

NATIONAL BLACK CLIMATE MANDATE



**Gulf Coast Center
for Law & Policy**
southern perspective,
national impact, global influence

MOVEMENT
ORGANIZATION





NATIONAL BLACK CLIMATE MANDATE

The climate crisis is impacting communities in the U.S. and abroad and requires bold, immediate action. With the largest economy in the world and the greatest historical emissions of greenhouse gases, the U.S. must commit to doing its fair share of the global effort to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This effort must prioritize the dignity, well-being, and safety of marginalized communities and the most vulnerable people in both the U.S. and around the world. Now is the time for a Black climate agenda!

The Red Black and Green New Deal (RBG New Deal), an initiative of the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), puts Black liberation at the center of the global climate struggle, and addresses the impacts of climate change and environmental racism on Black communities.

This RBG New Deal agenda proposes immediate actions policymakers, corporations, and people can do to fortify Black people—especially those most marginalized, such as disabled, chronically ill, transgender, gender-nonconforming, and intersex people—from the uniquely racist practices of the fossil-fuel industry.

This initiative will transform and drive a national discussion meant to:

- Address the impact of climate on Black lives,
- Spark action toward the development of equitable solutions directly related to Black communities,
- Build and expand a network of climate supporters and advocates for immediate action, and
- Develop and introduce federal and local policy that protects and invests resources into the Black community to address the climate crisis.

The investment in the Black community's full potential and ability to thrive addresses all harm to Black Lives. Just as M4BL demands divestment from prisons, police, and surveillance that harm Black Lives, it also demands divestment from extractive economies and industries doing the same. The M4BL's Red, Black & Green New Deal initiative gets us to a sustainable future in defense of Black lives. The RBGND National Black Climate Agenda focuses on justice across six key pillars: Water, Energy, Land, Labor, Economy, and Democracy.



The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) is a national network of more than 150 organizations creating a broad political home for Black people to learn, organize, and take action. The Red, Black & Green New Deal initiative is designed to educate and catalyze Black people to prepare for, mitigate the impacts of and transform their fights for justice in a new climate reality. Join us as we save the planet by advancing a vision for Black Lives. Here's our plan:



**Gulf Coast Center
for Law & Policy**
*southern perspective,
national impact, global influence*

MOVEMENT
FOR BLACK LIVES



HONOR THE WATER

In its simplest form, water is life and should be honored as such. We demand a Constitutional declaration of water as a human right and a national ban on water privatization. Corporations and other entities that contaminate water through action or negligence should be held liable and made to repair the harm done.

Federal standards must ensure clean and safe drinking water and sewage services in all schools, jails/prisons, public spaces, and all housing. We need immediate replacement of all lead water pipes and immediate repair of Flint, Detroit, and other water systems that keep more than 2 million residents in the country without access to safe and affordable drinking water. We must establish and activate national emergency water assistance as part of in disaster declarations.

We demand an immediate end to deep water fracking and drilling. Ban all new fossil fuel drilling and fracking in federal waters, and protect marine habitats acknowledged for subsistence and cultural importance.

DEMOCRATIZE ENERGY

Energy is a human right. Oil, gas, coal, solar, and wind energy are part of the public commons for public control and benefit. We call for a Constitutional declaration of non-extractive energy as a human right and a national ban on all oil and gas drilling. The U.S. must divest from the mining, fossil fuel, and agribusiness industries responsible for fueling climate change. No new fracked gas, no new oil or gas pipelines, no new export terminals, no more bomb trains, and no more excuses for not moving to sustainable, non-polluting energy sources.

We must ensure adequate, equitable access to funding and finance for justly sourced, non-polluting renewable energy in Black communities. We must reform our nation's utility systems to provide sustainable energy access (from generation to transmission) to all who desire it. We demand community-control of local energy resources through a collectively governed, decentralized, climate-resilient, modernized grid with sufficient renewable energy storage.

We cannot continue to shift harm from the U.S. to the Global South but instead engage in a transition away from polluting industries to sustainable ones.

FREE THE LAND

Land is tied to our right to space, existence, dignity and care for Black communities. Free, Prior, and Informed Consent from Indigenous Peoples for all policies and infrastructure affecting their lands, waters, and cultural resources is the only way to achieve climate justice.

Black communities should be granted lifetime right to steward the land as a form of reparations for stolen labor of Africans enslaved in the U.S.. The federal government should grant untainted lands free of toxic chemicals to Black and Indigenous Peoples and provide resources to safely steward them for food production, shelter, and a thriving future.

We demand no additional leasing out of federal lands to fossil fuel/fracking industries, loggers, miners, or industrial agriculture. We must remove commodification schemes to convert farmland and agricultural resources into profit centers for cash crops.

We need to mitigate and regulate climate gentrification and further displacement of Black communities by protecting public housing and low-income neighborhoods situated on high ground. There must be a national mandate to retain and protect forests and wetlands that buffer and stabilize Black communities.

RE-IMAGINE & REDEFINE LABOR

We call for a Universal Basic Income. The standard of living a dignified life in this country must be rooted in self-determination and dignity. The U.S. transition away from dirty energy should include:

- Federal investment toward prioritizing impacted workers to support upgrading broken infrastructure including roads, rail, water and service lines;
- Rebuilding clean, sustainable, non-polluting and affordable public transit;
- Replacing lead pipes for clean water; and
- Expanding wind and solar energy through robust renewable energy standards with a prioritization of local and equitable hiring and contracting that creates opportunities for Black Lives.

Job programs must provide a living wage and encourage support for local workers' centers, unions, and Black-owned businesses which are accountable to the community. Care workers' value must be recognized and resourced. The right to organize and collectivize as workers must be federally guaranteed and protected. Federal and federally funded state job programs must specifically target the most economically marginalized Black people, and provide compensation for those involved in the care economy.

U.S. businesses and people, as well as foreign businesses offering goods or services

in the U.S., must conduct human rights and environmental due diligence in all of their global and domestic supply chains.

END EXTRACTIVE ECONOMIES & RESTORE STOLEN BLACK CAPITAL

We call for a Universal Basic Income. The standard of living a dignified life in this country must be rooted in self-determination and dignity.

The U.S. transition away from dirty energy should include:

- Federal investment toward prioritizing impacted workers to support upgrading broken infrastructure including roads, rail, water and service lines;
- Rebuilding clean, sustainable, non-polluting and affordable public transit;
- Replacing lead pipes for clean water; and
- Expanding wind and solar energy through robust renewable energy standards with a prioritization of local and equitable hiring and contracting that creates opportunities for Black Lives.

Job programs must provide a living wage and encourage support for local workers' centers, unions, and Black-owned businesses which are accountable to the community. Care workers' value must be recognized and resourced. The right to organize and collectivize as workers must be federally guaranteed and protected. Federal and federally funded state job programs must specifically target the most economically marginalized Black people, and provide compensation for those involved in the care economy.

U.S. businesses and people, as well as foreign businesses offering goods or services in the U.S., must conduct human rights and environmental due diligence in all of their global and domestic supply chains.

ADVANCE DEMOCRACY FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PLANET

Federal recognition of sovereignty must be approved for tribes with applications pending at the federal level for more than 10 years. The Rights of Nature must be legally recognized. We must adopt national standards of human rights within our legal system. We must adopt and mandate the Precautionary Principle and a polluter pays principle in all U.S. states and territories. We need to create universal voter registration and shift our voter registration to an opt-out structure, instead of an opt-in structure.

ROOT IN THE RIGHT TO BREATHE

We call for an end of toxic and polluting industry expansion in EJ communities. We must prioritize investment in remediation of polluted sites in environmental justice communities and expand equitable access to public health resources in historically underserved and impacted communities.

ADVANCE DEMOCRACY FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PLANET

Federal recognition of sovereignty must be approved tofor tribes with applications pending at the federal level for more than 10 years. The Rights of Nature must be legally recognized. We must adopt national standards of human rights within our legal system. We must adopt and mandate the Precautionary Principle and a polluter pays principle in all U.S. states and territories. We need to create universal voter registration and shift our voter registration to an opt-out structure, instead of an opt-in structure.

ROOT IN THE RIGHT TO BREATHE

We call for an end of toxic and polluting industry expansion in EJ communities. We must prioritize investment in remediation of polluted sites in environmental justice communities and expand equitable access to public health resources in historically underserved and impacted communities.

WATER



HONOR THE WATER

In its simplest form, water is life and should be honored as such. Even without economic benefit or service to humanity, water is precious and is to be respected, liberated, and protected. From rain, rivers, bayous, and creeks, to streams, lakes, and oceans, water is our most precious collectively held resource and access to it is the right of life in the ecosystem. Water must be managed cooperatively across regions as a common good, taking into account ecological as well as human needs and prioritizing use according to the greatest need rather than for industrial or profit gains.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION

We call for a Constitutional declaration of water as a human right and for a national ban on water privatization. We can no longer allow water to be privatized or used for any greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting government or industry use.





CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Corporations and other entities that contaminate water through action or negligence should be held liable and made to repair the harm done. We must declare a national ban on selling off control of municipal water systems to private corporations, including through design, building, and operation. We must revoke State Underground Injection Control laws and close loopholes for oil and gas production in federal environmental laws.

STANDARDS OF ACCESS

Federal standards must ensure and enforce clean and safe drinking water and sewage services in all schools, jails/prisons, public spaces, and to all residents. We call for the immediate replacement of all lead water pipes and immediate repair of Flint, Detroit and other water systems that keep more than two million residents in the country without access to safe and affordable drinking water. Going forward, we demand a national prohibition on all water shutoffs for non-payment and a national cancellation of all water debt.

EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS

We must establish and activate national emergency water assistance in disaster declarations. We must stop the racist and unjust practice of emergency manager laws that strip communities, particularly communities of color, from decision-making power.



OCEANS AND SEAS

We demand an immediate end to deep water fracking and drilling. Ban to all new fossil fuel drilling and fracking in federal waters and protect marine habitats acknowledged for subsistence and cultural importance. Phase out existing drilling by 2030, expand marine-protected areas, restore vulnerable marine ecosystems (Southern Mangroves; Great Lakes), and invest in the protection and repair of U.S. fisheries.



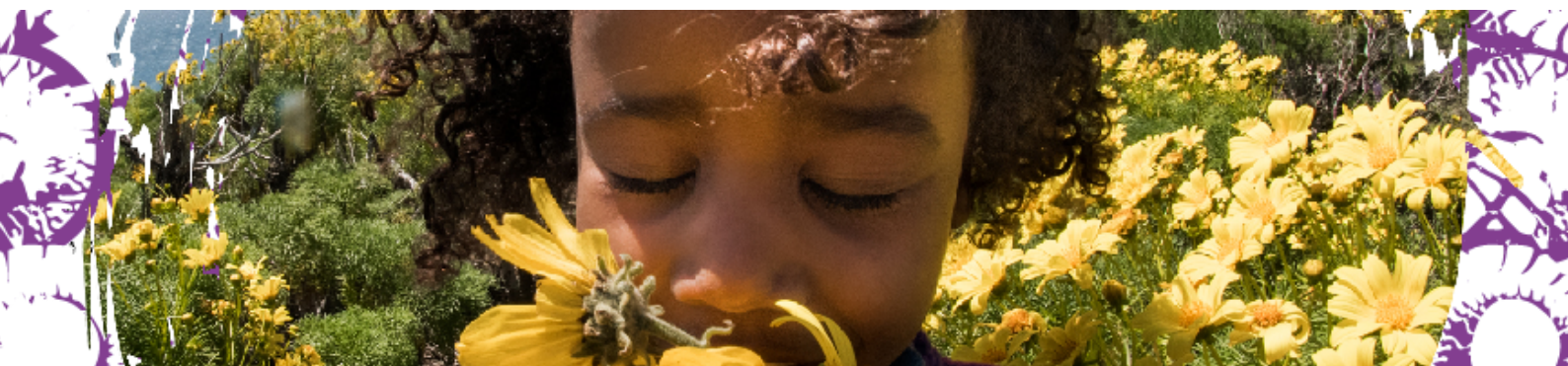
ENERGY



DEMOCRATIZE ENERGY

Energy is a human right. Oil, gas, coal, solar, and wind energy are part of the public commons for public control and benefit. The oil and gas industry concentrates harm into Black communities worldwide, creating sacrifice zones through hazardous shipping, trains, and pipeline transportation; air-polluting ports and export terminals; and toxic bodily absorption of microplastics and poisonous chemicals from facilities most often found in Black and poor communities. The same industries responsible for extracting fossil fuels and accelerating the climate crisis are the very industries polluting, destabilizing, and killing Black communities and ecosystems around the globe. No more Black Lives will be sacrificed for dirty energy.

We must transition to 100% justly sourced, renewable energy. We must mobilize public dollars and redirect private investments to accelerate this clean energy infrastructure. We must support ecologically sustainable farming and protect all forests, wetlands, and natural systems that balance the human output of greenhouse gases, coupled with policies to ensure a just and equitable transition for workers and communities toward a non-extractive economy. We need a plan for a national and global transition away from extractive industries that does not leave Black communities stuck with stranded industry assets or industry neglect





CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION

We call for a constitutional declaration of non-extractive energy as a human right. We also call on a national ban on all oil and gas drilling. We can no longer allow our precious Earth and its natural resources to be exploited for private gain and global destruction.

DIVEST FROM DIRTY ENERGY THAT HARMS BLACK COMMUNITIES

The U.S. must divest from the mining, fossil-fuel, and agribusiness industries responsible for fueling climate change. No new fracked gas, no new oil or gas pipelines, no new export terminals, no more bomb trains, and no more excuses for not moving to sustainable, non-polluting energy sources. We demand a phasing-out of existing nuclear energy in an equitable manner, and a replacement of reactors by expanding renewables and efficiency—not with fossil fuels. All subsidies supporting these harmful and climate-accelerating industries must be redirected to justly sourced renewable energy, and to a just transition for energy workers.



INVEST IN SUSTAINABLE ENERGY THAT HELPS BLACK COMMUNITIES THRIVE

We must ensure adequate, equitable access to funding and finance for justly sourced, non-polluting renewable energy in Black communities. We must accelerate deployment, integration, democratic ownership, public ownership, and affordability of renewables. We reject false solutions like carbon capture and sequestration, geoengineering, and technological alterations of the planet's natural systems that allow these drivers of the climate crisis to persist, that perpetuate oppressions, and that greenwash their harms. We envision a pollution-free sustainable energy economy with our country reaching zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

DEMOCRATIZE UTILITIES

We need to reform our nation's utility systems to provide sustainable energy access--from generation to transmission--to all who desire it. We demand a moratorium on essential utility service disconnections during disaster declarations and times of crisis. We must mandate states and multinational corporations operating in the U.S. to maximize energy efficiency and electrification. We call for community-control of local energy resources--this means a collectively governed, decentralized, climate resilient, modernized grid with sufficient renewable energy storage.



GLOBAL ACCOUNTABILITY

We cannot continue to shift harm from the U.S. to the Global South. Instead, we should engage in a transition away from polluting industries to sustainable ones. U.S. policy must phase out coal, oil, and gas production at a pace consistent with our fair share to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Stop new U.S. fossil fuel production immediately and phase out fossil fuel production by 2030. The U.S. must also advance equity and declare that the global definition of “renewable energy” cannot be harmful to communities or the environment. Nuclear, wood pellets, solid waste, geoengineering, construction and demolition debris are harmful.



LAND



FREE THE LAND

Land is tied to our right to space, existence, dignity and care for Black communities. It holds the right for Black communities to be whole, nourished, housed and healed. Land determines the destinies of our communities - the right to restored land, clean air, clean water and fair housing. Our goal is a reclamation of Black people's sustainable stewardship of the land. Through theft and violence, Black farming communities have been reduced by 98% in the U.S., while industrial food production now contributes to at least a quarter of global, climate-accelerating emissions through fossil fuel consumption at the base of its machinery, fertilizers and pesticides. We must reimagine land use and a sustainable approach back to the land. We must divest from practices that harm the land and invest in ways of life that help us care for the land that humanity depends on.

INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

We seek collective community control over how resources are preserved, used and distributed and do so while honoring and respecting the rights of our Indigenous family and the sacred duty to maintain that relationship for the benefit of our future generations. Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for Indigenous Peoples regarding policies and infrastructure affecting their lands, waters, and cultural resources is the only way to achieve climate justice.



LAND STEWARDSHIP AS REPARATIONS

Black communities should be granted lifetime right to steward the land as a form of reparations for stolen labor of Africans enslaved in the U.S.. The right to the land should grant untainted, toxic and chemical free lands from the U.S. Government to Black and Indigenous Peoples and provide resourcing to safely steward them for food production, shelter and a thriving future.

Lifetime stewardship programs for restorative agricultural cooperatives, debt forgiveness for predatory land loss, land redistribution via community land trusts all accompanied by a legal guarantee of viable land (e.g. untainted, non toxic, healthful lands).

Build a Black-owned “land commons” equal to 16 million acres, which was the height of Black ownership in 1920. Strategies should include: Stopping all (public and private) foreclosures and seizures of Black land; funding for a network of Black community land trusts; implement the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act in all states; forgive all farmer land debt; end/punish corporate land grabbing. We call for guaranteed basic income for Black Land Stewards engaged in practices that promote climate mitigation, climate adaptation, healing and Black culture.



END THE COMMODIFICATION OF LAND

No additional leasing out of federal lands to fossil fuel/fracking industries, loggers, miners or industrial agriculture. Remove commodification schemes to convert farmland and agricultural resources into profit centers for cash crops and the influx of market-based solutions, which are not usable or sustaining to Black livelihoods. No new prisons or detention facilities. We call for a moratorium on removing trees and developing land for the creation of prisons, immigration detention facilities and institutions that allow for the practice of slavery, servitude or dehumanization.

FAIR HOUSING & GENTRIFICATION

Mitigate and regulate climate gentrification and further displacement of Black communities by protecting public housing and low-income neighborhoods situated on the “high ground”. Reform the National Flood Insurance Program, housing government sponsored enterprises (GSEs), and other housing programs and subsidies to assist residents who need to relocate from toxic environmental pollution or areas with high climate risk and ensure equity for low-income homeowners by repurchasing at market value of the year 2000- when governments and corporations definitely that the climate crisis threaten the people, economies and governments globally. Create a National Housing Plan that decouples housing from urban economic growth and direct HUD, in partnership with advocates and communities, to study and address the influence of property-led urban growth strategies on creating and exacerbating the modern affordable housing crisis.



FORESTS & COASTAL WETLANDS RESTORATION

There must be a national mandate to retain and protect forests and wetlands that buffer and stabilize Black communities. Restore or protect over 2 million acres of coastal wetlands by 2030 to sequester carbon emissions and reduce coastal flooding. Create a Federal Forest Carbon Reserve System to significantly address the climate crisis by safeguarding existing vast carbon stores and increasing biological carbon sequestration in federal forests (see [here](#)). Transfer the United States Forest Service to the Department of Interior and prioritize addressing the climate crisis as the first and most important priority on national forests and grasslands.



LABOR



RE-IMAGINE & REDEFINE LABOR

The roots of the climate crisis lie in an economic system that encourages unlimited extraction, unlimited production and unlimited consumption. This approach advances corporate greed, unsustainable production, and profit-seeking over the well-being of people and the planet. The root of our interlocking economic and environmental crises is society's historical willingness to treat workers (and products of workers) as disposable. We must reimagine labor in this country. We must acknowledge the labor of the invisibilized care economy and question whether the labor of oil, gas, coal and nuclear workers should not be used for less dangerous work for equal pay. We must support and democratize the ability of workers to bargain for their pay and safety as a constitutionally protected right to contract. We must redefine labor- and not see it as a job that is paid for by another, but as a dignified right to choose where an individual's energy is directed and offered.

We are worth more than what we can produce for someone else's bottom-line. Job creation should ensure safe workplaces, family-sustaining wages, and protection of workers' rights to organize. Millions of new clean energy jobs, existing low-wage jobs, and frontline jobs can become the family-supporting jobs that everyone deserves. High-quality job creation means retooling and conversion of factories and reclamation and remediation of closed facilities.



ADVANCE ANTI-POVERTY MEASURES AS CLIMATE PREPAREDNESS

We call for a Universal Basic Income scheme that recognizes traditionally feminine household labor as valuable and provides dignity to all people—including those who cannot work. The standard of living a dignified life in this country must be rooted in self determination and dignity.

JUST TRANSITION FOR WORKERS

The U.S. transition away from dirty energy should include federal investment toward prioritizing impacted workers to support upgrading broken infrastructure including roads, rail, water and service lines; rebuilding clean, sustainable, non polluting and affordable public transit; replacing lead pipes for clean water; expanding wind and solar energy through robust renewable energy standards with a prioritization of local and equitable hiring and contracting that creates opportunities for Black Lives. All coal, oil and gas workers must be guaranteed at least five years of wage and benefit supports for displaced workers, housing assistance where applicable, job retraining opportunities, insurance coverage, pension support, early retirement offerings, and priority job placement for displaced workers. Enact legislation to ensure high-road labor standards for all workers, including agreements to incentivize preferential hire for workers who have been displaced during the decline of the oil and gas industry, Davis Bacon prevailing wage requirements, community benefit agreements. A new and more sustainable economy requires millions of secure jobs with healthcare benefits.



INVESTMENT IN THE TRANSITION ECONOMY

Job programs must provide a living wage and encourage support for local workers' centers, unions, and Black-owned businesses which are accountable to the community. The Civilian Climate Corps (CCC) must prioritize Black and poor people for access to training for green jobs, and for jobs on track for skill and within unions. 40% of CCC jobs are set aside for Black communities to avoid repetition of New Deal era injustices. Ensure that next generation energy efficiency work is done by workers earning living wages, working in safe and healthy conditions, with collective bargaining rights, while supporting public jobs programs and prioritizing businesses owned by women and people of color.

INVEST IN A CARE ECONOMY

Care workers value must be recognized and resourced. Black workers have built the nation, raised its children and served as the under and uncompensated workforce driving America success since its inception. As Black workers have always held the jobs that support vulnerable populations, it is time to invest in care and reinvest in community care funds in federal law, policy and regulations at every agency. There should be an expanded training program in the form of a Climate Care Corps (land care, elder care, child care, disability care) and enforceable protections for federal and state job programs and provide compensation for those involved in the care economy.



FEDERALLY PROTECT THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

The right for workers to organize is essential to the future of work and the health of the workforce. Black communities are among those in greatest need for expanded protections as they enter the workplace in the context of systemic racism and oppression. Clashes with the state cost Black lives and a loss of the right to worker protections increases that risk in public and private sectors. The right to organize and collectivize as workers must be federally guaranteed and protected.

FEDERAL JOBS BENCHMARKING AND PROGRAMS

Federal and federally-funded state job programs must specifically target the most economically marginalized Black people, and provide compensation for those involved in the care economy. Job programs must provide a living wage and encourage support for local workers' centers, unions, and Black-owned businesses which are accountable to the community and prioritize Black communities. Paid jobs programs that include traditionally unwaged & traditionally feminine forms of care work that make all other work possible and are already low-carbon.



NEW STANDARDS FOR DOING BUSINESS IN & WITH THE U.S.

Mandate U.S. businesses and persons, as well as foreign businesses offering goods or services in the U.S., to conduct human rights and environmental due diligence in all of their global and domestic value and supply chains. All worker protections, labor standards, and environmental guardrails must extend to workers in U.S. corporations operating outside the U.S.. Publicly traded companies must be mandated to reserve 40% of board seats for elected worker representatives. Extend national labor and employment law protections to agricultural workers, foreign fishers, domestic workers, and other gig workers. Address current and historic inequities of food and farm workers- often among the most vulnerable workers in our economy because of exemptions from labor protections, lax enforcement of worker safety standards, an unfair immigration system and attacks on the right to organize.



ECONOMY



END EXTRACTIVE ECONOMIES & RESTORE STOLEN BLACK CAPITAL

The underlying philosophy of the U.S. economic system is extraction - from the kidnapping, enslavement, and theft of Black people and hundreds of years of unpaid labor at the formation of this nation, to the exploitation of immigrant labor- a practice that our economy still depends on today. This philosophy of extraction drives the current racial wealth divide, international trade induced economic migration, racial health disparities, over-policing and militarization, national educational disparities and the global climate crisis. Our nation is responsible for violently taking without repair. And this global climate emergency signifies the final phase of our ability to collectively act on behalf of our connected global humanity.

We demand a just transition from extractive economies and toward a sustainable future and advancement of the vision for Black Lives. Now is the time to reverse the generational tide of extractive economy and to replace it with restorative reinvestment in Black communities toward the next generation of non-extractive finance, living wage jobs and sustainable infrastructure. A transformation of our economy is the basic level of what is required to ensure equity across fiscal, physical and knowledge-based work systems.



REPARATIONS AS CLIMATE PREPAREDNESS

Federal dollars must restore Black capital stolen from generations of unpaid labor, misappropriated opportunities and lives taken by the state through force, lack of regulation, and non enforcement of environmental protections. Post slavery in the U.S., petrochemical facilities and dirty energy transportation and transition routes have turned Black communities into sacrifice zones. Federal reparations must ensure a cessation of harm, the restoration of lost generations, land and the capital stolen from Black labor compounded with interest. Reparations must advance and protect democratic control over how resources are preserved, used and distributed and do so while honoring and respecting the rights of our Indigenous family.

Federal reparations must ensure access and control of food sources, adequate and climate resilient housing, restored land, clean air, and clean water for Black communities. Reparations must mandate public school education curricula that critically examine the political, economic, and social impacts of colonialism and slavery, and the connection of these systems to the global climate crisis. And as a matter of equity, reparations should be paid with seized assets of corporate entities and polluters who have put profit margins over whole communities. Funding for reparations should also be redirected from policing and militarization.



BLACK CLIMATE FINANCE MECHANISMS

Legislation that acknowledges climate harms to Black communities around the globe must enable both access to wealth creation and trauma care as a measurable output. Financing to support climate mitigation and adaptation must move through existing Black banking institutions, resource the development of new institutions and support embedded community-banking structures empowered to build small businesses advancing the next generation of sustainable energy, labor and natural resource stewardship. There must be a moratorium for renters and utility customers impacted by climate disaster and unable to pay. We seek financial support of Black alternative institutions, including policy that subsidizes and offers low-interest, interest-free or federally guaranteed low-interest loans to promote the development of cooperatives (food, housing, energy, water), land trusts and culturally responsive health infrastructures that serve the collective needs of Black communities on the frontlines of climate change

BLACK HEALTH IS BLACK WEALTH

We need strong, effective and enforced environmental legislation that protects Black health in this new climate reality. State sponsored community health centers in EJ communities should be paid for by polluters. Funding towards community control of sustainable food systems, funding towards HBCUs and other land grant universities to invest in sustainable and community-controlled agricultural research and training.

TRANSPORTATION

The transportation sector is one of the largest consumers of the climate-accelerating fossil fuels. It is also a critical measurement of access to wealth for Black communities. There must be deep federal investment in a nation-wide expansion of low cost, clean energy-fueled mass and public transit to reduce car dependency, increase mobility and access.

BLACK CLIMATE READINESS & JUST TRANSITION

Redlining and structural racism place many Black communities in climate disaster zones. We must address the historic devaluation of Black owned (and associated) land when considering reforms to the National Flood Insurance Program that encourage “buy-outs” and relocation of families and communities. Ensure that renters are not wrongfully displaced without adequate compensation by flood or resettlement programs. Create a national Just Sustainability Climate Resilient Community Development fund to help regions, cities and communities create low-greenhouse gas emitting, climate-resilient strategies that support just community transitions. Re-activate, with long-term and adequate funding, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC), created to make federal investment in distressed counties of the Southern U.S. and authorized to receive at least \$30 million every year. Advance funding mechanisms that share energy generation profits with Black communities, institutions, and businesses. And protect and increase funding for Black institutions including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Black media and cultural, political and social formations. We demand full access to technology including net neutrality and universal access to the internet without discrimination and full representation for all.

END FOSSIL FUEL BAILOUT, ADVANCE CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Hold fossil fuel companies and other executives’ industries accountable for misleading the public about the climate crisis and for the costs of climate impacts across the nation. Reform bankruptcy laws to require fossil fuel companies to fulfill their obligations to workers and communities, Put fossil fuel companies facing bankruptcy under federal receivership and require them to wind down their fossil fuel production operations. End the bailout of coal, oil and gas and any planned buildout of new petrochemical infrastructure and expansion. Break up polluting industrial agricultural monopolies and institute a moratorium on large food and agribusiness mergers.

DEMOCRACY



ADVANCE DEMOCRACY FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PLANET

Neoliberal pillars of austerity, deregulation, and privatization- especially of essential services such as access to clean water, access to healthcare, and access to education have devastated people across the world and in the U.S.. Systems-wide corruption requires the creation of new public institutions to strategically mobilize public investments that tackle the interlocking crises of racism, poverty and global warming. In the U.S., Black, poor, rural communities are on the frontlines of saving our national vision of democracy and saving our planet.

There is not much time to democratically plan, implement, and administer projects, but we must conjure the political courage and civic engagement to do so. The climate crisis threatens our vision for democracy and our very existence. Saving them both requires that we adopt a Black feminist perspective to our economic system and ground in the theory of Black Liberation. From prisons to schools, from workforce to innovation, from law to culture- advancing democracy means creating a system that acknowledges the need for and supports the advancement of Black liberation. Fannie Lou Hamer reminds us that, "Nobody's free, until everybody's free."

VOTER & ELECTION PROTECTION

Create universal voter registration and shift our voter registration to an “opt out” structure, instead of an “opt-in structure”. The climate crisis requires a massive collective decision-making process and the expansion of the right to vote for all people including: full access, guarantees, and protections of the right to vote for all people through universal voter registration, automatic voter registration, pre-registration for 16-year-olds, same day voter registration, voting day holidays, online voter registration (OVR), enfranchisement of formerly and presently incarcerated people, local and state resident voting for undocumented people, and a ban on any disenfranchisement laws. We call for the elimination of extralegal political interference and influence of Big Polluter corporations, trade associations, and front groups in elections. We must eliminate the electoral college and allow the will of the majority to direct the leadership for the nation.

ADVANCE DEMOCRACY FOR CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Federal recognition of sovereignty must be approved to tribes with applications pending at the federal level for more than 10 years. The Rights of Nature must be legally recognized. We must adopt national standards of human rights within our legal system. We must adopt a precautionary principle along with a polluter pays principle - and mandate both for use in all U.S. states and territories. Statehood is a requirement for full and democratic representation of territories with significant Black populations on the frontline of this climate emergency. As a step toward national climate preparedness, we support the calls for the immediate recognition and statehood of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We must reform the filibuster procedure and remove and reform structural impediments to real climate action. We must confront a U.S.-led military-industrial complex that defends extractive industries, pollutes the environment, fuels climate change, and undermines peace and human rights globally. The solutions offered by the Green New Deal must be community-owned and community-led, including inclusive financing and equitable distribution of energy and the development of just housing and education policies. It must also draw from, uplift, and support existing women and community-led solutions to the climate crisis, in the U.S. and globally.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

ROOT IN THE RIGHT TO BREATHE

The mantra “I can’t breathe” is most often associated with police violence in Black communities, but is equally true and relevant in calling out the violations of corporations engaged in extractive and polluting industries. From Cancer Alley in Louisiana to Flint in Michigan to Richmond in California and all the polluted communities in between, for Black Communities, the fight for environmental justice is a site of resistance for issues of climate, energy, natural resources and self determination and the successor to civil rights.

As a conceptual lens, environmental justice is a critical race analysis of systems that exposes disparate treatment, cumulative impacts of toxic waste, and energy generation and transportation in the context of American racism. Black communities require more than meaningful engagement past the point of decision-making. Black communities require the power to intervene in decisions that pose present and future harm. We must move beyond rhetoric to the realization of investments in capital, infrastructure and jobs that contribute to the achievement of health as a social determinant. To advance a vision for Black Lives, air, water, and land pollution must be stopped, remediated and prohibited. We must address the health and environmental impacts of toxic pollution.

STOP POLLUTING BLACK COMMUNITIES

We need bold Environmental Justice legislation with enhanced enforcement capacity and racially-inclusive data and mapping that reflects the fifty years of dereliction on enforcement of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), Clean Water Rule, Clean Air Act, Toxic Substances Control Act, Resources Conservation and Recovery Act and EPA Title VI regulations. We call for an end of toxic and polluting industry expansion in EJ communities. Phase out oil production and petrochemical expansion (including plastics) in places that are suffering most from the impacts of extraction—by creating a 20 square mile health and safety buffer zone between petrochemical infrastructure and homes, schools, and other sensitive sites.

We call for a moratorium on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO), an end to all industrial dumping, an end to fossil fuel leases and an end to public tax dollars going to fossil fuel subsidies. We say no to Carbon Trading, no to nuclear waste, no to liquified natural gas and an end to fracking. We call for an end to the expansion of oil and gas pipelines and an end to industrial water discharge. We want Toxic Water Contamination Enforcement and increased Brownfield recovery funding and legislation. We demand regulatory parameters that ensure that polluters pay for the cost of a just transition and that those costs are not passed on to others, through appropriate bonding secured.

INVEST IN CLEANING UP BLACK COMMUNITIES

Prioritizes investment in remediation of polluted sites in environmental justice communities and expands equitable access to public health resources in historically underserved and impacted communities, recognizing the disproportionate burden of health impacts in these communities and the historic disinvestment in public health resources. We want the development of a “Restore Fund”, to remediate environmentally-contaminated sites (e.g. coal mines, power plants), and a RePower Fund, to diversify local fossil fuel-dependent economies with clean energy, broadband, manufacturing, and other economic instruments that advance the Vision for Black Lives. To invest equitably, Black and poor communities must be deeply engaged in planning, policy development, and budgeting, offering meaningful roles and power in decision-making processes, and respecting history and traditional ecological knowledge.

A person wearing a yellow shirt and a hat is standing on a small, simple boat in a flooded area. The water is calm, and the background shows a distant shoreline with some structures. The overall tone is somber and highlights the impact of climate change on vulnerable communities.

CLIMATE DISASTER

DECLARATION OF CLIMATE + RACIAL URGENCY

Climate Disasters are rapidly becoming a new normal for Black communities. Across the Global South, the seas are rising, fires are raging and coastal sunny day flooding is eroding the few existing social safety nets. According to two independent globally-reviewed and scientifically-based reports, we have less than a decade before reaching the point of no return with the global climate crisis. The Intergovernmental Panel on the Climate Crisis (IPCC) 2018 Special Report together with the 2018 U.S. Fourth National Climate Assessment report bring to terrifying clarity what scientists and climate activists have been saying for decades. The climate is going through human-accelerated change that threatens all life on earth. It threatens everyone's physical health, mental health, air, quality, water access, food systems and shelter and the very land that holds our communities, but it affects some of us much more than others.

Extreme weather events like the 2021 Arctic Blast and the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season and the 2005 storms that hit the Gulf Coast exposed the vulnerabilities in our infrastructure and a lack of preparedness for this new climate reality. It showed how generations of structural discrimination have put Black, Native and poor communities at the greatest risk. Unless we are honest about these generated vulnerabilities and social faultlines, these kinds of weather events will continue to devastate communities that are already under siege. The status quo of systems, protections and liability are inadequate responses to the compounding crises that harm Black people first and worst regardless of income, location or status. The call for Climate Justice speaks to the need for a complete government response that protects and serves the people rather than serving up the vulnerable in the midst of climate disaster.

FEDERAL DISASTER PREPARATION ROOTED IN EQUITY FOR THE FRONTLINES

We are in a climate emergency- federal dollars and agencies should prioritize climate preparation, adaptation and mitigation in Black communities. The disproportionate and negative impact of land management practices on Black communities must be acknowledged as impediments to disaster resilience, insurance rights and community planning. We must assess vulnerability to extreme weather or other climate-related events that would limit healthcare facility operations, and invest, plan, and implement strategies to build health and mental health system resilience in collaboration with public health and other community agencies. Healthcare for all must be seen as a part of climate disaster mitigation, adaptation efforts, and solutions.

LEGAL PROTECTIONS & OVERPOLICING

We must protect the constitutional and human rights of frontline leadership within the U.S. and globally and we must respect and uphold Indigenous rights, end environmental racism, and end the criminalization of environmental defenders. Restructure legal protections for Black communities in disaster recovery at Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and through all agencies receiving federal dollars. Establish a consistent and affordable equity rubric in the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Program and direct FEMA to establish clear standards and funding preferences for green infrastructure in the most vulnerable communities in its pre-disaster mitigation programs.

CLIMATE MIGRATION & RELOCATION

We must update federal laws and policies to address managed retreat related to sea-level rise and climate change. Laws and protections for those forcibly relocating must be paired with incentives to transform receiving communities into inclusive societies. We must establish legal recognition and protection for climate migrants crossing U.S. domestic and international borders.

INTERNATIONAL & FOREIGN POLICY

GLOBAL SOUTH SOLIDARITY

We are no longer in a position to address the climate crisis domestically. Lackluster efforts at climate mitigation now have us on a trajectory for an extinction event. The Paris Climate Accords lack redress for coal, oil and gas pollution and the proliferation of greenhouse gases as the weapons of mass destruction in an avoidable climate crisis. Solutions must be multinational, embedded with accountability in the Global North and leadership from the Global South. Global governance must adjust to this reality immediately if the human species has any chance at adaptation. Black and Indigenous communities, as the stewards of millenia, have called for solutions that include rematriation, open borders for climate migrants, and the end of false, technocratic solutions leaning into markets and money-making rather than stewardship.

CANCEL INTERNATIONAL DEBT

We call for the unconditional cancellation of public external debt payments by all lenders for all countries in need for at least the next 10 years as an immediate step. We also call for a clear program towards the unconditional cancellation of outstanding debt and allow borrowing governments to have it within their power to stop making debt payments, and to not suffer any penalties for doing so.

RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The confirmation by Congress that Tribal nations can exercise their full and inherent civil, regulatory and adjudicatory authority over their own citizens, lands, and resources, and over activities within their Tribal lands; the implementation of the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, without qualification.

CLIMATE MIGRATION

U.S. visas for people crossing U.S. borders due to acute or slow moving climate disasters and impacts are mandatory. Priority should be given to migrants from the Global South and countries with a history of low greenhouse gas emissions.

GLOBAL DIVESTMENT FROM FOSSIL FUELS

If not curtailed, U.S. oil and gas expansion will impede the world's ability to manage a climate-safe, equitable decline of oil and gas production. The U.S. must cease domestic oil and gas exploration and development, and U.S.-based banks, insurance companies, and asset management companies must cease the financing of such activities. It is in the national security interests of the U.S. to rapidly wind down extraction and export of fossil fuels while ensuring a just transition for extraction-dependent workers and communities.

There must be an immediate divestment from industrial multinational use of fossil fuels and investment in community-controlled, justly-sourced, sustainable energy solutions. Stop the export of all plastic trash to other countries, like Kenya, and make it a violation of U.S. national security to provide any form of assistance to corporations and foreign governments, if that assistance will be used to explore and develop fossil fuel resources, or to build infrastructure such as pipelines or export and import terminals that lock in fossil fuel extraction and use.



**Gulf Coast Center
for Law & Policy**
southern perspective,
national impact, global influence

Reynolds
Barnes

