

# **A BLACK AGENDA FOR NEW YORK CITY**

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MORE JUST, EQUITABLE  
COMMUNITY FOR ALL**

**OFFICE OF COUNCIL MEMBER  
CRYSTAL HUDSON**

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## **A BLACK AGENDA FOR NEW YORK CITY**

# A MESSAGE FROM CRYSTAL HUDSON

Dear Fellow New Yorkers,

In the midst of a pandemic that is killing Black people at more than twice the rate of other Americans<sup>1</sup>, a multiracial movement unapologetically defending Black lives, and one of the most consequential elections of our lifetime that has ignited white supremacy in full force, I invite our political leadership in New York City to join me and stand up to advance an agenda for Black New Yorkers.

When Black New Yorkers thrive, all New Yorkers thrive. This means a guarantee of safety, housing, access to a quality education and good jobs, and the ability to raise families without the constant surveillance of law enforcement or the child welfare system. However, all too often our inability to zero in on the specific issues impacting Black New Yorkers means that our solutions to structural and blatant racism are deeply insufficient.

I am unapologetically pro-Black, pro-queer, pro-justice. As the next Council Member representing the historically Black neighborhoods of Crown Heights, Prospect Heights, Clinton Hill, Fort Greene, and Bedford-Stuyvesant, *A Black Agenda for New York City* charges the next iteration of leadership in New York City to center the needs of Black New Yorkers in governing—because I cannot do it alone. This agenda provides comprehensive recommendations for New York City leaders to tangibly improve the lives of Black residents across the five boroughs in the areas of Health & Wellbeing, A Green City, A World-Class Education, Housing for All, Dismantling the Carceral System & Ending Violence in Our Communities, and Economic Opportunity & Building Generational Wealth. The following priorities reflect the most urgent recommendations for Black New Yorkers that speak to the gravity of this moment:

1. Put money directly in the hands of Black New Yorkers with baby bonds and a guaranteed paycheck;
2. Create a pipeline for non-law enforcement union jobs for Black New Yorkers;
3. Pilot a basic income program in zip codes with the highest rates of gun violence;
4. Launch a citywide truth and reconciliation process focused on race and reparations;
5. Build Black generational wealth and prevent displacement through community home ownership; and
6. Create a city racial equity commission to evaluate every new policy and piece of legislation.

While this agenda is by no means all-encompassing, it seeks to offer a robust view towards transformation for the incredibly diverse Black community in New York City. In doing so, I provide city leadership with a roadmap for change that is unapologetically undoing generations of neglect, while lifting up centuries of our resilience.

Yours,  
Crystal

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/07/us/politics/blacks-coronavirus-police-brutality.html?mc\\_cid=9100e6e0cd&mc\\_eid=da925ebe82](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/07/us/politics/blacks-coronavirus-police-brutality.html?mc_cid=9100e6e0cd&mc_eid=da925ebe82)

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## Our Current Moment

In the midst of a pandemic that is killing Black people at more than twice the rate of other Americans<sup>2</sup>, a multiracial movement unapologetically defending Black lives, and one of the most consequential elections of our lifetime that has ignited white supremacists in full force, our political leadership in New York City must stand up and advance an Agenda for Black New Yorkers.

As a Black queer woman and candidate for New York City Council, I look to represent a district that has had to bear the pain of gentrification and displacement of Black residents, the overwhelming burden of rapid development that was never intended for us, the destruction of a healthcare infrastructure, and the erosion of businesses who can no longer afford to stay in our community.

When Black New Yorkers thrive, all New Yorkers thrive. This means a guarantee of safety, housing, access to quality jobs, and the ability to raise families without the constant surveillance of law enforcement or the child welfare system. However, all too often our inability to zero in on the specific issues impacting Black New Yorkers means that our solutions to structural and blatant racism are deeply insufficient. And yet, like always, still we rise.

The 35th District is home to so much of what makes Black New York remarkable - Soul Summit in Fort Greene Park, Black-owned retail and restaurants along Fulton Street, Dance Africa at BAM, Afropunk at Commodore Barry Park, the Caribbean diaspora in full display on Utica Avenue, the West Indian Day Parade along Eastern Parkway, and so much more. The Agenda that our campaign lays out uplifts the needs unique to the 35th District, while focusing attention on what is essential to ensure Black New Yorkers can thrive across all five boroughs.

In June 2020, in the midst of the raging pandemic and outpouring of solidarity with the movement for Black lives in the face of the deaths of Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many other Black Americans who were killed by law enforcement and militia groups, our very own New York City Commission on Human Rights (NYCCHR) quietly released a report called *Black New Yorkers on Their Experiences with Anti-Black Racism*. In it, the Commission outlines the “inescapability” that Black New Yorkers feel when it comes to their experiences with anti-Black racism. Documenting the lived experiences of thousands of Black New Yorkers through interviews and focus groups, some of the recommendations of the Commission were as follows:

- Develop and advance legislation and other policy measures that will protect Black New Yorkers and other groups targeted for discrimination;
- Deepen and expand relationships with organizations serving Black New Yorkers and develop hyper-local programming in Black communities across the city in order to build awareness of the Commission, City Human Rights Law protections related to race and color discrimination and available remedies;
- Develop new strategies for addressing race-based discrimination and harassment in places of public accommodation across the city; and
- Create programming for implementation in gentrifying neighborhoods to build understanding of how anti-Black racism operates in modern-day New York City.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/07/us/politics/blacks-coronavirus-police-brutality.html?mc\\_cid=9100e6e0cd&mc\\_eid=da925ebe82](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/07/us/politics/blacks-coronavirus-police-brutality.html?mc_cid=9100e6e0cd&mc_eid=da925ebe82)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cchr/downloads/pdf/publications/AntiBlackRacism\\_Report.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cchr/downloads/pdf/publications/AntiBlackRacism_Report.pdf)

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Building from some of these recommendations, this Agenda represents the start of a forward-thinking, explicitly anti-racist and pro-Black vision for the empowerment and upliftment of Black New Yorkers.

Now that two simultaneous pandemics our community has been experiencing are in plain sight—a global pandemic that is killing us and a lethal form of racism at the hands of law enforcement—there is no going back. Our city—and our District—must move forward by rectifying the inequities that got us here. As the next City Council Member for the 35th District, I will work with community leaders, organizations on the ground, and my colleagues in government to ensure *A Black Agenda for New York City* leads and informs the way we recover, rebuild, and reimagine a New York City that truly works for all of us.

### ***Definitions and Framework for This Agenda***

- We unapologetically lead with race as the dominating experience that dictates the disparate outcomes that New Yorkers face. When we disaggregate experiences of inequity by race, Black folks fare the worst.
- We use “Black” as both a political and racial identifier, one that encompasses the experiences of people across ethnicities and nationalities. Blackness is expansive and knows multiple places of origin and cultural experiences.
- “Black New Yorkers” are not a monolith. We center the experiences of those who are most marginalized in the Black community—poor Black people, gender non-conforming Black people, trans Black people, Black women and femmes, Black people with disabilities, Black sex workers, Black immigrants, undocumented Black immigrants, and Black people who are survivors of trauma and violence, to name a few. Each of these communities have different and unique needs. Yet as divergent as our experiences may be, the shared experience of race and racial injustice defines many of our lived experiences.
- When the needs of Black New Yorkers are met, the needs of all New Yorkers are met. The purpose of this Agenda is to center the experiences of those who face the compounding impacts of marginalization, rather than to equate suffering.
- Reparations, defined as “a system of redress for egregious injustices,”<sup>4</sup> guide our principles. Our solutions are focused on putting more resources in the hands of more Black people. Knowing that Black folks have been systematically left out and denied access to credit, capital, housing, material wealth, and services that they not only desire but also require for survival, we center this agenda on the redress for these deliberate policies of our past and present.

### ***Centering Racial Equity: The Necessary Approach to Governing***

Government has long struggled to center racial equity as the primary lens through which policymaking and agenda setting take place. As a result, our solutions rarely result in measurably different outcomes in well-being for people of color, especially Black residents.

In fact, in many cities, racial disparities are even more significant today than they were in the 1960s, and government has done little to intervene.<sup>5</sup> In 1963, the average wealth gap between white families and non-white families was \$121,000, and by 2016 that gap had grown to over \$700,000.<sup>6</sup> In the same timeframe, the earnings gap between whites

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/why-we-need-reparations-for-black-americans/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/todays-racial-wealth-gap-is-wider-than-in-the-1960s;>

<sup>6</sup> <https://apps.urban.org/features/wealth-inequality-charts/>

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and Blacks has remained stagnant; the homeownership gap between white and Black families has increased; and segregation continues to drive fundamentally different opportunities to education, employment, and opportunity.

All too often, government policies (or lack thereof) that yield racially biased results are attributed to personal choices or chance—rather than to the clear and intentional actions of government actors. Perhaps no one describes this better than scholar Richard Rothstein who, in his book *The Color of Law*, describes with exacting precision that in city after city, racial segregation in housing is not “*de facto* segregation”—or a result of private action—but rather the consequence far more insidious but no less destructive “*de jure* segregation”—or explicit government activities undertaken with the intent to subjugate Black lives.<sup>7</sup>

Right here in New York City, our own Mayor ascertained that New York City had the most racially segregated school system because of individual housing decisions that yielded racially homogenous neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup> The fact is that 87% of people stopped, questioned, and frisked were Black or Latinx at the height of a practice once deemed the cornerstone of an allegedly race-blind broken windows policing policy.<sup>9</sup> And the fact that the vast majority—57%—of heads of households living in shelters are Black is cited as individual flaws in the inability to attain a family-sustaining job.<sup>10</sup> The truth, however, is that government policy is the architect of these grave disparities, but governments consistently ignore their culpability or blame a perfect storm of individual choices as the root cause, rather than anti-Black racism—plain and simple.

Governing from a lens of racial equity means that we do the difficult work of centering those at the margins, who have been most harmed by explicit government choices, and make explicit interventions to repair the ills of our past. For the purpose of this Agenda, that means that we unapologetically center Black New Yorkers. New leadership in New York City on the heels of a surge of energy in solidarity with the movement for Black lives opens up the possibility that New York can finally center racial equity in governing.

### Six Bold Recommendations for Black New Yorkers

This agenda goes into policy recommendations in great detail in the areas of Health & Wellbeing, A Green City, A World-Class Education, Housing for All, Dismantling the Carceral System & Ending Violence in Our Communities, and Economic Opportunity & Building Generational Wealth.

The following priorities reflect the most urgent of these recommendations that speak to the gravity of this moment:

1. Put money directly in Black New Yorkers’ hands with baby bonds and a guaranteed paycheck. In 2016, Black households with children had one cent for every dollar held by white households with children.<sup>11</sup> Further, household wealth is an indicator of education, employment, and other opportunities throughout our lifespan. For too long, Black people have been shut out and left behind by racist policies and practices across all levels of government. As a result, “it will take 228 years for the average Black family to catch up to the wealth of an average white family today, and that’s only if conditions improve immediately.”<sup>12</sup> Putting cash in the hands of Black New Yorkers will only make a dent in the damage caused, but it’s a good start. With baby bonds for all children born into families with household incomes

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-color-of-law-a-forgotten-history-of-how-our-government-segregated-america/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/02/nyregion/nyc-segregation-affordable-housing.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nyclu.org/en/press-releases/analysis-finds-racial-disparities-ineffectiveness-nypd-stop-and-frisk-program-links>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/basic-facts-about-homelessness-new-york-city/#:~:text=Approximately%2057%20percent%20of%20heads,are%20of%20unknown%20race%20ethnicity.>

<sup>11</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2378023120916616>

<sup>12</sup> <https://generalassemb.ly/education/celebrating-black-in-tech-personal-finances-and-the-racial-wealth-divide/new-york-city>

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of 0 percent to 30 percent Area Median Income (AMI), and a paycheck guarantee—both upheld by public banks and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), our city can set Black families up for success in the long-term, while repairing the ills of the past. See *more recommendations on [Economic Opportunity & Generational Wealth Building](#)*.

**2.** Create a pipeline for non-law enforcement union jobs for Black New Yorkers. Unionized public sector employment has been a reliable pathway to the middle class and wealth-building for so many Black Americans. In New York City, New York State, and across the United States, Black people are the most highly unionized group than any other racial or ethnic demographic.<sup>13</sup> And yet, as evidenced by the fight to defund the NYPD this summer, the fact that many Black New Yorkers currently serve in law enforcement has been used as the primary scapegoat as to why we cannot defund punitive city agencies because doing so would harm Black communities. New York must create a new pipeline for sustainable, unionized employment within city government for Black New Yorkers who are currently in law enforcement roles, and Black New Yorkers who have been shut out of sustainable employment—Black trans women, Black folks who have been incarcerated, and other Black New Yorkers facing the greatest barriers to employment. See *more recommendations on [Economic Opportunity & Generational Wealth Building](#)*.

**3.** Pilot a basic income program in zip codes with the highest rates of gun violence. Taking a public health approach to gun violence means recognizing that many of its root causes are inherently linked to wealth and the well-being of individuals—including poverty, income inequality, lack of opportunity and under-resourced services.<sup>14</sup> The injury, pain and trauma of violence impacts the physical and mental well-being of communities, intergenerationally concentrating poverty among Black New Yorkers facing the greatest burdens, while impacting healthy habits and increasing rates of premature death, high medical costs and decreased productivity. Likewise, many communities plagued by gun violence have faced generations of economic disinvestment, including decreased job opportunities and business investment.<sup>15</sup> Globally and nationally, basic income programs have been proven to work: cash transfers are spent judiciously and frequently lead to significantly higher economic gains compared to money invested.<sup>16</sup> A basic income program in communities whose fabrics have been frayed by gun violence would provide an additional opportunity for families to secure housing, put food on the table and reduce the anxiety associated with being unable to afford daily necessities that so frequently leads to violence and cycles of trauma.<sup>17</sup> This program, coupled with a targeted block-by-block gun removal initiative, will usher an end to gun violence. See *more recommendations on [Economic Opportunity & Generational Wealth Building](#) and [Dismantling the Carceral System & Ending Violence in Our Communities](#)*.

**4.** Launch a citywide truth and reconciliation process focused on race and reparations. As attorney, Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative, Founder of The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and MacArthur “Genius Grant” Recipient Bryan Stevenson says, “We have committed ourselves in this country to silence about our history, to ignorance about our history, to denying our history. And that’s the first part of this relationship that has to be repaired. We’ve got to be willing now to talk honestly about who we are and how we got here.”<sup>18</sup> Since the 1970s, governments around the world have established truth and reconciliation commissions to address the harm they have caused to their own citizens, like Reconciliation Australia, which was established as the national body for reconciliation in Australia.<sup>19</sup> While we hope for a national truth and reconciliation process as a country to heal from the enduring nationwide legacy of genocide and slavery,<sup>20</sup> we can start this process as a city. From the ills of the racist and misguided War on Drugs to widely practiced policies like ‘Stop, Question and Frisk’ to the surveillance and removal

<sup>13</sup> [https://slu.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CUNY-SLU-Union\\_Density-Report-2020pdf.pdf](https://slu.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CUNY-SLU-Union_Density-Report-2020pdf.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <http://efsgv.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Root-Causes-of-Gun-Violence-1.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/justice-policy-center/projects/economic-impacts-gun-violence>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2020/03/13/5-lessons-for-using-universal-basic-income-during-a-pandemic/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/free-money-the-surprising-effects-of-a-basic-income-supplied-by-government/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.vox.com/21327742/bryan-stevenson-the-ezra-klein-show-america-slavery-healing-racism-george-floyd-protests>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/about-us/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/08/16/does-america-need-a-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-395332>

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of Black children from Black parents and families, our city's own government has committed undue harm to Black New Yorkers. Other states and cities have taken this approach, with North Carolina establishing a commission in 2000 to create a record of and assess the impact of the 1898 massacre and successful coup d'état by white supremacists in Wilmington, NC and Oklahoma creating a commission to assess and create a historical account of the 1921 Tulsa massacre.<sup>21</sup> The time to illuminate the ills of our shared past is now so that we can acknowledge the generational pain and center the experiences of those who have had to bear the most harm. As part of the truth and reconciliation process, the city should establish a justice fund used as a form of reparations to invest in Black communities who have been disinvested in, under-funded, and under-resourced for generations.

**5.** Build Black generational wealth and prevent displacement through community home ownership. Countless Black homeowners across the five boroughs are struggling to maintain their homes due to systemic barriers, predatory practices, and rising costs. For seniors on a fixed income, the prospect of keeping one's home is even more elusive. All the while, many Black New Yorkers would love the opportunity to purchase homes in historically Black neighborhoods, but cannot—the inaccessibility of mortgage loans being just one reason.<sup>22</sup> Despite the threat of deed theft running rampant in Black communities,<sup>23</sup> there are still homeowners looking to sell to a legitimate buyer. New York City must pilot a program that allows Black homeowners who are interested in passing their homes onto prospective Black buyers - who, more often than not, may be longtime local residents - into a rent-to-buy program. Prospective owners would have the opportunity to rent from the homeowner through the duration of the mortgage, without facing discriminatory lending practices; the seller would no longer have the burden of costly payments to maintain their home; and Black-owned assets remain in Black hands, curbing displacement and keeping communities whole. See *more recommendations on Housing for All*.

**6.** Create a city racial equity commission to evaluate every new policy and piece of legislation. Past New York City mayors and City Councils have made varying—and at best, clunky—attempts at centering racial equity as core to their agenda-setting strategies. Efforts like the New York City Young Men's Initiative were an important first start, but much more must be done to ensure real accountability for the government to set policy and advance legislation through a racial equity lens. Currently, our City Council passes legislation and city agencies enact rules without a uniform, evidence-guided discussion of the possible racial impact of changes to city law. And while a consensus is forming that supports reviewing the racial impact of land use decisions, all laws passed in any government have the potential to be written or enforced in a manner that slights one or more racial groups—something Black New Yorkers know all too well. As such, we must fully fund and create a racially diverse commission of social science experts that can collect germane data and evaluate every new rule change and bill, and specifically detail both the new policy's potential impact on various racial groups and how to ensure equitable enforcement. This commission should be part of the legislative and rulemaking review process and must submit a racial equity statement before a bill receives a committee vote or a rule change is enacted. The commission should also consult experts from germane disciplines and community organizations during the racial equity statement drafting process to ensure expert understanding of how enforcement currently works and how it might hamper any attempts at anti-racist policymaking. Once the commission is established and has a clear process to evaluate new policies, it should also begin reviewing the city charter and city law, in tandem with the Law Department, to identify potentially racist laws already on the books; conduct a rigorous analysis to determine whether each law has been enforced in a racist manner; and suggest legislative fixes that will ensure each law is implemented in an anti-racist manner.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://crrj.northeastern.edu/home/about-us/truth-commissions/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://anhd.org/report/black-and-latino-borrowers-locked-out-homeownership-new-york-city-new-data-and-analysis-shows>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/21/nyregion/deed-theft-brooklyn.html>

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## **Health & Well-Being**

Black New Yorkers deserve to benefit from our city's world-class health infrastructure and yet health outcomes for Black New Yorkers are oftentimes the worst. Because of systemic neglect, poor housing conditions, proximity to air pollution, lack of access to green spaces, and the shuttering of hospitals in communities of color, chronic illnesses like breast cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and stroke mortality are not only disproportionately higher for many Black people but also often diagnosed at a later age than their white counterparts.<sup>24</sup>

In light of the burden that Black New Yorkers had to bear throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, our approach to health and well-being for our communities must focus on a systems-level approach.

## **COVID-19 Response**

Increase COVID-19 testing sites, and access to vaccination and pandemic-related care in predominantly Black communities through community-based responses. Our response to Covid must continue to center the communities impacted the most—Black New Yorkers who have continued to experience the ills of social determinants of health. In addition to a racially equitable approach to ensuring access to testing and vaccines, we must provide culturally competent education to increase awareness of testing and vaccine availability. The onus must be on the leadership of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Health and Hospitals (H+H) and state officials to ensure fair and equitable inoculation, counseling, outreach for and distribution of vaccines in Black neighborhoods. Our city's existing healthcare institutions, leadership and overall public health strategy must center racial equity as its core strategy to put an end to the pandemic.

Engage in direct outreach with trusted messengers to build trust in the vaccine. Vaccine hesitancy in communities of color, and in particular in Black communities, has been well-documented.<sup>25</sup> After hundreds of years of medical experimentation, false public health information knowingly distributed to Black communities and outright racism from healthcare institutions that is still the reality facing so many Black New Yorkers today, it's no surprise that Black communities are less trusting of the vaccine. The city must continue to build trust with Black communities through providers of color, credible community messengers and deferring leadership to trusted experts in our community.

## ***Growing a Healthcare Workforce that is Ready to Serve Black New Yorkers***

Create a mental health corps of culturally competent providers to support grieving families and communities. There have been countless tragedies because of the compounding experience of loss brought on by COVID-19. As a result, our communities are traumatized—and, in many ways, retraumatized—by preventable deaths and other experiences of pandemic-related loss. New Yorkers, especially Black New Yorkers, must be able to receive mental health services free of charge, from culturally competent providers who they trust. The city must create a mental health corps of trained providers who can support New Yorkers with the services they need, free of charge. While premium services like TalkSpace provide mental health services at users' fingertips, there are few options for people who cannot pay for mental health services out of pocket, or who do not have employer-sponsored health insurance—and even fewer options for young people who might be covered through a family member or guardian. A New York City Mental Health Corps of providers who are able to serve New Yorkers of color would provide on-demand services that help meet folks' needs.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/structural-inequalities-in-new-yorks-health-care-system>

<sup>25</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/ny-scrambles-ensure-covid-vaccine-rollout-doesnt-leave-behind-black-and-brown-communities>

Develop a citywide doula program so that all people giving birth can access a doula, regardless of their ability to pay. A key factor for Black women to give birth and receive the medical advocacy they need is the ability to benefit from the presence of a birth advocate, like a doula. There is a wealth of evidence that demonstrates the benefit of doula care, especially for Black women who are giving birth.<sup>26</sup> In spite of their documented benefits, most people who seek doula care pay for this service out of pocket. New York City must expand affirming doula care to improve mortality disparities in healthcare.

Create a pipeline of Black birthworkers, nurses, midwives and OB-GYNs who are prepared to end Black maternal mortality. In New York City, from 2006 to 2010, Black women were 12 times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes.<sup>27</sup> While Black women aren't significantly more likely to develop conditions like hemorrhages & preeclampsia, they are more likely to die from them. All signs of the cause of this point to medical racism—even when all factors are controlled for, unequal treatment of providers towards Black women is abysmal. And yet, a recent study found that when Black babies are delivered by Black doctors, their mortality rate is cut in half.<sup>28</sup> In partnership with academic institutions like the City University of New York, and New York City Health+Hospitals (H+H), New York City must invest in the pipeline of Black healthcare providers who are prepared and eager to serve Black folks, especially those who are pregnant and/or giving birth.

Train Black healthcare workers who are ready to serve Black LGBTQ+ communities, with a focus on transgender and non-binary Black New Yorkers. In spite of all of the progress that New York has made on providing affirming healthcare to LGBTQ+ communities, and communities of color in particular, healthcare remains a luxury for so many queer and trans Black New Yorkers. Black healthcare providers must be trained to serve queer and trans Black communities who are among the most neglected by our healthcare system.

Require that all residents and healthcare providers being trained at H+H are evaluated on their competency to serve Black patients. While H+H offers training to physicians system-wide, the city must increase the reach and efficacy of a core curriculum that teaches cultural humility in providing access to care. H+H must also institute more rigorous benchmarks for anti-racist trainings in healthcare for all providers, and DOHMH must expand the availability of trainings to all providers beyond our public hospital system. We must also hold physicians accountable to ensure and devise a robust metric - one that incorporates clear accountability measures like open liability insurance claims or preventable patient deaths - to suspend bad actors and those who have a history of ignoring patient needs.

Grow the number of Black-owned caregiving co-ops to provide homecare services. The care economy is among the fastest growing in the nation, and is made up of mostly women of color—and Black women in particular—who provide needed services to people with disabilities or who are aging. Homecare agencies are notoriously poorly managed, and leave workers of color who dominate the industry with low wages and little opportunity to collectively bargain. Most recently, home care workers in New York State lost a battle to get paid their due time, as the New York State Court of Appeals determined that home care workers who work 24-hour shifts only needed to get paid for 13 hours of their time.<sup>29</sup> Our city must invest in worker-owned cooperatives of caregivers so that workers themselves can set labor standards and earn a livable wage.

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<https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2019/12/15/black-mothers-matter-079532#:~:text=Studies%20show%20that%20doulas%20help,black%20or%20low%20income%20women>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/ms/pregnancy-associated-mortality-report.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> [https://1410c6d1-d135-4b4a-a0cf-5e7e63a95a5c.filesusr.com/ugd/c11158\\_150b03cf5fbb484bbdf1a7e0aabc54fb.pdf](https://1410c6d1-d135-4b4a-a0cf-5e7e63a95a5c.filesusr.com/ugd/c11158_150b03cf5fbb484bbdf1a7e0aabc54fb.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/nys-highest-court-its-legal-to-pay-home-health-aide-workers-for-13-hours-of-a-24-hour-shift>

## **A BLACK AGENDA FOR NEW YORK CITY**

## ***Curtailing Health Disparities and Expanding Access to Healthcare***

Expand access and provider competency to deliver affirming healthcare to Black transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) folks. The five boroughs need more TGNC providers to offer holistic, trans and gender-affirming healthcare. Providers like Callen-Lorde Community Health Center are overwhelmed with demand, which is a signal to our city that we must increase the supply of qualified providers to serve our communities. DOHMH and H+H must expand the pool of providers by training more community health workers, physicians, nurses, social workers and more who are Black and TGNC themselves, or who are able to provide affirming care to Black TGNC folks.

Expand the reach of community clinics trusted by Black communities, particularly for those that specialize in STI rapid testing and prevention. In June 2019, the city opened a STI rapid testing site that specifically focused on testing and prevention of STIs among queer and trans folks of color.<sup>30</sup> The city must continue to expand community-focused care models to address disproportionately high HIV and STI positive rates experienced by Black folks.

Expand school based health centers and expand comprehensive sex education. It is well established that school-based health centers provide essential healthcare that many communities of color are otherwise locked out of.<sup>31</sup> The city must expand school based health centers beyond the 387 schools that already have them, and ensure that providers build trust with families, parents and guardians so young people access the care they need.<sup>32</sup> New York City must also expand comprehensive sex education so young people receive medically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive sexual health education that is LGBTQ+ inclusive, every grade, every year.

Increase funding of research focused on health equity and health disparities to then implement recommendations for a more patient-centered healthcare system. While the city reports on an annual plan for equitable healthcare through efforts like Take Care New York, the availability of disaggregated, real-time data is sparse.<sup>33</sup> Given the grave health disparities experienced by Black New Yorkers, our city must invest in real-time population research focused on the needs of Black folks in our city.

## ***Food Sovereignty and Food Justice***

Bolster food sovereignty citywide. The pandemic has surfaced the fragility of New York City's food systems. Before COVID-19, nearly 1.2 million New Yorkers were already food insecure, which accounted for what the Food Bank of New York City defines as a "Meal Gap" of more than 201 million missing meals across the five boroughs.<sup>34</sup> Mutual aid organizations across New York City have filled critical gaps since the beginning of the pandemic, especially for Black New Yorkers who have been hit the hardest by not only the pandemic, but by the economic instability that has resulted.<sup>35</sup> The city has tremendous power over food procurement, and therefore a stake in food sovereignty. In spite of advocacy organizations' attempts at providing direct relief to undocumented workers, many Black undocumented folks are disconnected from services and do not otherwise qualify for SNAP or other forms of relief. Our city must create a supplementary food voucher system for New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity who are left out of SNAP, connect

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/nyc-s-quickie-lab-closes-loophole-sexual-health-prevention-n1015826>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5759331/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/health-and-wellness/school-based-health-centers>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/tcnv/tcnv-2020.pdf>

<sup>34</sup>

[https://1giggs400j4830k22r3m4wqg-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Fighting-More-Than-Covid-19\\_Research-Report\\_Food-Bank-For-New-York-City\\_6.09.20\\_web.pdf](https://1giggs400j4830k22r3m4wqg-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Fighting-More-Than-Covid-19_Research-Report_Food-Bank-For-New-York-City_6.09.20_web.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/life/2021/1/4/22202979/nyc-mutual-aid-groups-covid-head-into-2021-with-expanded-mission>

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mutual aid grocery efforts and support shared infrastructure at scale, contract with food providers owned and operated by people of color and immigrant communities who can provide food recipients with culturally relevant food options, and expand community fridges managed by non-profit organizations, mutual aid groups and trusted local providers to ensure New Yorkers have the right to healthy, sustainably produced and culturally appropriate food.

End food apartheid. It is not mere coincidence that predominantly Black communities within Harlem, Brooklyn and South Bronx are home to New York City's food deserts. In these same areas, where income levels are below average, food deserts are linked to higher rates of diabetes and lower rates of physical inactivity. Simply put, we must create an equitable system of food access for all communities, especially the Black communities that have suffered for generations from a lack of access to high quality, healthy food products. To start, New York City must identify the top 20 food deserts in our city and work with Black-owned supermarket owners to partner with trusted community based organizations that serve the Black community, providing them with sufficient seed money to open up grocery stores that cater to their neighbors' needs. The city should work to locate these supermarkets in a centralized location for each food desert to ensure ease of access for the communities, provide resources for the promotion and advertising of these new locations to local community members, facilitate dialogues with local community groups to identify partnerships between various nonprofits and these supermarkets (e.g. fitness and healthy eating initiatives), and conduct a periodic analysis of food access in the city to determine whether new food deserts have appeared.

## **A Green City**

Black New Yorkers bear the brunt of infrastructure divestment and disinvestment, resulting in transit deserts, disproportionate proximity to air, sound and light pollution, an overconcentration of hazardous facilities (like waste transfer stations), a lack of green space and overall environmental neglect. It is long past time for policymakers to rectify a long history of neglect of Black New Yorkers by the city whose construction they literally bore on their backs.

In 18th century New York, a dearth of potable water and lack of public sewers meant enslaved persons spent their days carrying clean water to their households and human waste away from them.<sup>36</sup> As the city developed public health infrastructure, Black New Yorkers were pushed to the margins of that very infrastructure, evidenced either by substandard services or living dangerously adjacent to the infrastructure built to serve other communities.

The current public review regimen developed in the middle of the last century is in desperate need of reform. As noted in an in-depth analysis by the Municipal Art Society, over the past twenty years rezoning processes in New York City have led to whiter, more unaffordable neighborhoods.<sup>37</sup> And New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson's proposed planning reform, issued in December 2020, calls out the need for corrective action to counter "segregationist policies and the historic neglect of brown and Black neighborhoods."<sup>38</sup>

Public transportation and an accessible transportation infrastructure are fundamental tools in building a more equitable society. Yet even as Black New Yorkers would suffer disproportionately from the MTA's proposed cuts and fare hikes in the face of extreme budgetary austerity, they already face numerous other obstacles. From historical disinvestment in their communities that has created a now inadequate route map to racist fare evasion enforcement, Black New Yorkers do not have equal access to the lauded transit system as the rest of the city.

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<sup>36</sup> Hoffer, Peter Charles: [The Great New York Conspiracy of 1741: Slavery, Crime, and Colonial Law](#). Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.mas.org/initiatives/reforming-ceqr/>

<sup>38</sup> <http://council.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Planning-Together-Final-Report-December-16-2020.pdf>

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## **Environmental Justice**

Revise the city's CEQR process. The City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) process systematically considers the adverse environmental impacts that could result from a proposed discretionary land use action. The city's guiding document, the *CEQR Technical Manual*, needs to be revised in the following ways:

- Projected outcomes that are required to be analyzed (reasonable worst-case development scenarios) should reflect real-world examples rather than overly optimistic computer models, and previously approved projects should be required to provide updated analyses to examine how accurate their projections turned out to be;
- Projects should study more comprehensive and varied alternatives;
- City rules should be revised to balance individual project goals with wider environmental concerns;
- Proposals need to offer more detailed mitigation measures and add mechanisms to keep project sponsors accountable to the community;
- City planning processes must adhere to the 2018 Charter revision mandating more community input,<sup>39</sup> and
- Environmental impact statements should be required to be more readable and accessible for public understanding and input.

## **Transportation**

Fully fund and implement the already-passed Streets Master Plan. New York City's Streets Master Plan intends to dramatically improve bus and bike transit infrastructure and create safer streets across the city, especially in Black neighborhoods that have suffered historic disinvestment.<sup>40</sup>

Accelerate New York City Transit's bus network redesign process currently underway and dramatically expand Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) plans. Black New Yorkers have the longest commute times in New York City, and overwhelmingly rely on the subway and buses to get to work.<sup>41</sup> Buses provide a relatively affordable and quick-to-implement way to provide better public transit for Black commuters. The 14th Street Busway has been an enormous success and expanding BRT routes to Central Brooklyn and other Black neighborhoods is essential to allowing people to travel for work and pleasure.<sup>42</sup>

Create better bike infrastructure everywhere, but prioritize Black neighborhoods where NYPD is more likely to ticket Black bikers for riding on the sidewalk.<sup>43</sup> Not having safe places to bike in the street has given police even more opportunities to criminalize Black people. The placement of better bike infrastructure—such as protected bike lanes—in whiter and wealthier neighborhoods is yet another example of the city's disinvestment in Black communities.

<sup>44</sup>

Ensure the Fair Fares Program is fully funded and expanded for all New Yorkers in need. Fair Fares recognized that subway and bus fare is too expensive for low-income people and cut the price by 50 percent. However, not all eligible people have applied for Fair Fares, and even a half-price round trip fare can still be costly for many. As New York City's revenues recover from the current recession, the city should invest more in fare reductions—starting as a pilot targeted

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.nycctb.info/nyc-votes/vgwelcome/general-election-2019/ballot-proposals/ballot-question-5-land-use/?languageType=English> and <https://www.citylandnyc.org/proposed-land-use-ballot-question-seeks-to-enhance-community-input/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3954291&GUID=D37BA0B0-9AB6-434B-A82E-E49A7895A1A4&Options=&Search=>

<sup>41</sup> <https://wherewelive.cityofnewyork.us/explore-data/access-to-opportunity/transportation/>

<sup>42</sup> [https://new.mta.info/system\\_modernization/brooklynbusredesign](https://new.mta.info/system_modernization/brooklynbusredesign)

<sup>43</sup> <https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2020/06/22/nypd-targets-black-and-brown-cyclists-for-biking-on-the-sidewalk/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2019/10/17/in-nyc-the-best-bike-lanes-are-in-rich-neighborhoods/>

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at Black communities if resources are limited. This action should be the first step toward eventually making public transit free for all, which would benefit all New Yorkers—and particularly Black New Yorkers.

Reform Access-a-Ride. Currently there are countless independent and private operators under City Council oversight; the absorption of this transit network into a municipal service would create unionized and/or municipal jobs at a cost savings, and allow seniors with limited mobility, those living with disabilities, and other clients of Access-a-Ride to have more [reliable transportation options](#).

Support the expansion of Black-owned dollar-van providers. Dollar vans are a lifeline for Black communities who live in transit deserts. Our city must equip dollar van companies with technology infrastructure so that riders can effectively “hail” rides, supporting riders to get access to transportation and support dollar van owners to make a living.

Shift traffic enforcement out of the NYPD. More than \$220 million of the NYPD’s bloated budget goes to enforcing traffic laws.<sup>45</sup> The reality of armed police handling traffic enforcement is that routine stops too often escalate to violence and even murder. It is no surprise that Black people suffer these fates during police traffic stops at disproportionate rates. Armed police should not handle traffic enforcement and the real savings from shifting these responsibilities from the NYPD can be reinvested in Black communities.

### **Green Infrastructure**

Invest in green infrastructure, starting with Black communities. As Black communities in coastal and low-lying areas become more vulnerable to rising sea levels and stronger storms, and suffer from heat island effects due to rising temperatures and a relative lack of parks and trees, the importance of investing in green infrastructure grows. These investments in our collective sustainability and resiliency are disproportionately needed in Black neighborhoods—where they could produce tens of thousands of high-quality jobs—and can be funded largely through new borrowing under the city’s capital budget.<sup>46</sup>

Upgrade NYCHA’s heat and hot water systems to modern and reliable electrical systems from their current state of disrepair. Existing heat and hot water systems in NYCHA developments create at worst dangerous and at best uncomfortable conditions for nearly all residents in the colder months of the year.<sup>47</sup> NYCHA residents deserve access to reliable, non-stop heat and hot water without worrying about their health and well-being while staying at home.

Meet coastal and low-lying areas’ substantial resiliency needs. Our city must commit to meeting the resiliency needs of various coastal and low-lying areas to reduce flooding, whether by creating raised parkland, floodwalls, floodgates, or other projects.

Reduce building emissions across New York City, creating cleaner air and reducing energy needs. We must implement deep energy retrofits for NYCHA and city-owned buildings,<sup>48</sup> provide (or coordinate the provision of) financing for

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/a-look-inside-the-new-york-city-police-department-budget.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.gothamgazette.com/city/9842-next-steps-nyc-green-new-deal-coalition-100000-climate-jobs>

<sup>47</sup> <https://ny.curbed.com/2019/8/12/20802116/nycha-heat-outages-hot-water-winter-legal-aid-society>

<sup>48</sup> <https://rmi.org/our-work/buildings/deep-retrofit-tools-resources/deep-retrofit-case-studies/>

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retrofits for privately owned buildings, and continue expanding energy efficiency standards for all residential and commercial buildings.<sup>49, 50</sup>

Create new parks and plant new trees in Black neighborhoods. Black neighborhoods have far less park space per resident than white neighborhoods, which aid in reducing heat island effects and creating new space for recreation. We must identify available city-owned properties where new parks can be located while also planting trees where possible to ensure cleaner air for Black New Yorkers.

Invest in clean energy locally. Though the Green New Deal may seem to many to be out of the purview of the city, there is so much we can do to invest in clean energy at the city level. One initial move is to replace expensive and heavy polluting peaker plants with cleaner alternatives, including community solar - which can be located right in New York City.

## **A World-Class Education**

For far too long, New Yorkers have come to accept the fact that our education system is deeply divided by race and class. In the last eight years, and largely through organizing efforts of student and student-parent led organizations like Teens Take Charge, Integrate NYC and the Coalition for Educational Justice, our city has reconciled with the stark disparities in racial inequity in our city's school system. It is now unfortunately common knowledge that New York City has the most racially segregated school system in the country.<sup>51</sup>

While important steps have been made to begin to desegregate our city's schools, expand early childhood education and invest in a diverse educator workforce, excellence in K-12 education must also mean that schools that are majority-Black are just as excellent and desirable as schools that are majority-white or majority-Asian American.

New York City is more reliant on standardized testing for school admissions than any other school district in the country.<sup>52</sup> When policies like standardized tests, programs for "gifted" children and disciplinary practices yield deep disparities based on race, the policies themselves that attempt to create objectivity are in fact, racist policies that eliminate the prospect of education serving as a universal equalizer for Black students. With 1.1 million students and over 1,800 schools in the system, the impacts of this are devastating to Black students.

In addition to standardized testing, Black students suffer from disproportionately racialized surveillance and discipline in New York City schools. In spite of an overall drop in school suspensions since Mayor de Blasio took office, racial disparities remain high, with Black students continuing to bear the brunt of school suspensions.<sup>53</sup> Disparities are particularly harsh for Black girls—during the 2018-2019 school year, there were 4,560 police interventions targeting girls in New York City public schools—Black girls represented 57% of all interventions, while representing only 25% of all girls.<sup>54</sup>

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<https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/new-york-citys-ambitious-building-emissions-law-turns-one#:~:text=Local%20Law%2097%20is%20not,the%20city%27s%20greenhouse%20gas%20emissions.&text=Under%20Local%20Law%2097%2C%20buildings,emissions%20caps%20beginning%20in%202024>

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[https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/new-york-elections-government/ny-nyc-de-blasio-green-new-deal-20201117-fcvkrdypdzqbhijhte3cm3xu-story.html?mc\\_cid=8c3a63379e](https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/new-york-elections-government/ny-nyc-de-blasio-green-new-deal-20201117-fcvkrdypdzqbhijhte3cm3xu-story.html?mc_cid=8c3a63379e)

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/26/nyregion/school-segregation-new-york.html>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/17/nyregion/public-schools-screening-admission.html>

<sup>53</sup> <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2019/11/1/21109129/student-suspensions-fall-sharply-in-new-york-city-reversing-an-unusual-bump-the-year-before>

<sup>54</sup> <https://campaigns.ggenyc.org/ending-abuse-at-the-hands-of-law-enforcement/>

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An education system that is truly invested in equal opportunity for Black students in New York City is one that invests in their full needs and sees them as whole people.

### ***Ending School Segregation by Design***

Permanently end gifted and talented (G&T) programs. More than 75% of students in G&T programs are white or Asian.<sup>55</sup> Racial segregation in G&T programs was accelerated after former Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein eliminated a more holistic assessment of students for G&T programs and replaced admissions with a single exam.<sup>56</sup> This change was almost immediate—in 2007, 31% of students admitted to G&T programs were Black; in 2008, the number was only 13%.<sup>57</sup> As a result of extreme racial segregation in housing based on race, G&T programs were also scaled back in majority-Black neighborhoods. As a result of the efforts of New York City's School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG), Mayor De Blasio announced that the city would administer G&T for one final time in 2021, on the road towards elimination of the program. As the next Mayor and City Council enter into leadership, G&T must be permanently eliminated and codified into law to ensure it never returns and our schools do not use similar tests to perpetuate racist programs like G&T.<sup>58</sup>

Transform the middle school admissions process into a lottery. In December 2020, the DOE announced that it would pause selective screens in the middle school admissions process for one year, and instead lean on the early findings from a lottery system for entry into middle schools.<sup>59</sup> This decision must remain permanent, and build on the learnings from Brooklyn's District 15 Diversity Plan that is already showing important successes at creating a more diverse, more holistic learning environment for students.<sup>60</sup>

End the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) and other high-stakes testing. As with most standardized testing, exams like the SHSAT yield racially disparate outcomes in New York City's elite specialized high school system. In 2020, only ten Black students gained entry into Stuyvesant High School for the 2020 - 2021 academic year, up from seven Black students in 2019. Even though New York City's schools are 70% Black and Latinx, the overall percentage of black and Hispanic students in New York's eight so-called specialized high schools is only 11%.<sup>61</sup> We must start by abolishing the SHSAT and create a far more holistic approach to specialized high school admissions in New York City.

Implement the full set of recommendations put forth by the School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG). In 2019, students, education experts, advocates and researchers released the full set of recommendations from the SDAG, a task force charged with solving New York City's enormous school segregation problem. SDAG put out over 60 recommendations

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<https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2019/04/16/as-new-york-city-makes-limited-changes-to-gifted-programs-the-regular-admissions-process-yields-predictable-results/&sa=D&ust=1611444883207000&usq=AOvVaw0SWG078F-rlq16IRtZX3E8>

56 <https://www.nyclu.org/en/news/how-nycls-gifted-programs-make-segregation-worse>

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<https://www.nyclu.org/en/news/how-nycls-gifted-programs-make-segregation-worse#:~:text=New%20York's%20extremely%20racially%2Dsegregated%20boroughs%20in%20order%20to%20enroll>

58 <https://gothamist.com/news/city-will-offer-gifted-talented-test-four-year-old-students-one-last-time>

59 <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/12/18/22188384/changes-nyc-school-application-process>

60 <https://d15diversityplan.com/>

61 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/nyregion/nyc-schools-numbers-black-students-diversity-specialized.html>

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for school desegregation, including all of the above items, and they must all be adopted by the DOE.<sup>62</sup> Although this is a work in progress, SDAG laid the foundation for racial transformation at schools, and this work must be embraced.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Expanding the Promise of Early Childhood Education***

Expand 3K citywide. Early childhood education is key for Black children in their development and learning, and nationally, only 54% of eligible Black children are served by programs like Head Start. As a result of the pandemic, the DOE paused in expanding 3K in New York City. We must invest in 3K expansion to all five boroughs, building on the success of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) to bring critical early childhood education to all New Yorkers.

Build a universal childcare system in New York City. It has been well documented that early childhood programs like Head Start is a vital early childhood program for Black families and communities.<sup>64</sup> There is perhaps no greater moment than the COVID-19 pandemic to demonstrate how urgent truly accessible childcare is for families to thrive. We must expand the benefits of HeadStart, which have disproportionately beneficial impacts on Black children and families, and which is currently administered by the DOE in an attempt to build a seamless birth - 12th grade system, to all children in the five boroughs.

### ***Invest in Excellent Schools that Serve Black Youth***

Ensure the full promise of Fair Student Funding. Since 2007, New York City public schools have been funded in part by a weighted, student needs-based allocation formula known as Fair Student Funding (“FSF”) that currently accounts for approximately two-thirds of a school’s total annual budget.<sup>65</sup> In spite of its promise, FSF has never been fully implemented across New York City Schools. In order to ensure that Black students have the greatest opportunity to succeed at thriving schools, we must ensure full implementation of FSF so resources are allocated to students in greatest need.

Expand community schools with the goal of serving more Black students. Community schools are a proven model to provide holistic education and much-needed services to New York City students.<sup>66</sup> We must expand community schools across the system, with a focus on predominantly-Black communities who would benefit most from this model of integrative education.

Expand Afrocentric and Indigenous education for all students. Afrocentric curricula, which emphasizes education about African nations and the African heritage of many Black students, works to empower Black children and teach them to be proud of where their families came from, a split from the Eurocentric approach in many city schools that many Black New Yorkers encountered when they went to school. Likewise, inclusion of indigenous history would ensure a more comprehensive and historically accurate understanding of the long-misinterpreted history of the people whose land we currently occupy, including pre- and post-1900 context. To work toward racial equity in our city’s school system, schools must expand their application of an Afrocentric and indigenous approach to all students, not just Black and indigenous students. The “default” in any school should not be a white, Eurocentric approach where students learn about the Western world and teachers use examples from Western cultures to teach students about

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<sup>62</sup> [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1c478c\\_1d5659bd05494f6d8cb2bbf03fcc95dd.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1c478c_1d5659bd05494f6d8cb2bbf03fcc95dd.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/vision-and-mission/diversity-in-our-schools/school-diversity-advisory-group-recommendations>

<sup>64</sup> [https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/12/2017\\_EquityStartsEarly\\_0.pdf](https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017/12/2017_EquityStartsEarly_0.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> [https://www.nyappleseed.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-FSF-Briefing-3\\_20.pdf](https://www.nyappleseed.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-FSF-Briefing-3_20.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/1/28/21121101/nyc-s-community-schools-program-is-getting-results-study-finds>

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everything from math to music without an acknowledgment of African nations or indigenous culture, and we have shaped everything from literature to modern popular music to American cuisine.

Expand affirming LGBTQ+ education for all students with a focus on Black leadership in the queer and trans liberation movement. Stonewall was a police riot started by Black and Latinx trans women in New York City. Young people, and young people of color in particular, must have the opportunity to learn about the history of the queer and trans liberation movement, especially placing the unique story of activism in New York City into context.

Expand the workforce ready to serve Black students, including NYC Men Teach. We must invest in creating an educational workforce that reflects the student body - one where young students can see a teacher who looks like them and who understands and respects their culture and background. Efforts like NYC Men Teach work to identify Black men and men of color and recruit them to become teachers in our city schools. We must use city resources to expand NYC Men Teach, adding hundreds of more Black male teachers and male teachers of color into the teacher pipeline, and work to strengthen mentoring and counseling programs by providing clear pathways to access these jobs for Black New Yorkers.

### ***Create Positive Learning Environments for Black Students in Schools***

New York City schools need to be decriminalized. Black students are exponentially more likely to receive school suspensions than their white counterparts. Trauma-informed care models— including restorative justice and combating the adultification of student discipline—will allow Black children to be treated as children and the primary clients, not enemies, of the education system. Working with the Mayor’s office, education advocates, students and parents, I will look to implement the following concrete outcomes for public school students:

Eliminate vague and subjective dress codes. Black girls are adultified simply for being who they are. The New York City Department of Education must eliminate vague and subjective dress code policies that often target Black students, and especially girls, young women, femmes and gender non-conforming youth, in schools.

Remove School Safety Agents (SSAs) from schools and support just transition to other municipal jobs. New York City must work towards removing all police from schools while supporting a just transition for the 5,000 municipal workers who serve as SSAs into other municipal, unionized, non-law enforcement jobs in similar civil service titles.

Decriminalize learning environments. All New York City schools must eliminate zero tolerance policies, remove metal detectors and other instruments of surveillance;

Eliminate suspension and expulsion. Black youth face the most disproportionate rates of school discipline of any other racial group in NYS schools.<sup>67</sup> Even as the city has seen a significant decline in overall suspensions, racial disparities have remained a constant. This is especially true for Black LGBTQ students and Black students with disabilities.<sup>68</sup> I intend to work with student groups, educators, and the Mayor’s office to equip schools with the tools to eliminate suspensions as a tool for discipline.

Implement a citywide suspension and expulsion review policy. Our city must identify the schools that disproportionately suspend Black students and publicly post the information.

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<sup>67</sup> <https://campaigns.ggenyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Suspension-Free-Schools-A-Report-By-GGE.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.ggenyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Response-to-Student-Safety-Act-Data-Release.pdf>

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Provide full legal representation to students in need. On the path to eliminating school suspensions, New York City must create a formalized, fully-funded pilot program in a handful of DOE schools with the highest rates of suspension to connect either law students from public and private universities based in New York City or city public defenders with DOE students undergoing the suspension or expulsion process to provide them with representation throughout the process - akin to the Suspension Representation Project at NYU Law; and

Create a bill of rights for all students subjected to the suspension or expulsion process that notifies them of their rights (including their ability to seek representation). A Bill of Rights would specify the types of activity that is and is not grounds for discipline, details information on the suspension and expulsion process in clear terms, and provides resources like legal aid or psychological counsel that they may.

## **Housing for All**

Housing is a human right; period. After years of racist housing policies and racialized disinvestment and neglect in our city's public housing, it's going to take a bold shift in our thinking and large-scale reinvestment to right the wrongs of our past.

From the monstrous demand for vouchers and the broken housing lottery system to the failures of de Blasio's Housing New York plan, and the years-long waiting list for NYCHA, we are failing low- and middle-income New Yorkers who need a safe, secure, affordable place to live. We need to stop selling city-owned property to developers and keep public land in the public's hands.

The overwhelming cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing options, and the issue is highly racialized, with Black New Yorkers making up an astonishing 58 percent of the homeless shelter population.<sup>69</sup> Over the last several years, we have seen the abysmal lack of moral courage by our city's leadership to build truly affordable housing for New Yorkers experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. This administration has spent the last several years focused on building and preserving housing that has never been accessible to people experiencing homelessness.

When thinking about community safety, we need to put the welfare of Black trans women and non-binary femmes at the center of these conversations. This includes advocating for an overdue housing voucher program for LGBTQ youth—long promised by the de Blasio administration.

## **A Local Homes Guarantee**

Pass a Homes Guarantee at the local level<sup>70</sup>. Every person living in our city should have access to safe, permanently affordable housing. Black New Yorkers disproportionately face homelessness, live in public housing that has long been neglected and underfunded, spend more than 30% of their income on housing, and are still feeling the effects of a long legacy of racist housing policy. We need bold, large-scale investment in affordable housing, especially for Black New Yorkers, to ensure that housing is a human right.

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<sup>69</sup> [https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NYCHomelessnessFactSheet\\_7-2017\\_citations.pdf](https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NYCHomelessnessFactSheet_7-2017_citations.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> [https://homesguarantee.com/wp-content/uploads/Homes-Guarantee\\_-\\_Briefing-Book.pdf](https://homesguarantee.com/wp-content/uploads/Homes-Guarantee_-_Briefing-Book.pdf)

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## ***Increase the Supply of Housing that Will Benefit Black Residents***

Grow the social housing sector. As we continue to face the ramifications of this pandemic and a volatile economy, we need to shift our focus and center housing as a social good. Social housing aims to create affordable housing that shields housing from market forces, promotes a vision of social equity, and gives residents democratic control over their own housing. Some of these ideals are currently incorporated in part by public housing and limited equity cooperatives, but we must encourage the growth of this model by empowering nonprofits and tenants to acquire housing developments, expanding tenants' rights and protections, and target risky and predatory behavior by landlords and lenders.

Fully fund public housing. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has been criminally underfunded and neglected by all levels of government, and low-income Black New Yorkers have needlessly lived in dangerous conditions for years as a result. There must be a tremendous overhaul to the infrastructure that governs maintenance and capital repairs at NYCHA. I will continue to work closely with NYCHA residents and my colleagues across local, state, and federal government to ensure that we unapologetically advocate for the massive reforms needed to ensure that every NYCHA development has the resources they need to ensure a quality standard of living for all residents. That starts with immediately repairing all units with lead-based paint, prioritizing households with children.

Establish a network of Community Land Trusts to take ownership of derelict buildings and private properties with uninhabitable living conditions. The first Community Land Trust (CLT) in the United States was founded over fifty years ago by Black farmers in the Jim Crow South who faced eviction for their involvement in civil rights activities.<sup>71</sup> Today, Black folks face some of the highest eviction rates in New York City, with tenants living in majority Black zip codes being three times more likely to be evicted than those living in majority white zip codes.<sup>72</sup> The city has had various iterations of programs geared towards public ownership of abandoned private properties and those with tenants living in hazardous conditions; yet so many tenants are still living in uninhabitable conditions with predatory landlords who appear on the NYC Public Advocate's Worst Landlords List year after year.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, the New York City Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD) has at least 225 buildings in its Alternative Enforcement Program (for FY2020) that meet a certain threshold of "hazardous" and "immediately hazardous" violations per dwelling unit—conditions that no one should be subjected to living in day after day and in many cases, month after month and year after year. Other city programs like the Tax Lien Sale and Third Party Transfer notoriously target and disempower low-income Black homeowners by revoking ownership rather than providing assistance to sustain ownership, while CLTs empower communities with cooperative ownership and true affordability in perpetuity.<sup>74</sup> It is time government agencies stopped incentivizing private landlords to maintain hazardous building conditions through lenient programs that don't keep tenants safe, and time we put the power in the hands of the people through intentional ownership opportunities.

Expand housing options specifically for Black trans New Yorkers. Nationally, Black transgender people face the most severe housing insecurity among LGBTQ communities.<sup>75</sup> New York City has taken some steps to expand housing options for trans folks of color, including most recently via an effort put forth by Gays and Lesbians Living In a

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<sup>71</sup> <https://www.newcommunitiesinc.com/>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/race-evictions-new-york-city>

<sup>73</sup> <https://landlordwatchlist.com/landlords>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/housing/2019/5/2/21211102/brooklyn-foreclosures-must-stick-city-lawyers-argue>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/covid-19-action-centers-black-lgbtq-people-can-address-housing-inequities>

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Transgender Society (GLITS).<sup>76</sup> New York City must continue to expand housing options for Black transgender folks across the five boroughs, following the model created by GLITS.

### ***Overhaul the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure to Center Racial Equity***

Require racial impact and equity statements for all proposed land use decisions. Every time the city decides to change how land is used multiple communities are impacted. The upzoning of a neighborhood could mean a change in the business culture of a neighborhood - jeopardizing Black-owned small businesses - or could mean a fundamental shift in the socioeconomic and racial demographics of a neighborhood given the types of housing or commercial land use proposed. As such, residents deserve to understand the full picture of how their homes may change if a land use proposal passes. Developers are already required to submit reports estimating the environmental impact of their projects. As such, the city should require a racial impact study for any land-use changes that also require an environmental review to understand the direct and indirect impacts of the project as they relate to race and ethnicity, similar to Public Advocate Jumaane Williams' bill Int. 1572-2019.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, developers who show that their project will have a strong impact on the racial and ethnic character of a neighborhood in any manner must also submit their plans to correct that impact and ensure an anti-racist development that does not harm specific groups and bolsters the local community. The City Planning Commission and all stakeholders in the ULURP process can then review these materials to determine whether the impact and suggested equity adjustments are satisfactory.

Radically rewrite Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH). The MIH program is a disaster and has been completely ineffective. The program's stated goal of creating a drastic increase in the number of affordable housing units is right, but unfortunately, the program is inherently flawed. The vast majority of units created are concentrated in areas that are facing unprecedented amounts of gentrification, while leaving more affluent communities starved for affordable housing. Furthermore, the definition of affordable is problematic as these units are priced at amounts that would seem astronomical to many New Yorkers in dire need of housing. We must radically revise MIH to expand affordability beyond 20% and retain public land for public housing, rather than continuing the privatization scheme that is woefully ineffective.

Prioritize rezonings in wealthier neighborhoods to increase deeply affordable housing stock. Rezonings in our city have decimated communities across the boroughs and have ignored meaningful input from local residents. Development projects, like Atlantic Yards/Pacific Park right here in District 35 have pushed longtime residents out and created chaos, endless construction, broken promises, and little accountability for those who remain. We must shift our focus of neighborhood rezonings from communities that are predominantly of color and instead increase the housing supply in wealthier, predominantly white neighborhoods. These neighborhoods can absorb the cost of building deeply affordable housing with premium market-rate rents, while low-income communities of color cannot.<sup>78</sup> Crystal will work with other council members and the new administration to identify as many as 12 of these neighborhoods and advocate for their rezonings to provide housing and community infrastructure for lower-income residents and residents experiencing homelessness.

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<sup>76</sup> <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/the-glits-house-allows-homeless-lgbtq-people-a-place-to-thrive>

<sup>77</sup>

<https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3963886&GUID=D2C9A25B-0036-416E-87CD-C3AED208AE1B&Options=ID|Text|Search=int+1572>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/10/opinion/affordable-housing-soho-nyc.html#click=https://t.co/CbK6zGwUFT>

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## **Create Long-Term, Permanent Housing Solutions for People Experiencing Homelessness**

Expand supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness who are in need of wraparound services. Since the 1980s, permanent supportive housing that incorporates affordable housing assistance and wraparound services like healthcare has continued year after year to prove a strong solution to homelessness.<sup>79</sup> After the Bloomberg administration ended permanent housing placements in exchange for limited housing subsidy programs, homelessness skyrocketed and the city eventually canceled, effectively placing more than 10,900 families back in the shelter system.<sup>80</sup> We need to continue to finance and expand supportive housing programs for people experiencing homelessness, in conjunction with federal housing voucher programs, to reduce homelessness. We also must continue incorporating new wraparound services to ensure those experiencing homelessness are prepared for living and working in our current world. While the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Office of Supportive and Affordable Housing and Services (OSAHS) has resources for people experiencing homelessness for everything from obtaining public assistance to legal assistance to disability access, we must ensure HRA continues to audit its programs and identify shortcomings and areas for further growth while also working to inform individuals in supportive housing systems about the availability of various city programs.

Strengthen enforcement of 15% set aside on city-funded projects. Under a recently passed bill, any rental building with more than 40 units must set aside at least 15 percent of units for people experiencing homelessness.<sup>81</sup> For developers who want to bypass the homeless set aside, they could eschew city funding or propose projects with fewer than 40 units - even though these projects will have higher city subsidies. Though the bill is projected to create 1,000 new apartments for people experiencing homelessness per year, we must ensure developers follow not just the letter of the law but also the spirit of it in working to create more housing for people experiencing homelessness. As such, we must work with HUD and the state legislature to identify available funding systems to create a capital development fund that goes toward providing even greater subsidies for developers who build this housing for those experiencing homelessness in their private development. We must also create a strong enforcement mechanism to ensure these units are not later flipped as market-rate units and remain in the housing pipeline for those experiencing homelessness.

## **Dismantling the Carceral System & Ending Violence in Our Communities**

Black New Yorkers know what keeps our neighborhoods safe. For too long safety has been in the hands of the police and criminal justice system, who have systematically surveilled and criminalized black people. Black people are about 22% of NYC's population and 54% of NYC's daily jail population.<sup>82</sup> Reducing violence and recovering from harm means centering the leadership and needs of those most impacted. This can not be done within the current system. We must close the jails on Rikers Island without building new jails. To do so we must decarcerate and invest in community based resources. As we fight for a future without pre-trial detention we can not forget our currently incarcerated family and friends and must immediately address conditions of confinement.

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<sup>79</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/briefing-supportivehousing-2002.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/help-homeless-families-permanent-housing/>

<sup>81</sup> <https://council.nyc.gov/press/2019/12/19/1856/>

<sup>82</sup> [http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Breaking-the-Frame\\_.pdf](http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Breaking-the-Frame_.pdf)

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### ***Demilitarize and Defund Law Enforcement***

Demilitarize and defund the NYPD. The NYPD's budget must be cut by at least \$1 billion, and these cuts must be related to core NYPD operations and practices and not just a symbolic shifting of funds.<sup>83</sup> This means instituting an immediate hiring freeze, cancelling new cadet classes and cutting the budget for the expansion of surveillance infrastructure. In defunding the police, we also must cut from the patrol budget. The NYPD has extended their reach into civic institutions where they have no place and frequently abuse those they interact with. Armed police officers must be removed from public transit, homeless outreach, and mental health response.<sup>84</sup>

Demand greater police accountability. Police must be held accountable for abuses of power. New York City should end qualified immunity and allow people to recover monetary damages in civil lawsuits against police officers.<sup>85</sup>

Remove indemnification clauses from union contracts. Through labor negotiations, we must remove any and all indemnification clauses from contracts with police unions. These clauses are what redirect public funds to cover the legal fees of police officers and shield officers from liability for their actions.

Remove the discretion over police discipline from the NYPD. Time and time again, the NYPD demonstrates that it has no capacity to discipline police officers who harm and kill civilians, especially Black civilians. NYPD discipline should be determined by a completely independent body that has final decision-making authority.

### ***Invest in Community-Led Safety Decoupled from Law Enforcement***

Invest in community-based restorative justice with attention to addressing violent crimes. While there has been a sea change in focus on restorative justice practices as an ideal way to address harm, we must scale this model to address violent crimes. People who have caused harm must not be defined by the potentially worst thing they have done, and people who have experienced harm should have the opportunity to make decisions about what accountability looks like.

Replace cops with community support through the expansion of Cure Violence. Time and time again, we have seen that our current punitive solutions for preventing and intervening in violence put Black lives at risk. It has been well-established that violence is a public health issue, and it must be treated as such.<sup>86</sup> New York City has already expanded its focus on Cure Violence programs, which engage credible messengers and violence interrupters to mediate conflict, address violence before it begins, and hold community members through trauma and healing in moments when violence does erupt. Promising models such as the Brownsville Safety Alliance are already set to expand to other parts of the city.<sup>87</sup> Cure Violence must serve as our city's governing model for violence interruption, engaging and hiring those closest to their communities as organizers, social workers and fully able to keep one another safe.

Expand community safety efforts in the face of escalating violence faced by queer and trans Black communities. As of February 2021, three Black transgender women have already been killed simply because of their of identity. In the face

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<sup>83</sup> <https://www.changethenypd.org/nycbudgetjustice>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.changethenypd.org/nycbudgetjustice>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-police-immunity-methodology/>

<sup>86</sup> [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gun-violence-is-a-public- b\\_10698848](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gun-violence-is-a-public- b_10698848)

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.thecity.nyc/brooklyn/2021/1/12/22228235/nypd-pull-out-experiment-in-brownsville-to-expand-elsewhere-chief-says>

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of violence against Black transgender, non-binary and LGBTQ communities, New York City must expand community safety efforts that do not involve law enforcement.

Fund community security at scale. For decades, Black led organizations like the Audre Lorde Project, Life Camp and GMACC have advanced community solutions to reducing violence and increasing neighborhood security. The City Council must recognize their leadership as well as other community safety organizations and increase funding to their work.

Expand Mayor's Action Plan to all NYCHA developments. We must expand the Mayor's Action Plan (MAP) to all NYCHA developments to invest in community driven responses to neighborhood issues.<sup>88</sup>

Bolster ONS funding. We must increase funding to the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) to expand the Crisis Management System to fund credible messengers to escalate conflicts and connect people to services such as the Anti-Gun Violence Youth employment programs and culturally competent mental health support.<sup>89</sup>

### ***Invest in the Real Well-Being of Black Children***

End ACS' surveillance of Black children. We must fundamentally overhaul the New York City Administration of Children's Services (ACS) to stop ending the disproportionate surveillance of Black children and refocus efforts by the New York City Administration of Children's Services, instead focusing on the root causes of entry into the child welfare system and systemic change.

Strengthen access to informal kinship navigator training for all caretakers. We must ensure all caretakers are aware of all resources at their disposal, including financial assistance grants, and of all laws related to kinship care. Especially during this pandemic, Black families have disproportionately relied on informal kinship care as jobs, food and other necessities have become more scarce. [CITE] However, resources for informal kinship caretakers are sparse and frequently inaccessible to families and caretakers most in need. As such, we should ensure all city-appointed caretakers can undergo city-administered training, with the help of groups like the NYS Kinship Navigator, that walks them through the kinship care process in New York, including available benefits offered by the state Office of Children and Family Services and ACS. The city can also expand subsidies and grants for families to access the statewide kinship navigator program or local kinship services.

Provide temporary funding to keep families connected. As the COVID-19 pandemic keeps families apart, New York City should provide greater stipends to foster parents to help them support their children during the pandemic, including by financing greater access to technology (e.g. internet, tablets) to keep families and their networks connected.

### ***Work Towards Making Our City's Jail System Irrelevant***

We must fundamentally transform our approach to criminal justice - moving from a punitive model to one focused on justice and rehabilitation. We cannot keep degrading and dehumanizing our neighbors who are currently incarcerated, more than half of whom are Black. Any way we slice it, jails, prisons and detention centers are no place for people.<sup>90</sup> At a minimum, we must:

- Close Rikers Island, the Vernon C. Bain Correctional Center (aka "The Boat") and borough-based jails;

<sup>88</sup> <https://map.cityofnewyork.us/learn-about-map/>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/peacenyc/interventions/crisis-management.page>

<sup>90</sup> [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/press-release/DOC\\_At%20a%20Glance-1st6\\_Months\\_FY2019\\_012919.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/press-release/DOC_At%20a%20Glance-1st6_Months_FY2019_012919.pdf)

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- Decarcerate through legislative reforms and prioritize the reduction of the jail population and funding community based alternatives to incarceration and detention, including for violent felonies;
- Eliminate all low-level offenses and support efforts to legalize marijuana;
- Eliminate sentences of less than a year served in city jails, as the majority of individuals serving these sentences have been convicted of a misdemeanor or non violent felony;<sup>91</sup>
- Decriminalize sex work and all related offenses (including decarcerating people arrested or jailed for sex work related charges);
- Eliminate ticketing for equipment violations;<sup>92</sup>
- Invest in more Alternatives to Incarceration and Alternative to Detention programs, prioritizing programs with a trauma informed and restorative justice lens;<sup>93</sup>
- Advocate for the release of older individuals who are incarcerated; and
- Support state reforms to release people incarcerated because of technical parole violations - the only population that has increased over the past five years as there have been steady decreases in the overall jail population.<sup>94</sup>

### ***Support the Health and Wellbeing of People Held in City Jails***

On our pathway to closing city jails, we must ensure that the treatment of people being held is humane. At Rikers, 75 percent of people who enter the jail are addicted to drugs, with 20 percent addicted to heroin or painkillers.<sup>95</sup> Our city must radically shift how we provide mental health services and support implementation of community-based mental health respondents to remove any criminalization of people with mental health. We must define carceral health as a public health issue. This includes:

- Stopping the criminalizing of people criminalizing people with mental illness;
- Prioritizing those incarcerated and working in city carceral facilities for COVID-19 vaccinations, as they are at high risk of contracting and spreading the virus.<sup>96</sup>
- Adopting a public health approach to addressing concerns that arise survival crimes, drug possession, and sex work;
- Moving individuals incarcerated at the incredibly toxic and dangerous body of landfill and rubbish we call Rikers Island to a space that has documented reports of increased health issues from exposure to toxins;<sup>97</sup>
- Providing immediate and holistic healthcare to everyone in its jails and detention centers;
- Working with Correctional Health Services to provide expanded services to individuals at Rikers;
- Expand harm reduction based drug treatment in jails;
- Expanding access to methadone and buprenorphine in jails;

<sup>91</sup> [https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/City-Sentenced-Factsheet\\_October-2020.pdf](https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/City-Sentenced-Factsheet_October-2020.pdf)

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-police-to-no-longer-ticket-for-equipment-violations-under-new-policy/567406922/>

<sup>93</sup> <https://jlusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/buildCOMMUNITIES-platform.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> [http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Breaking-the-Frame\\_.pdf](http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Breaking-the-Frame_.pdf)

<sup>95</sup>

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2016/05/23/at-rikers-island-a-legacy-of-medication-assisted-opioid-treatment#:~:text=At%20Rikers%2C%2075%20percent%20of,three%20available%20medications%20and%20counseling.>

<sup>96</sup>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/26/nyregion/new-york-vaccine-prisons.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=New%20York>

<sup>97</sup> <https://news.law.fordham.edu/elr/2017/11/22/the-concerns-of-closing-a-toxic-island/>

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- Ensuring that everyone who comes into contact with the New York City Department of Correction is immediately connected to long term care in the community and gets extensive follow up and continuity of care at H+H;
- Ensuring CHS and the city not only surpasses the Board of Corrections’s minimum standards but also individually assess and addresses the needs of incarcerated people, particularly those with disabilities; and
- Providing expansive and affirming care for transgender and gender non-conforming, non-binary and intersex people.

### ***End Gun Violence Alongside Directly Impacted Community Members***

Address youth violence with restorative justice solutions. Young people and emerging adults, disproportionately Black, are frequently victims of gun violence and over-incarceration. Young people must be at the center of the city’s mitigation efforts as they have been in cities all around the country, and the focus must be on peace and restorative justice.<sup>98</sup>

Form a “Peace Book” pilot program in the 35th District. We must empanel a youth task force and earmark funding for a ‘Peace Book’ to be piloted in Council District 35, developed by young members of the community and regularly updated.<sup>99</sup> The Peace Book will contain contact information for wraparound services, job opportunities, and funding for training and programming for young people. The Peace Book will also identify community members and organizations providing free or accessible health care, therapy, meals, and substance use disorder and other harm reduction programs.

Form a civilian chaperone and mentorship program. Likewise, young people should have access to a safe passage to and from school. Instead of relying on armed law enforcement officers in subway stations and on school campuses, we should pilot a civilian chaperone and mentorship program, training and employing recent NYC public high school graduates and CUNY students to act as credible messengers in public transit and on common school routes to encourage school attendance and ensure young students can commute safely.

Engage in the largest gun buyback program in New York City. Historically, gun buyback programs have occurred at too small a scale and without proper targeting and incentivization, resulting in minimal reductions in gun violence. However, a citywide gun buyback program in tandem with other gun violence prevention programming could serve as a key educational tool for communities seeking to reduce the prevalence of firearms. The new program would utilize a graded system with larger rewards for guns most frequently used in crimes (e.g. handguns) and prevent incentivization of gun collectors or arbitrage. It also would incorporate a targeted advertising campaign, focusing on at-risk populations - parents, young people (especially young men) - in partnership with community organizations and credible messengers.

### ***Economic Opportunity & Building Generational Wealth***

Even as Black workers are in danger on the frontlines of our pandemic response, they also face mass unemployment.<sup>100, 101</sup> But these inequities did not begin with COVID-19. Black New Yorkers have extremely low representation in the best-paying industries, including finance, advertising, and business services, and have long been locked out of

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/chicago-youth-join-forces-demand-end-to-violence-against-children>

<sup>99</sup> <https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/pass-the-peace-book-ordinance-now>

<sup>100</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/new-york-citys-frontline-workers/>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/race-and-the-economic-fallout-from-covid-19-in-new-york-city>

opportunities.<sup>102</sup> This underrepresentation unsurprisingly contributes to lower wages for Black New Yorkers, but even within the same industries, the disparities in Black and white earnings are stark.<sup>103</sup> In a similar vein, two percent of New York City's businesses are owned by Black people, despite them making up 22 percent of the city's population.<sup>104</sup> And unsurprisingly, because Black New Yorkers have low homeownership rates and far less access to credit than their white neighbors, they suffer displacement from their communities in the wake of neighborhood rezonings.<sup>105, 106</sup>

When it comes to wealth-building, in 2016, Black households with children had one cent for every dollar held by white households with children.<sup>107</sup> Further, household wealth is an indicator of education, employment, and other opportunities throughout our lifespan. For too long, Black people have been shut out and left behind by racist policies and practices across all levels of government. As a result, "it will take 228 years for the average Black family to catch up to the wealth of an average white family today, and that's only if conditions improve immediately."<sup>108</sup> Putting cash in the hands of Black New Yorkers will only make a dent in the damage caused, but it's a good start.

The city's attempts at building economic prosperity for Black New Yorkers has been limited at best, and rife with corruption at worst. New York City's commitment to contract with more Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) barely makes a dent in our city's overall contracts, with the New York City Comptroller's 2020 Agency audit report finding that only 4.9 percent of city contracts were awarded to M/WBEs.<sup>109</sup> Between March and August 2020, the city spent more than \$1.5 billion for COVID-19-related goods and services contracts, yet only 11 percent went to M/WBEs.<sup>110</sup> The M/WBE program has long been found to be rife with corruption at both the City and State level - from shell companies set up as "pass-through" entities to secure contracts intended for M/WBEs, to spouses

At the same time as Black workers and their families fare the worst or near worst among New Yorkers across so many metrics, we must center their needs in planning our economic recovery.

### ***Protect Black Workers Who Have Suffered Through the Pandemic***

Streamline the city's workforce development offerings. We must streamline the city's workforce development offerings to make them easier for small businesses and workers to access and for organized labor to coordinate with, and invest in proven workforce development initiatives for Black communities. Examples include the Jobs-Plus program that serves NYCHA residents,<sup>111</sup> the Customized Training program for Black small businesses,<sup>112</sup> or bridge training to help people prepare for more advanced trainings or education.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> <https://nycfuture.org/research/stark-disparities-in-employment-and-wages-for-black-new-yorkers>

<sup>103</sup> <https://nycfuture.org/research/stark-disparities-in-employment-and-wages-for-black-new-yorkers>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.fastcompany.com/90541366/first-report-on-the-state-of-black-entrepreneurs-in-nyc-reveals-sharp-disparities>

<sup>105</sup> <https://furmancenter.org/thestoop/entry/snapshot-of-homeownership-in-new-york-city>

<sup>106</sup> <https://ny.curbed.com/2019/12/5/20995175/nyc-rezonings-racial-displacement-jumaane-williams>

<sup>107</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2378023120916616>

<sup>108</sup> <https://generalassemb.ly/education/celebrating-black-in-tech-personal-finances-and-the-racial-wealth-divide/new-york-city>

<sup>109</sup> [https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/making-the-grade/reports/making-the-grade-2020/#\\_ftn3](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/making-the-grade/reports/making-the-grade-2020/#_ftn3)

<sup>110</sup> [https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/making-the-grade/reports/making-the-grade-2020/#\\_ftn3](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/making-the-grade/reports/making-the-grade-2020/#_ftn3)

<sup>111</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/evidence/jobs-plus-expansion-findings-2018.pdf>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/bsct-brief-2014.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.mdrc.org/publication/beyond-ged>

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Reclassify all gig workers by recognizing them as employees rather than contractors. There are an estimated 150,000<sup>114</sup> app-based independent contractors in New York, representing only 1.6 percent of the state's overall workforce but about 17.5 percent of over 850,000 low-paid independent contractors in the state.<sup>115</sup> This much broader category of independent contractors labors under similarly low-paid and precarious conditions. As such, we should work with the state to require an hourly minimum wage for industries beyond car sharing, mandate employer-provided paid sick leave, and support gig workers' efforts to unionize.<sup>116</sup>

Support Black artists. The arts community has been one of the hardest hit since the COVID-19 pandemic began, as cultural beacons like Broadway shuttered, artists lost gigs, and performances at independent theaters halted across the city. A recent survey by Americans for the Arts found that more than 30,000 artists across the five boroughs were laid off due to the pandemic.<sup>117</sup> As a result, we have a unique opportunity to reshape our city's connection to the arts and promote Black artists and their stories. We should use discretionary funding to support Black cultural organizations - from nonprofit theaters and dance troupes to museums and art galleries - and incorporate Black art into city efforts where possible, commissioning temporary exhibits from Black artists on city properties or in our parks. We should also work with existing nonprofit cultural institutions to curate and create exhibits about race in New York City that are free to access for all New Yorkers. These exhibits can include oral histories from Black New Yorkers about their experiences with racism, interactive exhibits detailing the effects of redlining or over policing in specific neighborhoods, or a discussion of the Black leaders in our city who have worked to eradicate the injustices and inequities Black New Yorkers have faced for generations. As our city reopens, we should focus our artistic endeavors on Black creators.

### ***Building a Robust Black Workforce for a 21st Century City***

Ensure that Black workers are paid equitably within city government. In October 2020, an analysis required by local law found that male employees roughly average about \$4,500 a year more than female employees, and Black city workers average about \$7,600 a year less than white workers. New York City must issue an annual report on pay equity disaggregated by multiple variables, including but not limited to race and gender, and ensure that all city jobs make salary information publicly available in real time.<sup>118</sup>

Provide widespread education about state pay equity laws. In 2019, New York State passed a state law that bans employers from asking for or relying on salary history to set pay rates, as well as a prohibition on employers' paying employees less if they perform "substantially similar work" as their colleagues who are not in that protected class.<sup>119</sup> These laws have the potential to protect Black workers but many may not know about them when applying for a job. As such, we must undertake a citywide education campaign about pay equity laws and ensure job seekers know their rights.

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<http://www.centrernyc.org/lowpaid-wage-and-gig-workers#:~:text=The%20report%20estimates%20that%20there,independent%20contractors%20in%20the%20state.>

115

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5e424affd767af4f34c0d9a9/1581402883035/Feb112020\\_GigReport.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5e424affd767af4f34c0d9a9/1581402883035/Feb112020_GigReport.pdf)

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/policy/labor/will-gig-workers-be-classified-employees.html>

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/the-economic-impact-of-coronavirus-on-the-arts-and-culture-sector>

<sup>118</sup> <https://council.nyc.gov/press/2020/10/29/2031/>

<sup>119</sup> <https://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/fact-sheet-2019-new-york-state-pay-equity-laws/>

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Expand city investments in supporting the growth of community land trusts and worker cooperatives in Black neighborhoods. We should bolster city funding for community land trusts (CLTs) and worker co-ops in Black neighborhoods. Community land trusts ensure that buildings are not sold for profit, as the trust will own the land but sell property on that land, and stop real estate speculation that can result in resident displacement and even homelessness.<sup>120</sup> As mentioned above, we should create a network of CLTs to buy up derelict buildings and private land with poor living conditions. Worker cooperatives give workers the opportunity to own a portion of their business, increasing wealth for workers and helping reduce economic inequality.<sup>121</sup>

Ensure that (re)development plans in Black neighborhoods include ironclad commitments to training and long-term employment in high-quality jobs for incumbent residents. Too many development plans have made vague overtures about employing local talent when the actual jobs guaranteed are few, short-term, and pay too little; and resources are not provided to give local residents the training they need to attain better jobs that new development may create. Developments must include ironclad training and employment commitments for Black communities that ensure they benefit from the arrival of public and private investment in their neighborhoods.

### ***Put More Money and Assets in the Hands of Black New Yorkers***

Put money directly in Black New Yorkers' hands with a paycheck guarantee. New York City must implement a citywide paycheck guarantee that all Black New Yorkers regardless of immigration status, are eligible for a basic income. Federal legislation to implement a paycheck guarantee, the Paycheck Guarantee Act introduced by Congressmember Pramila Jayapal, would directly cover up to 100 percent of workers' paychecks throughout the coronavirus crisis.<sup>122</sup> The proposal would cover up to \$90,000 per worker, and cover every single person working at a business facing a significant revenue loss. A paycheck guarantee would help set Black families up for success in the long-term, while repairing the ills of the past.

Create a New York City Baby Bonds program that targets Black families. Our city must implement a baby bond program for all children born into families with household incomes of 0 percent to 30 percent Area Median Income (AMI). Such a program would give these children an investment account at birth that would ultimately grow throughout the child's life.<sup>123</sup> The child could then use the capital available in the account when they reach adulthood to finance major investments like a college education or costs related to a business start-up.

Expand city support for initiatives that promote and protect Black homeownership. Our government should review and formally support initiatives aimed at both expanding and protecting Black homeownership, ranging from estate planning education to organizing tenants to buy multi-family buildings to creating city-backed matched savings accounts to generate money for Black New Yorkers to put toward homeownership in the five boroughs.<sup>124</sup>

Expand NYC Kids Rise college savings pilot beyond its initial pilot to more Black neighborhoods. We should expand the pilot of the NYC Kids RISE Save for College program, conducted in partnership with the DOE, to more Black neighborhoods.<sup>125</sup> The program gives every kindergarten student an initial \$100 in a state 529 account and gives the child's parents and guardians information on how to create a college savings plan. Other community members - from

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<sup>120</sup> <https://ny.curbed.com/2019/6/18/18682466/nyc-community-land-trusts-funding-city-budget>

<sup>121</sup> <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/building-a-worker-co-op-ecosystem-lessons-from-the-big-apple/>

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2020/7/8/paycheck-guarantee-is-popular>

<sup>123</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/close-racial-wealth-gap-baby-bonds/613525/>

<sup>124</sup> <https://bhp.cnycn.org/>

<sup>125</sup> <https://nykidsrise.org/about/save-for-college-program/>

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religious institutions to community groups - can also contribute to the scholarship accounts. We should formally support this type of community-centered investment in education by expanding the program, specifically targeting Black neighborhoods - including some in District 35.

Expand the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection's Office of Financial Empowerment's financial literacy and services programming with a focus on Black neighborhoods. We should expand the Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE)'s programs aimed at fighting poverty and connecting New Yorkers with services aimed at bolstering their personal finances, ranging from a starter banking account to free or low-cost tax preparation services.<sup>126</sup> The city should commit to a comprehensive resident education initiative in Black neighborhoods to inform residents about the programs and connect them with any OFE services they may need.

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<sup>126</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dca/partners/programs.page>

## **Acknowledgements**

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