign finance reform and delink monied interests from policymaking.

- Reverse Citizens United and eliminate any measures enabling corporate personhood.

- Ensure representational governance at all levels, from federal to state to municipal.

- Increase participation in local government: establish transparent, participatory processes at water boards, school boards, zoning boards and community advisory boards, as well as participatory budgeting.

- Address the challenges with state pre-emption.

Transform the systems for ensuring universal access to the commons so that human rights are centered in all.

- Secure *economic wellbeing* with measures including reparations and wealth transfer, as well as a jobs guarantee and universal basic income. Universal Basic Income or Job Guarantee? Why Not Both? - The American Prospect

- Within the context of a solidarity relationship with Indigenous cousins regarding defining *land sovereignty* in unceded territory, establish a system that ensures equal access to safe and affordable housing and land. LANDBACK; Black Land & Liberation Initiative

- Transform our *energy system* to one that has a central purpose of providing energy for all needs, versus the current investor-owned utility model which has as its primary purpose providing maximum profits to a relative handful of investors. The 100% Project

- Advance *local food systems* that provide healthy and affordable food options that are produced in resonance with sound regenerative land practices while creating local jobs. US Food Sovereignty Alliance

- Ensure that access to *quality water* is afforded to all. Climate Water Equity & Clean Water for All

- Support *transportation justice* to provide communities with access to safe, reliable, and affordable modes of transportation including public transit, walking, and biking to ensure access to livelihoods, education, faith practices, etc. National Campaign for Transit Justice

- Uphold the right to universal, equitable, affordable, and culturally competent *health care*, ensuring that everyone has what they need to be healthy. Indivisible

- Advance *transformation of the immigration system*, including an end to detentions and deportations, in favor of a world where hands are extended in peace and care across borders, people are welcomed and

afforded opportunities to thrive when they come to the United States, and no one feels forced to leave home or risk death in pursuit of a decent life for their family. Dream Defenders

- Universalize **access to broadband** as a gateway to critical information about resources such as legal assistance, health, employment opportunities, social connectivity, and more. edweek.org

- Ensure that our **education system** centers equal access and quality regardless of residence, race, gender, immigration status, or any other factors. As such, early learning facilities and K-12 schools must be publicly financed instead of relying on property taxes – a system that deepens and exacerbates inequities. The Education Justice Network

- Advance a paradigm shift from dependency on synthetic chemical production to fuel our economy to **valuing human health over profit**: Cancer Free Economy Network

- Safety and security measures must center opportunities as an antidote to circumstances of desperation that drive some illegal actions. We must work towards **abolishing prisons** and instead invest in rehabilitation models and preventative mental health services. Critical Resistance

Uphold healing justice/restorative justice…

- …in our relationship with Earth—Touching the Earth, Falling in Love with Mother Earth

- …in our relationships with each other--Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation

A CALL TO CONSCIOUSNESS-- A CALL TO ACTION

We owe it to Black children and other marginalized populations to follow in the footsteps of grassroots leadership. We must advance the Just Transition at scale. As we learned from the relationship between the civil rights movement and women's suffrage, when we solve for what impacts those on the furthest margins, we improve conditions for all. As such, when we have a living economy, we all win. Despite the false narrative of scarcity, peddled by those seeking to maintain the status quo by pitting us against each other, the reality is that of abundance. We must embrace systems that enable us to all share the abundance and thrive together.

Together, we can ensure that every child has a safe and secure cradle, literally and figuratively, throughout their childhood and beyond. This is not only possible, but necessary. Join us! Our society's children of today and tomorrow are dependent on our success.
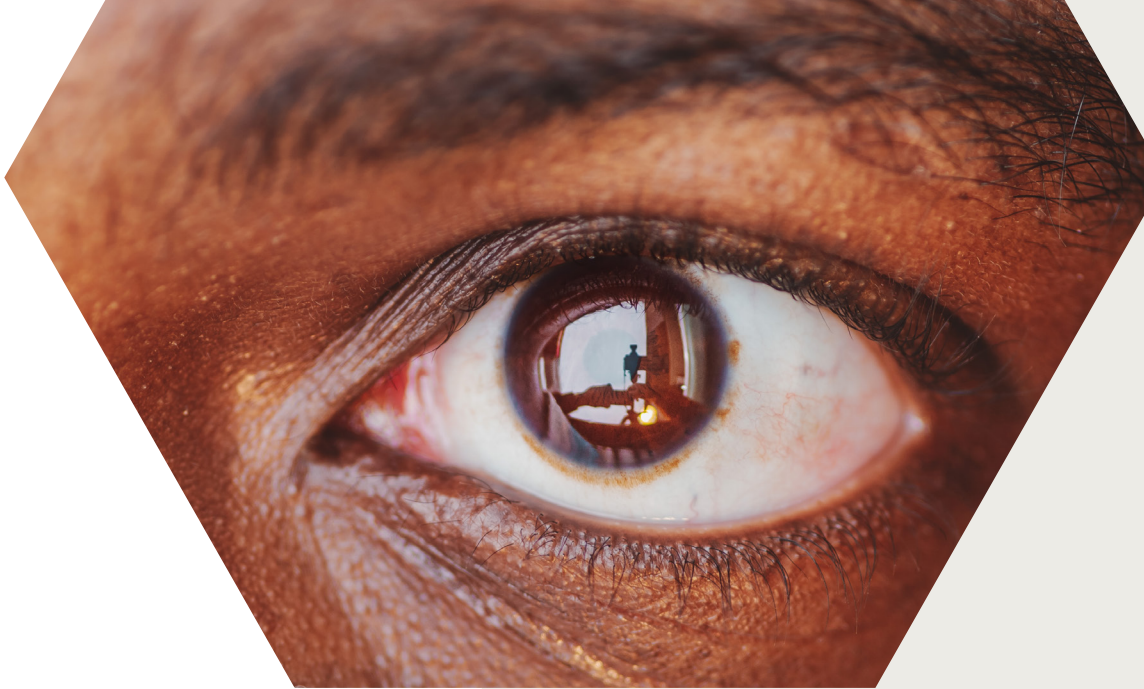
Appendix:

RACIAL JUSTICE RESOURCES

- [M4BL Vision for Black Lives](#)

- [10 Organizations That Support Racial Equality](#)

- [Color of Change](#)

- [National Equity Project](#)

- [Rise Against Hate](#)

- [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#)

- [NAACP](#)
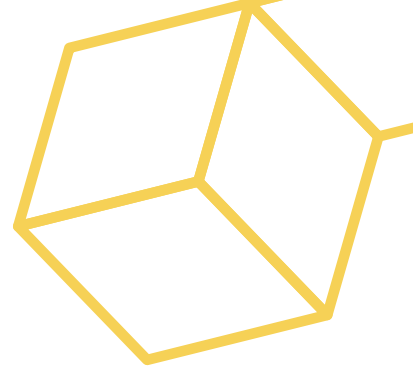
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