

AGENDA

TO BUILD

BLACK

FUTURES

BLACK YOUTH PROJECT 100 (BYP100)

CONTENTS

Foreword.....	3
<i>Charlene Carruthers</i>	
Introduction: State of Black Youth in the U.S. Economy	6
<i>Terrance Laney</i>	
Pay for Generational Oppression: Reparations Revisited.....	13
<i>Terrance Laney</i>	
Honor Workers' Rights: #BlackWorkMatters.....	18
<i>Charlene Carruthers</i>	
Divest and Eliminate Profit from Punishment	22
<i>Cedric Lawson</i>	
Value the Worth of Women's Work	25
<i>Janaé Bonsu</i>	
Support Trans* Wealth and Health.....	29
<i>Janaé Bonsu</i>	
Stabilize and Revitalize Black Communities.....	33
<i>Ishmael Buckner, Miya Ward and Gabrielle Newell, Jabriel Jones</i>	
Afterword.....	37
<i>Janaé Bonsu</i>	
Glossary of key terms.....	39
Notes.....	43

FOREWORD

For Black people living in America, there is no economic justice without racial justice. We live in a country that tells us that not all of us deserve to breathe, eat well or have access to water. Black people in America face the contradiction of living in one of the world's most powerful countries with little access to sustainable wealth or safe communities. For decades, Black communities have lived with the effects of systemic economic injustice while at the same time experiencing decades of corporate and government investment in policing, surveillance, and incarceration. Despite this bleak reality, there is much to gain if we organize to build power for the sake of creating transformative change.

This level of change also requires our movements for liberation to move beyond narratives that urge Black folks to pull ourselves by bootstraps. We must focus on structural changes. The “American Dream” of meritocracy has never guaranteed prosperity for Black people in America. When added together, all Black households own only a small fraction of overall wealth in the U.S., despite the fact the unpaid labor of our ancestors created the basis for much of that wealth.¹ Our communities deserve reparations for systemic violence and harm, good jobs, stabilizing development in our communities, support for the women who hold our households together, and support and protections for queer and trans* folks.

BYP100 members from across the United States created the *Agenda to Build Black Futures* to articulate a set of economic goals and structural changes that could improve the lives of Black people living in America. Drawing on academic research and the lived experiences of young Black people, we lay out our vision for a more economically just society that values the lives and well-being of Black people, including women, queer, and transgender folks, the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated as

well as those who languish in the bottom 1% of the economic hierarchy. As activists, organizers, artists, parents, workers and so many more identities, we developed the *Agenda to Build Black Futures*, as a call-to-action for everyone who is committed to Black liberation.

There are very few powerful voices speaking for young Black people. We have to speak for ourselves. The *Agenda to Build Black Futures* is the second in a series of public policy agendas developed by BYP100 members living in communities across the United States. Our hope is that it serves as an essential crucial building block for all people working towards Black liberation. Our goal is to provide a well-researched and accessible resource to activists who want to change public policy on national, state, and local levels.

BYP100 works through a Black queer feminist lens, meaning that we are radically inclusive and strive to move those of us who are marginalized (e.g. Black women, girls and LGBTQ folks) to the center. We also seek to center our work on the lives, suffering and aspirations of the Black poor, the homeless, and low wage workers. Thus, the *Agenda to Build Black Futures*, is meant for young people who want to approach civil rights, racial justice, LGBTQ rights, labor and women's rights work differently. Further, the *Agenda to Build Black Futures*, is not meant to advance politics of respectability; we want ALL Black people to be able to live in their dignity.

The *Agenda to Build Black Futures* is ambitious, yet necessary to equip young people with a digestible set of public policy goals that they can organize around and win in their local communities. We found it necessary to build on the work of the *Agenda to Keep us Safe*, the first BYP100 policy agenda released in 2014,² which focuses on police accountability and ending mass criminalization, and share a vision for an economy that works for all oppressed people. Our local chapters in Chicago, New Orleans, New York City, Oakland, Washington, DC, and most recently

Detroit are all committed to moving these agendas forward in a way that is relevant to the conditions of the communities they each live in and organize.

We invite you to join our growing collective of educators, parents, community organizers, professors, artists, workers, students, those incarcerated and those formerly incarcerated to ensure that the ideas in the *Agenda to Build Black Futures* become reality.

In Black Love,

Charlene A. Carruthers
National Director, BYP100



INTRODUCTION

STATE OF BLACK YOUTH IN THE U.S. ECONOMY

The liberation of all Black people rests upon achieving a greater margin of economic justice for our families and our communities. Our long term goal is to realize an economic system that does not rely on exploitation, and places human needs before individual greed. Our economic goals are intertwined with our work to end the criminalization of young Black people, to combat police violence, and to advance the ongoing struggle for Black freedom in the United States and beyond.

The United States economy has a troubling outlook for most Americans, but for Black youth ages 18 to 34, there are even fewer aspects of the economy about which to be optimistic. Obtaining and maintaining wealth, homeownership, and a life not burdened by crushing debt is difficult-to-impossible for young Black people in the current economic climate. As BYP100 envisions creating a world where all Black people can achieve liberation, we must deal squarely with the violence caused by economic injustice. We rest our 21st century analysis on an understanding of slavery and its legacy as the racialized system of economic exploitation that constitutes a massive theft of Black labor, land and wealth. If U.S. slaveholders had been forced to compensate the descendants of unpaid Black workers for over 200 years of free labor, Black scholarships, institutions and organizations would be well-funded today. Moreover, we see a direct link between mass incarceration, police violence and the ways in which racial capitalism, especially capitalism in crisis, is ravaging Black bodies and communities.³

Economic Justice is Racial Justice

The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 and the targeting of Black liberation fighters such as the Black Panther Party, through ruthless and malicious government programs like COINTELPRO, was because their efforts to challenge racial capitalism and to achieve economic justice for Black people was a far greater threat than simple desegregation. Even as 2016 presidential candidates clamor for the support of young Black voters, an effective economic justice message that resonates with Black voters has yet to emerge. Politicians will only respond when there is pressure. We see the need for our movement to continue to foreground the intimate interconnections between economic justice and racial justice.

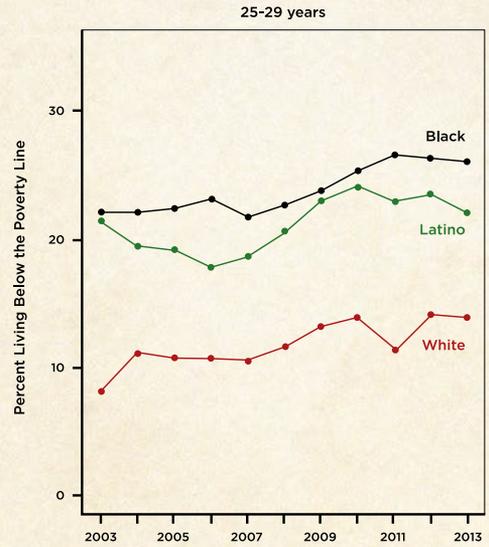
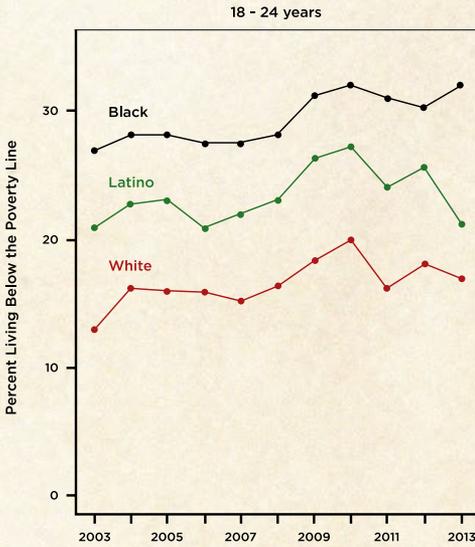
In 2011, many Americans engaged in the “Occupy Wall Street” protests around the country and in solidarity with similar actions worldwide to draw attention to, and express outrage at, the obscene wealth and income gap, and the overwhelming economic power that rests in the hands of the elite top 1%, those at the top of the U.S. economic hierarchy. Occupy Wall Street fought for policies aimed at fundamentally restructuring the American economy and eliminating the corrupting power of money in our political system. From the outset, Occupy Wall street used radical tactics such as the occupation of public spaces and a group-centered approach to its leadership; it’s lack of a message that centered the experiences of Black folks was be a significant impediment to the movement’s ability to grow, sustain and transform.

Despite various efforts to “Occupy the Hood” and draw attention to economic violence in the U.S. Black community we have not yet been able to fully bridge the residuals of the Occupy Movement with the centuries long battle for economic and racial justice led by Black people. This is tragic. The bottom line is that any labor or economic justice movement in the United

States context must deal squarely with Black people if it is to be successful. Economic justice and racial justice in the U.S. are inextricably linked, and neither can be won unless the struggles of young Black people are centered.

Black Poverty, Unemployment, Under-employment, and the Loss of Black Wealth.

Since we understand the economic disparities within the Black community, if we are genuinely concerned about liberation for all, we have to focus our attention on the most oppressed and hardest hit sectors of our community: the Black poor and working class, the homeless, the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated. It is hard to measure the extent of harm done to Black bodies, minds and souls as a result of systemic and longstanding economic violence, but we have to look at some of the numbers and ask why? The reality is grim. Over 26% of Black people live in poverty, as opposed to less than 10% of whites. Even more outrageous and alarming is that nearly half of all African American children under the age of six live in poverty (46%). This is in contrast to only 14.5% of white children.⁴ Added to the mix is the hard economic blow Black families suffer because of the epidemic of mass incarceration. There are over 2 million Americans in prison (1 in 100 adults) and while only 1% of white males 18 to 64 are incarcerated, 8% or 1 in 12 Black men in the same age group are incarcerated. These figures correlate not only to race but to poverty and economic marginalization. As a 2010 Pew study indicates, “More than one third (37%) of Black male (high school) dropouts between the ages of 20 and 34 are currently behind bars – three times the rate for whites in the same category.”⁵ Poor people with less formal education are more likely to land in prison, and they are disproportionately Black. Those same people, when released are treated as second class citizens and marginal to the economy. The same Pew study reports that “Serving time (for men) reduces . . . annual earnings by 40 percent.” The impact is greater on Blacks who are formerly incarcerated than for whites.⁶



U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table POVo1, years 2003-2013. From Black Millennials in America report.

During the period between 2007-2011, Black America saw its greatest loss of wealth in more than 25 years. In 2010, the average white household wealth was twenty times that of the average Black household, nearly double that in previous years, according to a 2011 report by the Pew Research Center. The foreclosure crisis represented the largest transfer of property ownership out of Black hands, since the end of Reconstruction. The loss of Black wealth has resulted in more Black youth unemployment and underemployment is at crisis levels. Even Black youth raised in middle class families often slide into poverty as adults. The loss of middle class status is just one indicator among several that demonstrate the systemic barriers Black people face.

Black youth are bearing the burden of the current economic crisis and without a major change, the future is bleak. The unemployment rate for Black youth is double that of white millennials. This disparity has been almost constant for decades, as unemployment among Black youth has ranged from around 14% to

more than 24%. Over the last decade, the worst year of unemployment figures for white youth (12% in 2010) would have been almost utopian conditions for Black young people. The burden of unemployment at these levels have a huge impact on our ability to survive, let alone thrive. An overwhelming majority (70%) of young Black people report that finding a job is difficult. Most of us are willing to do “hard work”, but where?

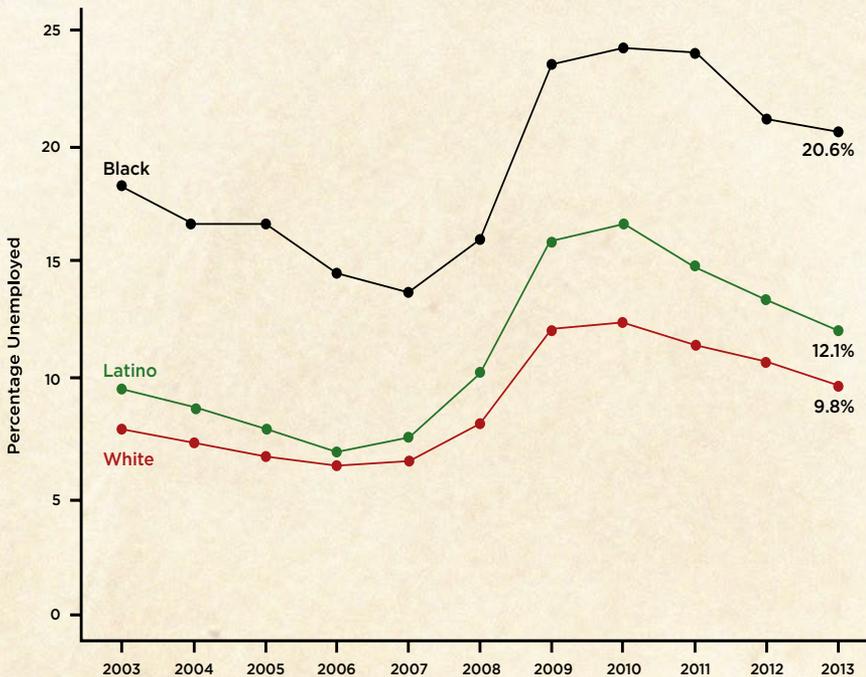
A populist message that credits “hard-work” and “playing by the rules” will never resonate with young Black voters until our economic system is not rigged in favor of the wealthy who do not work hard for wealth and “do not play by the rules” to maintain their wealth. Young Black women, at the intersection of racism and patriarchy, are facing a double burden. As discussed in greater detail in the *Value the Worth of Women’s Work* section of this agenda, the majority of Black households are headed by women, who not only earn less than their male and white female counterparts, but have additional burdens of sexual harassment in the workplace and heavy domestic duties at home.

Debunking “trickle down” economics

Wealth doesn’t trickle down and “trickle down” economics have worsened the divide among the Black “haves and have nots”. While we do have more Black millionaires and a few Black billionaires, that wealth is not spread around the larger Black community. The disparities are stark. A Black family in the 1% is worth a staggering 200 times that of an average black family. If Black America were an independent nation we would be among the most wealth stratified in the world. Yet mainstream media would have us believe things have drastically improved. We frequently see young Black men signing multi-million dollar sports and music contracts. The myth of increasing Black wealth must be confronted head-on. The truth is that Black people who obtain this wealth do so despite many obstacles, and that personal wealth does not automatically uplift the masses. When added together, all Black households own only a fraction of overall wealth in the U.S.⁷

Changing the narrative among Black people about the economy continues to be incredibly difficult. The Black 1% are significantly overrepresented in Black-led political movements and organizations. Wealthy Black people, much like super wealthy white people, cannot effectively speak for the vast majority who deal with the very real and present threat of abject poverty and financial ruin.

The median net worth of the few Black households in the top 1 percent was \$1.2 million dollars, while according to the Census median net worth for all black households was about \$6,000 in total. This disparity places wealthy Black people, especially in regards to their relationship to the economy, in two completely different realities.



Current Population Studies, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Funding Black Futures is Possible by Defunding Systems of Punishment

The relationship between young Black people and the economy should be very troubling for those concerned with economic justice. This country was founded on Black bondage and the profits that flowed from it. Black people were legal property in the colonies and the United States for nearly a century after its founding. From slavery to the present there has been a struggle over Black labor, Black life and the propensity for the society to exploit one and devalue the other. The 21st century version of this practice is in the form of a Neoliberal state, a growing prison industry, and ruthless policing. We are committed to fighting for the divestment from the oppressive systems of punishment, such as policing and prisons, and investment in the lives of Black people.

We need a fundamental shift in the way the U.S. invests in our most valuable resources - our people. Black people, descended from enslaved Africans, have built one of the wealthiest countries and economies to ever exist, yet we control less than 1.75 percent of that country's household wealth. Black people have been relegated to the back of the line in our economy and we should refuse to be resigned to these conditions for generations to come. Black people through "hard-work and playing by the rules" will never be able to overcome inequality of that magnitude. Bold, expansive and wide-reaching public policy change that moves our economy towards equality and equity is the only solution. This kind of change can only be achieved through a well-organized political movement for justice. This work will require young Black people to be incredibly brave and unapologetically fierce.

PAY FOR GENERATIONAL OPPRESSION: REPARATIONS REVISITED

To center enslavement as the only form of economic injustice experienced by Black people is, at best, limited and narrow. The discourse on reparations for Black people must be expanded beyond the lingering effects of chattel slavery.

“Racist white America has exploited our resources, our minds, our bodies, our labor. For centuries we have been forced to live as colonized people inside the United States, victimized by the most vicious racist system in the world. We have helped build the most industrial country in the world. We are therefore demanding...that they begin to pay reparations to black people in this country.”

— SNCC, Black Manifesto, 1969

The idea of restitution and reparations for Black Americans did not begin and end with the broken promise of “40 acres and a mule”. Queen Mother Audley Moore led the initiative to demand reparations from the federal government instead of government spending on what we now know as the failed War on Poverty. Other visions and articulations of reparations’ necessity continued with groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther Party, the Republic of New Africa, and N’COBRA. Most recently in 2014, the public discourse on reparations for Black people came back into the mainstream when Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote a series of articles on the subject for *The Atlantic* magazine. Rather than focus on chattel slavery as the sole basis to advocate for public policies to end white supremacy and institutionalized racism, Coates cen-

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF REPARATION PAYMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

1971	\$1 Billion + 44 Million Acres of Land	Alaska Natives Land Settlement
1980	\$81 Million	Klamaths of Oregon
1985	\$31 Million	Chippewas of Wisconsin
1986	\$32 Million, 1836 Treaty Violations	Ottawas of Michigan
1990	\$1.2 Billion	Japanese Americans

Black Reparations Now! Part 1, 40 Acres, \$50.00 and a Mule by Dorothy Benton-Lewis, BRC

tered many of his arguments on racist housing policies that have severely limited Black people's ability to build wealth through homeownership. Coates' articles initiated the most public and far-reaching conversation on reparations for Black people in decades. Through broadening our understanding of the historical injustices we faced, his work has built the momentum to expand this conversation.

Reparations is radical, but not impossible

A coalition of lawyers, activists, young Black organizers, and families of torture victims in Chicago formed the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials (CTJM) in 2010. They have done the work to expand our understanding of reparations, and secured a real victory and at least partial and delayed justice for Black victims of state-based violence, boldly using a reparations framework to do so.

In 1983, three Chicago police officers - members of Commander Jon Burge's torture crew - took murder suspect Darrell Cannon to an isolated area on the southside of Chicago and tortured him. He would be one of hundreds of mostly Black and Latino residents of Chicago who would become victims of brutal torture and coerced confessions that would lead to false convictions and imprisonment. Police officers repeatedly pressed an electric cattle prod to his testicles. They allowed him to believe

they had loaded a shotgun, rammed it into his mouth, and repeatedly pulled the trigger making him believe he was being executed. Eventually, Cannon provided a false confession for murder and received a life sentence.

After a long battle, organizers in Chicago won a multi-million dollar settlement for Darrell Cannon and other survivors along with programs that support survivors of police abuse and their families. The settlement, which was only \$5.5 million in pay outs, also included an agreement to devise a curriculum to be taught in Chicago Public Schools about the Burge torture scandal. The Chicago reparations campaign can serve as a model for winning reparations on a local level, with innovative solutions that support our entire community and financial payout to those most acutely and directly impacted by injustice. According to Ta-Nehisi Coates, “there is nothing wrong with Black people that the complete dismantling of white supremacy won’t cure”. Dismantling these lingering impacts will require creative solutions that are a mix of financial settlements, implementing policies that eliminate obstacles to wealth for Black people and transforming the popular historical narrative about Black people in America.

Recommendations

The remaining sections of this policy agenda can serve as an outline for what reparations can look like, so in addition to groups post-mentioned, priority reparations recipients should also include individuals and families affected by the War on Drugs, redlining policies, and the disinvestment of blighted communities across this nation.

Pass H.R. 40. We demand the passage of H.R. 40 and advocate that recommendations coming out of that commission should include the following:

Budget lines for reparations at municipal, state, and federal government levels. The National Coalition of Blacks for

Reparations in America (N'COBRA) has taught us that reparations can take many forms, including but not limited to cash payments, land, and economic development, scholarship funds, and textbooks/other educational materials that accurately depict the history of Black people of the African diaspora⁸ - all of which could begin to amend past and persistent injustice and exploitation.

While we understand that formal college education is not - and should not - be the sole and primary means towards economic stability, we cannot ignore the astronomical student loan debt that burdens and disproportionately impacts Black students. Thus, we support the demands of the growing movement to "Occupy the Student Debt," and their key demands to cancel all student debt, provide tuition-free public college education, and guarantee a \$15 minimum (living) wage for campus workers, who on many campuses are disproportionately Black or other people of color. **However, we amend this demand with the insistence that a national scholarship fund be established for Black students to be paid by colleges and universities that benefitted directly from slave labor.** All Black students would be eligible to receive an award.

Restore voting rights to incarcerated people. Today, close to 6 million people are denied the right to vote due to felony records.⁹ Additionally, through a process called "prison-gerrymandering," political power has decreased in over-policed areas and increased in the overwhelmingly white and Republican areas of the United States where prisons have been built.¹⁰ America cannot be an authentic democracy if all its citizens do not have access to the ballot.

Establish Independent Compensation Commission to process claims and pay compensation for economic, social, psychological, and political damage suffered as a result of the United States' harmful policies and practices towards Black people.

Model Legislation

H.R. 40 - To acknowledge the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery in the United States and the 13 American colonies and to establish a commission to examine the institution of slavery, subsequently de jure and de facto racial and economic discrimination against African-Americans.¹¹

City of Chicago Reparations Ordinance - Call for reparations for victims and family members affected by law enforcement torture and abuse.¹²

HONOR WORKERS' RIGHTS: #BLACKWORKMATTERS

The modern labor movement must support a robust agenda for Black workers. A workers' bill of rights must be adapted across all sectors in order to address generational poverty and worker exploitation while providing pathways for our people to do more than survive.

"I've worked in fast food for years and have two ugly scars on my hand & wrist from untreated on-the-job burns to show for it. Plus, every year my rent went up, my pay stayed the same leaving me to fight for more hours to make up the difference. My experience is not uncommon, and there are so many other people - particularly Black mothers, formerly incarcerated people, and LGBTQ folks - who are struggling to survive on inadequate pay and no mechanism to collectively bargain a living wage, health care benefits, and a safe work environment."

— Janaé Bonsu, BYP100 member

"I was in school with a full-time minimum wage position at a fast food restaurant. I was subjected to shortened breaks, verbal disrespect from management, working through burns, and working off the clock in fear of losing employment. My experiences illustrate the need for union rights. We want a union because we know that the workers united can never be defeated."

— Charles Preston, BYP100 member

On November 29, 2012 young Black and Brown fast food workers led an unprecedented strike in New York City that has since re-ignited an international movement for a living wage and right to form a union for all low-wage workers, now called the "Fight for \$15". The campaign has expanded to include more low-wage

workers including home health-care workers, security guards, and adjunct professors. All low wage workers, just like any other employee, deserve a safe work environment and living wage.

The struggle for workers' rights must become more closely tied to the fight for racial justice. Overall Black unemployment and underemployment, like Black poverty and debt, far exceed our white counterparts. No matter how politicians and pundits try to 'dress up' the figures, the reality is powerfully disturbing and unacceptable. Black workers make up a disproportionate percentage of all low wage workers. Nearly 80 percent of these workers are the sole breadwinners for their families and the average age of these workers is 28 years old. Black people are also over-represented in low-wage work. For example, in 2011, 36 percent of Black folks, including 38 percent of Black women, were employed in low-wage jobs (defined as earning poverty-level wages or less). Comparatively, among the white labor force, only 23 percent were employed in low-wage jobs¹³. These workers rep-



resent people who have to pay rising rent and child care costs, feed their families and thrive while earning minimum wages of as low as \$5.15 in Georgia and \$8.75 in New York (famously known for its high cost of living)¹⁴.

Obviously joblessness and underemployment correlate to other indices of suffering and want. All poor people suffer but with the impact of racism and discrimination, past and present, Black people, quite literally, suffer more. Black people make up 13% of the population overall and in 2012 we comprised 40% of the nation's homeless population. In cities like Chicago, New York and Detroit, children are hit especially hard. The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless estimates that 84% (17,000 in actual numbers) of the homeless children attending Chicago Public Schools were Black in the 2014-2015 school year.¹⁵ Hundreds of thousands of Black children go to bed without adequate food every night. Twenty six percent of Black households are determined to be food insecure, defined by the USDA as "social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food." This compares to 11% for white families.¹⁶

Taken together, the state of our economy shows us that we need good jobs. Good jobs include better wages, protections from discrimination, workplace safety and structures that allow workers to form unions and address grievances. Good jobs would provide opportunities for the most marginalized workers in our communities. These include, and are not limited to, people who are transgender, gender nonconforming, women, queer, formerly incarcerated and differently abled. Good jobs need to be the rule, not the exception.

Recommendations

We recommend adoption of the following

Workers' Bill of Rights:

1. All workers should receive a living wage (regardless of education/experience)
2. All workers should have access to provisions for maternity/paternity/parental leave.
3. All workers should have paid sick leave.
4. All workers should have the right to form a union and/or body for the purposes of collective bargaining for benefits, wage adjustments, sexual harassment, grievances and workplace safety.
5. All workers should have protections against discrimination based on perceived or self-identified gender presentation and sexual orientation.
6. All workers should have protections against discrimination based on past drug offenses or incarceration.
7. All gender-based and race-based pay gaps should be eliminated in public and private places of employment.
8. All adults who want a job should have a right to employment through public or private opportunities through a federal jobs program.
9. All children, regardless of the financial status the child was born into, should receive a Child Development Account or "baby bond".
10. All people have a right to a guaranteed living income regardless of employment status.

DIVEST AND ELIMINATE PROFIT FROM PUNISHMENT

Prisons, profit, policing, and poverty are intimately connected. Prisons are warehouses for the poor and policing is the gateway. And increasingly rich people and the multi-billion dollar security industry make money off of mass incarceration. The profit motive in the criminal injustice system is immoral and must be eliminated. Mass incarceration of Black people should not lead to unprecedented profit for corporations, government or any individuals. We must demand that all institutions divest immediately from racist and classist systems of punishment.

In July 2010, Marissa Alexander, a young Black woman from Florida, faced the fight of her life only nine days after giving birth to her youngest daughter. Her estranged husband, Rico Gray, attacked, strangled, and threatened to kill Marissa in her own home. To get rid of Rico, Marissa fired a warning shot into the ceiling. The single shot injured no one. Alexander was subsequently charged with several criminal charges and was incarcerated for a victimless crime.

Since 2010, Marissa fought a battle in the Florida courts for the right of self-defense that has not only left her missing irreplaceable time with her children. She has since successfully appealed her case and has been released from jail. But her current state, not being incarcerated is far from what many would call "freedom". Marissa has to pay \$105 every week for the use of an ankle monitor as she was on house arrest and an additional \$500 every other week for a bond

cost.¹⁸ Even after coming to an agreement with the state of Florida, Marissa still must pay continued costs for house detention and wearing a surveillance monitor until at least 2016. These cost do not include the additional financial burden placed on her family to travel to and from prison.

Alongside a booming prison population in the U.S. there are booming profits for corporations that create products and services for the criminal justice system.¹⁹ Increasingly, state governments have shifted the cost for these services directly to those being punished. Simply put, mass incarceration and the criminalization of young Black people has been nothing more than a massive payday for these kinds of corporations.

Many states no longer directly manage jails and prisons but pay corporations to do so; at times when jails have not been filled to capacity with Black bodies these companies have sued the states for financial loss.²⁰ While the majority of prisoners are not housed in private prisons, an ACLU study reports that the private prison population increased 1600% between 1990 and 2009. The two top private prison companies received over \$3 billion in revenue in 2010 alone.²¹ Those incarcerated in federal prisons and immigration detention centers are most likely to be in a for profit private facility, where conditions in many cases are “atrocious,” according to the same ACLU study.

Recommendations

Abolish all fines in the penal system and administrative fees for probationers and parolees because any transfer of our scarce family wealth to the prison industrial complex cannot be allowed to stand.

End all fines for minor and petty crimes and misdemeanors. It is becoming more and more evident that law enforcement agencies are used as tools to take advantage of young Black people

in over-policed areas, particularly for petty crimes like parking infractions, jaywalking, public intoxication, and low-level marijuana possession.

Divest public and higher education funds from the prison-industrial complex. The profit motive in the penal system is a corrupting force that motivates police and judges to unnecessarily incarcerate and criminalize in order to maintain profitability of powerful monied interests.

Reduce police budgets and reallocate residual funds to the people’s vision of public safety. Establishing participatory municipal and state budgets is an avenue that would allow the public to democratically decide how to allocate funds towards services and institutions critical to our survival and success.

Model campaign

Columbia Prison Divest is a campaign led by students at Columbia University, including a BYP100 member, demanded the immediate divestment of all shares from CCA and G4S and led to Columbia University being the first college in the U.S. to do so.²²



VALUE THE WORTH OF WOMEN'S WORK

Black women are our primary heads of households and our entire community is impacted when women are not able to support their families. All women - both cisgender and transgender - must be centered in our struggle for economic justice.

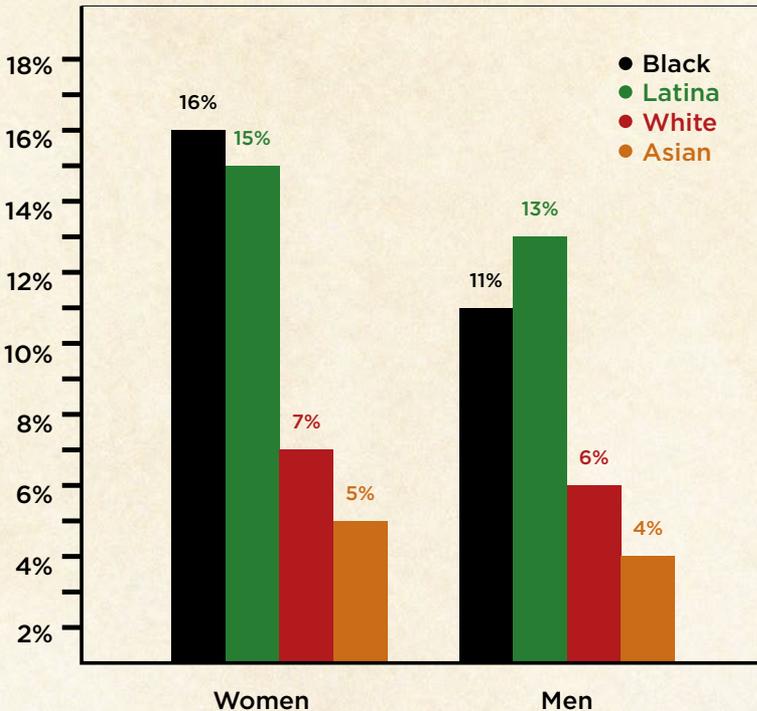
In March 2014, Shaneshia Taylor was faced with a tough choice: secure a job to better provide for her family, or pass up a job opportunity due to lack of childcare. As a homeless 35-year-old Black woman with two infant children, this was a tough choice indeed. On one hand, Shaneshia knows that at the time, she was not making enough to cover her family's expenses, and the job interview she had set up would significantly increase her earning power. On the other hand, when her child care provider abruptly became unavailable, she had nowhere else to turn. Weighing her options, she made the decision to leave her children in the car with the windows cracked and fans blowing while she interviewed for a job. She was subsequently arrested, charged, and pled guilty to felony child abuse. Shaneshia was sentenced to 18 years of probation, which includes mandatory parenting classes and treatment for "domestic violence offenders".²³

Shaneshia has been painted as a negligent child abuser, but what is a homeless mother to do when she has a shot at getting a job that will allow her to better care for her family, but there is no babysitter available? We cannot ignore the fact that Shaneshia had been making \$1,232 per month (including food stamps), but her monthly expenses were \$1,274 - that is \$42 short that she needed to find a way to make up for every single month.²⁴ The fact that any mother be faced with such

a decision is indicative of a several larger issues, chief among them being a shortage of affordable childcare in the midst of low-paying jobs.

The myth that women-led households and families are a threat to the stability of our community is a dangerous victim-blaming myth. From slavery to domestic work to low-wage service and fast-food jobs, Black women have historically been some of the hardest working and poorest compensated workers in the United States. Black women work to build our families and to be providers alongside men, despite the constant threat of white supremacy and patriarchy. We should honor Black women and their true role in our families and communities.

America's Working Poor by Race and Gender, 2012



Bureau of Labor Statistics, A Profile of the Working Poor, 2012, Table 2

Black women have historically played an integral role in both family and community life, independently and alongside men. Black women are the heads of many households, as nearly one third of Black households are headed by a single mother,²⁵ which also means that Black women have to be the breadwinners and family providers. To make matters worse, Black women are affected by both the gender wage gap **and** the race wage gap, as they make up a disproportionate amount of low-wage workers and earn only about 67 cents for every dollar of what men earn.²⁶ That means \$33 less for women to spend on groceries, housing, and other expenses for every \$100 of work that men do. The fact that there are far too many Black women who have to balance work and family life on poverty wages while being literally and figuratively undervalued in both spheres is a problem and injustice to say the least.

Racist politicians and social scientists like Daniel Moynihan have long blamed Black women for their own conditions, citing women-headed households and other non-traditional family structures, sexual promiscuity and children born out of wedlock, and “ghetto culture” for the many problems that Black families and communities face. Such messages scapegoating matriarchy allows men, communities, and government to skirt responsibility for challenging the societal structures that form the root of the hardships in Black women’s lived experience. Families do not have to look a certain way to be happy and healthy. As Shaneshia’s story shows us, the consequences of the race and gender wage gaps go beyond the struggle to keep a roof over her family’s head and food on the table. Access to quality childcare and afterschool programs for the minor children of these hard working mothers often falls right through that wage gap. Earning less pay for the same hard work is economic violence against Black women, their families, and their communities.

Recommendations

Raise wages for all workers, as discussed in the *Honor Worker's Rights: #BlackWorkMatters* section.

Universal child care and renewed investment in quality public schools. All parents should be able to go to work feeling safe and secure that their child or children are being cared for. A universal child care benefit is especially pertinent for parents who have been laid off, unemployed and looking for work, and underemployed. Spending on universal child care now, whether through funds made available through disinvestment in harmful state-funded punishment systems, renewed investment in child care subsidies, employer contributions, and/or other sources, is a sound preventive policy in that studies have shown that quality child care leads to positive outcomes in later life, which would alleviate government spending on services later on. In a similar vein, investing in schools and afterschool programs for Black children and adolescents that carry on the tradition of freedom schools in bolstering academic enrichment, socio-political consciousness, and communal self-development, is essential for cultivating strong communities.

Full access to reproductive healthcare regardless of ability to pay. All women should be able to exercise full autonomy and self-determination over their bodies, sex lives, ability to reproduce, and when/how often to do so. Poverty or strained financial ability should not stand in the way of these choices.

SUPPORT TRANS* WEALTH AND HEALTH

The narratives and experiences of queer and trans* Black people provide some of the clearest examples of the effects of poverty. The impact of structural violence when it appears as economic injustice often compounds to keep many in a constant state of trauma and often has fatal consequences for transgender women.

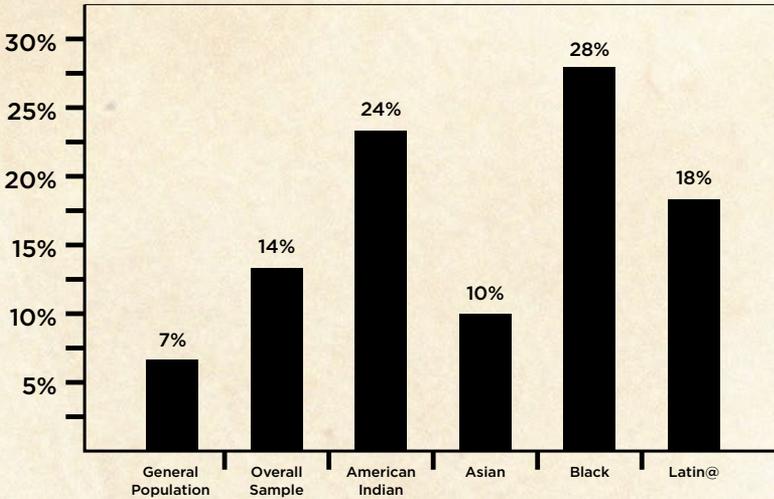
"I have so many degrees, trainings, and certifications that I spent money on getting and nobody will hire me. They take one look at me and make up some excuse not to hire me, if they bother to contact me back at all. I'm bipolar and have PTSD, I had an episode and had to go to a mental facility in Philadelphia where I was placed in a wing with violent offenders because they said I'd be a safety risk anywhere else. My risk, as they said, was that I was transitioning. Additionally, I was outed by hospital staff to anybody who would ask, and that would usually ruin my treatment.

I'm an addict in recovery who currently lives with my parents. I wanted to live in a recovery home because I felt it would be easier for me to recover if I lived in a place that nurtured my recovery. It wasn't until I stepped inside the recovery home that I was referred to that I realized it was a Christian recovery home where my hormones and other medications would be taken and I'd have no guarantee that I'd get them given to me. I was also treated like a potential predator simply because I'm transgender.

I can't make money, I can't live somewhere that I can recover, and I can't even get treated with dignity at some hospitals. It's hard not to get depressed about my future, it's hard to think I'll even make it through the present."

— Princess, 23

Trans Unemployment Rates by Race, 2011



National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 2011

The economic struggles of transgender women cannot be ignored or underestimated, and Princess is a primary example of how trans* and gender nonconforming bias and oppression is pervasive in this society. Anti-trans bias combined with Anti-Black racism equates to devastation to Black trans* folks who face a gross amount of discrimination and social stigma.

A national survey of transgender discrimination reported that Black trans* people report the highest levels of discrimination in trying to secure employment, affordable housing, healthcare, accurate identification, and opening lines of credit. Black trans* people live in extreme poverty with 34% reporting a household income of less than \$10,000 per year, which is four times more than cis folks.²⁷ The unemployment rate for trans* folks are twice the rate of the population as a whole, and more than 40% of trans* workers are underemployed.

These abysmal statistics are unfortunately the harsh reality of Black poverty and economic injustice, but as we continue to assert that Black lives matter in our words and actions, we know

that there is plenty room for actionable improvement. When asked what could change in order to improve her quality of life, Princess replied: “A recovery house could take me or, even if that doesn’t work, I could get hired somewhere that was respectful of me.”

Recommendations

Pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and make non-discrimination protections for trans* people explicit under federal and state law. Although nondiscrimination laws exist that protect people from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, disability status, sex, and genetic information, federal and state law that offers protection based on gender identity/expression in the areas of employment, housing, health insurance, and financial institutions is either inadequate (like in the case of federal Department of Housing and Urban Development) or nonexistent (like in the area of employment).

Comprehensive access to basic health care and transition-related care in benefits. Trans* workers get fewer benefits for the same work and have a harder time accessing necessary health care, having to pay out-of-pocket for transition-related care. It is essential that health insurance companies cover transition-related care.

Remove barriers to obtaining government-issued identification for trans* people that aligns with their gender identity. Government-issued identification is often needed in order to apply for employment, benefits, enroll in school, open bank accounts, and carry out other essential activities. However, federal and state governments impose a burden so heavy for trans* people to update their IDs - requiring proof of surgery and court orders - that only 21% of folks who have transitioned have been able to successfully do so.²⁸ National Center for Transgender Equality has been doing important work to remove these barriers and has achieved great success. However, many state agencies need

still impose burdensome requirements that need to be relaxed in order to ensure that trans* folks are able to obtain identification that reflects who they are.

Model Legislation

Employment Non-Discrimination Act (EDNA) would protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer folks (LGBTQ) from workplace discrimination, as it prohibits employers, employment agencies, labor organizations, and joint labor-management committees from engaging in employment discrimination on the basis of an individual's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.²⁹ This bill was passed by the House in 2013 but failed to pass the Senate. A version of it has been introduced repeatedly since 1994.

STABILIZE AND REVITALIZE BLACK COMMUNITIES

Economic development must uplift Black communities, Black families and individuals. To maintain opportunity for Black families in developing areas, our approaches must be multi-pronged and center social equity.

When Queen Johnson was born at Providence Hospital, her mother imagined her growing up in Brookland, D.C. and one day making a positive impact in the community. Though Queen did have a chance to grow up in the neighborhood, the latter is seeming less and less likely given the displacement Queen's family has seen under the swift and drastic gentrification of the Brookland neighborhood to cater to a mix of high end developers and university students.

During Queen's holiday visit home from university, she saw more new apartment buildings going up catering to the newly arrived residents from all over the country and on creating the planned arts community without consideration of native residents. Queen loved her neighborhood growing up and is the first in the room to rep her pride as both a native resident of D.C. and a member of the Brookland community. Eventually, the increased rent put too much of a strain on her family and they were forced out of the apartment they had called home. Unlike most of her former neighbors, Queen's mother and siblings were able to find refuge with her Grandmother at her home in the

district. Unlike many Black residents of the district, Queen was fortunate enough to have a grandmother who owned her home, which helped protect her from the astronomical increases in housing costs that D.C. residents have seen in the past decade. However, the luxury of her own room was replaced with sharing a small bedroom with two other relatives or sleeping in the living room. Recently, Queen moved out of the District to Maryland. She is pessimistic about being able to return to the neighborhood she once called home.

Unfair assaults on the Black community in the form of historical redlining followed by current trends in unfair mortgage agreements, lack of access to quality loans, predatory lending practices, and lack of quality income access have led to a Black mortgage crisis. In his June 2009 article, Michael Powell brings to life the story of Wells Fargo loan officers who blatantly target Black middle class loan applicants who they described as “mud people” with so-called “ghetto loans” or high interest subprime mortgages.³⁰

According to The Center for Responsible Lending, during the housing boom Black families with minimal credit scores of 660 were offered subprime mortgages at rates of 21.4% while the same loans were offered to white families with credit scores of 660 a rate of just 6.2%.³¹ This is just one of many examples of clear and blatant discrimination in mortgage procurement in the Black community.

The federal government spent hundreds of billions of American tax dollars, some generated from the Black community, to bail-out the banking and mortgage system that made wealth from discriminating against our communities. Federal government needs to act swiftly and boldly to support the Black communities whose financial well being was preyed on by Wall Street.

Recommendations

Accountability and Redress for Predatory Lending. We demand that immediate investigations be opened by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau into mortgage practices in Black communities all over the U.S., with additional attention given to Black female head of households. If misconduct is found on the part of mortgage lenders, then the financial institutions employing them should be held responsible for significant compensatory damages. Further, we demand local, state, and federal resources be used to support communities assaulted by discriminatory practices by creating programs to protect Black families from foreclosure and rectify the credit scores for those who have fallen victim to foreclosure.

Increased Availability and Accessibility of Financial Literacy. Financial literacy and education is an integral part of economic equality. Therefore, we challenge our local governments to fund nonprofits and community groups to teach on financial topics that include, but are not limited to the following: budgeting, financial opportunities (i.e., the purchasing of non-liquid assets), applying for a credit card, and tax filing. We demand that this education be available to any and all members of our community. We also demand that financial planning options be integrated into traditional banking systems already in place within our communities. These options should also be transparent and easily accessible.³²

Intentional Support for First-Time Homebuyers. We demand government to ensure that mechanisms be put in place for areas experiencing rapid development and growth to enable low-income and wealth-poor Black individuals to obtain and maintain homeownership, such as tax abatements for low-income homeowners and programs that provide down-payment assistance to first time homebuyers. Further, we demand that information about mortgage loan rates offered to prospective homeowners

including interest rate offers delineated by race, gender, ability status, and sexuality be made public to better allow the general public to gauge active levels of discrimination.

Support Community Land Trusts. In order to protect Black communities from the impacts of gentrification, a crucial challenge that must be addressed is the instability that the process imposes on communities through displacement. One method for addressing community displacement is through the development of community land trusts. By creating a system in which land and property ownership are separated, CLTs are able to in effect shield those properties from speculative housing market fluctuations and ensure that those properties continue to be bought and sold at rates affordable for lower and middle income households indefinitely.³³

Support and Strengthen Cooperative Enterprises. Cooperative Enterprises (also known as co-ops) economically empower Black people and provide an alternative to top-down corporations within an exploitative, capitalist enterprise system. They promote shared decision-making power, shared ownership, and shared profits. Cooperative ownership among Black people is not a novel idea, as market failures and economic racial discrimination have historically driven cooperative practice. However, we have plenty of room for collective growth so that we can literally build community and alternative structures for our workplaces, housing, and consumption. Several types of co-ops that could be started by young Black people right now to support Black communities include worker-owned business co-ops, producer-owned co-ops, housing co-ops, consumer co-ops (all defined in the *Glossary of Key Terms*).

AFTERWORD

Building an analysis and plan of action for economic justice underlies the basic concept of democracy. Until our economic needs are met so that we can participate to the fullest extent of our social and political lives, America cannot be considered a democratic nation. Unmet economic needs includes, but is not limited to monetary matters of un- and underemployment, as well as collateral consequences of incarceration that still prevents millions from voting rights, applying for jobs, and receiving public benefits.

BYP100's *Agenda to Build Black Futures* follows and builds on a direct action led by BYP100 and made possible through the collaborative efforts of Assata's Daughters, Organized Communities Against Deportations (OCAD), Southside Together Organizing for Power, Fearless Leading by the Youth, the #Not1More campaign, and We Charge Genocide. Together, we shut down entry points to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Conference in Chicago on October 24, 2015 to demonstrate that the resources being harbored by policing institutions both domestically and globally can literally save our lives if they were instead invested in us.

Drawing from the stories of our friends, ancestors, our own lives, and those of other Black people, the *Agenda to Build Black Futures* is an attempt to summarize first steps towards a just economy. It is not an exhaustive list of demands, but rather a wake-up call to those who have been asleep, and a call to action for all. This document is not meant to be prescriptive because we understand that the severity and nuances of conditions can vary widely by context. Recommendations are instead meant to be adapted and built upon to suit the needs of those most affected wherever you are.

The *Agenda to Build Black Futures* is also meant to serve as a call to those who are privileged actors in the system, especially those with the best of intentions, to be mindful that intention and impact are not one in the same. It does not benefit us for you to position yourself as having solutions to problems that are not your own. Instead, put your ear to the ground and leverage your privilege in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration with - not cooptation of - the people most affected. In other words, do not appropriate young Black brilliance as your own, or undermine our efforts.

As Glenn Martin, formerly incarcerated founder and president of JustLeadershipUSA says, “those closest to the problem are closest to the solution.” If anyone has the expertise to organize, be co-researchers, be teachers, be policy developers and analysts, and otherwise lead, it is those who have experienced this country’s most oppressive systems and are still standing to tell about it. It is us. That said, trust young Black people to lead. Trust the revolutionary process. We ready, we comin’.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Cis, cisgender: Cisgender refers to a person who is less likely to experience misalignment of their gender identity and assigned sex at birth; someone who is not trans*.

Community Land Trust (CLT): A community land trust (CLT) is a community-centered non-profit organization which seeks to preserve availability of affordable housing and promote community development through the purchase and perpetual holding of the land located.³⁴

Consumer-Owned Co-ops: Consumer-owned cooperatives are formed when consumers come together to pool their money to buy in bulk the kinds of goods and services they want (e.g. food, electricity, financial services), and the quality they want, at an affordable price. They operate independently of the state as a form of mutual aid, usually in the form of retail outlets.

Cooperative (Co-Op): Cooperatives are companies owned by the people who use their services and are formed for a particular purpose, be it to satisfy an economic or social need, to provide a quality good or service that the market is not adequately providing at an affordable price, to create an economic structure to engage in needed production or to facilitate more equal distribution to compensate for a market failure.³⁵

Criminalization: a process in which behaviors and people are marked (by the law, by the media, by public perceptions) as crimes and criminals. The process of marking people as 'criminal' does not always relate to those people having committed a

‘crime,’ more so, it has to do with an identity that is associated with society’s ideas about who is other, who does things wrong, and who should be punished.

Housing Co-ops: In housing co-ops, the tenants own the home or apartment building in which they live, care for the building, and share decision-making. In other words, tenants are essentially their own landlords, which ensures protection against exploitative landlord-tenant relationships.

Mass Incarceration: is a process by which surveillance, policing, punishment, and confinement of a significant portion of the population are major elements of maintaining a sense of normalcy in a society. In the United States (which has 5% of the world’s population and 25% of the world’s prison population), this phenomenon primarily affects Black and Latino communities and upholds race-based hierarchies of power.

Oppression: Any unjust situation where, systematically, and over a long period of time where one group denies another group access to the resources of society (i.e. social, political, and economic power).

Patriarchy: A form of social stratification and power-relationships in society that favors men, mainly White men, and grants them more rights and privileges over women and oppresses women’s social, political, financial, sexual and human rights. It has a connection with a social economic system such as capitalism.

Populist: A supporter of the rights and power of common, ordinary people. The term stems from the Populist Party, which was a short-lived political party formed in 1891 that operated under the philosophy of representing the interests of the general population.

Prison-Gerrymandering: Because the Census Bureau counts

people in prison as if they were residents of the prison cells, legislators often manipulate the line-drawing process of legislative districts after each Census for partisan advantage. Prison-gerrymandering thus uses prison populations to inflate the populations of the legislative districts that contain prisons even though most states prohibit imprisoned people from voting.³⁶

Prison-Industrial-Complex: is a term we use to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems.

Producer-Owned Co-ops: Producers of good form cooperatives when they jointly purchase supplies and equipment or jointly process and market their goods to standardize procedures and prices, decrease the costs of distribution, advertising, and sales. Agriculture marketing and craft cooperatives are the most common forms of producers' cooperatives.

Redlining: A discriminatory practice by which specific geographic areas - particularly inner-city neighborhoods and areas densely populated by Black people - are denied loans, mortgages, insurance, etc.

Reparations: The making of amends for a wrong one has done, by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged.

Trans*, transgender: While transgender is the most commonly used term to refer to people who experience misalignment of their gender identity and assigned sex at birth, trans* with an asterisk signifies the diversity of nonconforming gender identities and is used to refer to all of these identities at once. "Trans*" can refer to people who identify as transgender, transexual, transvestite, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderless, agender, two-spirit, and other identities that is not cisgender.³⁷

Worker-Owned Business Co-ops: As owners, workers have the power to manage a business themselves, which in turn, means that stable employment, policy-making, and shared profits are in their hands. Worker-owned business co-ops offer a structure for democratic economic participation to employees, as open membership, equal voting rights for each member regardless of investment, and concern for the community are all principles that characterize this type of co-op.³⁸



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