



# **A VISION FOR BLACK LIVES:** **POLICY DEMANDS FOR BLACK POWER, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE**

## **Reparations for the Systemic Denial of Access to High Quality Educational Opportunities In the Form of Full and Free Access for All Black People (Including Undocumented, Currently, and Formerly Incarcerated People) to Lifetime Education Including: Free Access and Open Admissions to All Public Universities and Colleges, Technical Education (Technology, Trade, and Agricultural), Educational Support Programs, Retroactive Forgiveness of Student Loans, and Support for Lifetime Learning Programs**

### **What is the problem?**

- Education in the U.S. has always been a subversive act for Black people. During enslavement we were legally barred from the most basic forms of education including literacy. Post-Civil War, and even after the *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* decision, Black people have been locked into segregated institutions that are underfunded, under resourced and often face severe health risk because of the decrepit conditions of their school buildings.
- The current racial equity gap in education has roots that date back to enslavement. In fact, [recent studies](#) suggest that racial educational inequalities may be the most (measurable) enduring legacy of slavery. The same study also verified ongoing income inequality correlated to counties where slavery was prevalent.
- The cradle-to-college pipeline has been systematically cut off for Black communities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 23 states spend more per pupil in affluent districts than in high-poverty districts that contain a high concentrations of Black students; and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights shows persistent and glaring opportunity gaps and racial inequities for Black students. Black students are less likely to attend schools that offer advanced coursework, less likely to be placed in gifted and talented programs, more likely to attend schools with less qualified educators, and employ law enforcement officers but no counselors.
- Public universities, colleges, and technical education remain out of reach for most in the United States and policies to help students cover costs continue to shift towards benefiting more affluent families.
- Funding cuts across the country are forcing individual students' tuition and fees to cover more operating costs than ever at public colleges and universities. At City University of New York (CUNY), the largest city public university system in the U.S., tuition and fees cover over 50 percent of the operating budget. Since right before the recession,



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government funding for higher education has significantly fallen. 47 states spent less in 2014-2015 on per student funding than they did at the start of the recession..

- Financial aid is not sufficiently covering the basic needs of students attending public universities and colleges, leaving many of them struggling to eat and pay for housing, transportation, daycare and healthcare. A Wisconsin Hope Lab survey showed half of all students surveyed were struggling with food and housing insecurity, 20 percent didn't have money to eat and 13 percent were homeless.
- Access to education — from university, to college, to community schools, to continuing adult education, to agricultural training — is essential to ensure that our communities can thrive. In addition to college age students, the ability to access lifelong education is essential to the political, economic and cultural health of our nation.
- The rising costs of higher education and exploitative and predatory lending practices of private and for-profit institutions make Black students more likely to drop-out, and leave them and their families stuck with debilitating and crippling debt. U.S. student loan debt nearly totals \$1.3 trillion, with close to \$900 billion in federal student loans, and more than 7 million borrowers in default.
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities continue to play a critical role in offering Black students, especially from low-income communities, access to higher education in an environment where they are supported and able to thrive. However, federal and state funding systematically underfunds Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) compared to Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). Since the recession, deep state funding cuts have disproportionately affected HBCU's, putting the future of many in jeopardy, and impairing their ability to offer high-quality educational opportunities to their students.

## **What does this solution do?**

- We seek complete open access for all to free public university, college and technical education programs (including technology, trade and agricultural) as well as full-funding for lifelong learning programs that support communities and families. We also seek the forgiveness of all federal student loans. Policies shall apply to all and should focus on outreach to communities historically denied access to education including undocumented, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.
- Cover all living costs, including but not limited to housing, transportation, childcare, healthcare, and food for students attending public universities, colleges, and technical educational programs (including technology, trade, and agricultural).
- Fully fund and provide open access to K-12, higher education, technical educational programs (including technology, trade, and agricultural), educational support programs

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and lifelong learning programs to every individual incarcerated in local, state, and federal correctional facilities (juvenile and adult).

- Provide full access to all undocumented people to state and federal programs that provide aid to cover the full costs, including living costs, to attend public universities, and colleges, technical educational programs, and lifelong learning programs.
- Increased federal and state investments in all Historically Black Colleges (HBCUs).

## **Federal Action:**

- Target: Legislative
- Process: This would require passage of a bill through both houses of Congress and be signed by the President. The Bill would provide \$165 billion (in 2014 the DOE provided \$30 billion in grant aid, \$36 billion in tax cuts and \$99 billion in federal student loans) per year to states to eliminate undergraduate tuition and fees at all public universities and colleges, and assist states to cover all related living costs for students. Additionally, the bill would allocate funding to lifelong learning and technical education programs and fund and provide complete open access to K-12, higher education, technical educational programs (including technology, trade, and agriculture), educational support programs and lifelong learning programs to every individual incarcerated in local, state, and federal correctional facilities (juvenile and adult). The bill would also increase work study programs and employment opportunities for students and expand eligibility to undocumented students and incarcerated students.
- Target: Legislative
- Process: This would require the passage of a bill through both houses of Congress and be signed by the President. The bill would allow undocumented people access to full state and federal aid to cover all tuition, fees, and living costs to attend public universities and colleges, technical educational programs (including technology, trade, and agriculture), and lifelong learning programs.
- Target: Legislative
- Process: This would require passage of a bill through the state legislature that ensures all HBCU's receive equitable funding for operational, staffing, infrastructure, and research needs, in order to adequately provide high-quality educational opportunities. In addition, the bill should offer incentives for HBCU's to attract and secure staff, increase graduate school course offerings, and support graduate schools that train teachers, doctors, lawyers, and social scientist.
- Target: Executive



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- Process: The President could issue an executive order abolishing all current student debt, Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution. The President should expand the Second Chance Pell Grant to include all individuals currently incarcerated in local, state, and federal correctional facilities (juvenile and adult).

## **State Action:**

- Target: Legislative
- Process: This would require passage of a bill through the State legislature which provides funds to eliminate undergraduate tuition and fees at all public universities and colleges and cover living costs. Additionally, the bill would allocate funding to lifelong learning and technical education programs and fund K-12, higher education, technical educational programs (including technology, trade, and agriculture), educational support programs and lifelong learning programs in all state correctional facilities. The bill would also increase work study programs and employment opportunities for students and expand eligibility to undocumented students and incarcerated students. The cost of the bill would vary based on jurisdiction.
- Target: Legislative
- Process: This would require the passage of a bill through both houses of Congress and be signed by the President. The bill would allow undocumented people access to full state and federal aid to cover all tuition, fees, and living costs to attend public universities and colleges, technical educational programs (including technology, trade, and agriculture), and lifelong learning programs.
- Target: Legislative
- Process: This would require passage of a bill through the state legislature that ensures all HBCU's receive equitable funding for operational, staffing, infrastructure, and research needs, in order to adequately provide high-quality educational opportunities. In addition, the bill should offer incentives for HBCU's to attract and secure staff, increase graduate school course offerings, and support graduate schools that train teachers, doctors, lawyers, and social scientist.

## **Local Action:**

- Increase local investments in public universities, colleges, technical educational programs (technology, trade, and agricultural), educational support programs and lifelong learning programs. Increase local investments and ensure access to education for all adults and youth incarcerated in local correctional facilities.



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## How does this solution address the specific needs of some of the most marginalized Black people?

- This policy would directly impact undocumented and incarcerated people by making higher education, technical education (including technology, trade, and agriculture) and lifelong learning programs eligible to them. The policy would also cover necessary living costs so they can pursue educational opportunities.
- Only 32 states offer some type of college or post-secondary courses to adults who are incarcerated, but 80 percent of the incarcerated population never graduated from high school.
- In the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 83 percent of Black trans respondents report not having a college degree.
- A Center for American Progress report showed that among Black same-sex couples that reported graduating from high school, only 40 percent report completing some college, compared to 67 percent for white same-sex couples

## Model Legislation:

- While, no current legislation provides funding to cover all costs related to higher-education, we can build off of models that cover the costs of tuition and fees and eliminate our current debt-based model.
- While not ideal, and not inclusive of all components of the above demands, Senator Sander's [College for All Act](#) includes federal funds to ensure free college and university for all eligible students.
- [Washington College Bound Scholarship](#)
- [Oregon State Legislature](#)
- [Kentucky House Bill 626](#)
- [DEMOS Debt Free College](#)

## Resources:

- [How Bad Are Conditions in Detroit Public Schools? This Appalling](#) Strauss, Valerie, Washington Post, 20 January 2016.
- [Racial Disparities in K-12 Education](#) 2013-2014, Civil Rights Data Collection.
- [Policies to help students pay for college continue to shift toward favoring the rich](#) Marcus, Jon, Hechinger Report, 24 May 2016.
- [Student and Faculty Higher Education Platform](#)
- [Students now pay more of their public university tuition than state governments](#) Douglas-Gabriel, Danielle, Washington Post, 5 January 2015.



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- [Hungry to Learn: Addressing Food & Housing Insecurity Among Undergraduates](#) Goldrick-Rab, Sara, Broton, Katherine, Eisenberg, Daniel. December 2015.
- [Food Pantries Address a Growing Hunger Problem at Colleges](#) Saul, Stephanie, New York Times, 22 June 2016.
- [The Case for Debt-Free Public College](#), Huelsman, Mark. DEMOS.
- [Funding at HBCUs Continues to be Separate and Unequal](#) Arnett, Autumn, 31 May 2015. Diverse Issues in Higher Education
- [Funding U.S. Historically Black Colleges and Universities: A Policy Recommendation](#) Jr. Mitchell, Donald Fall 2013, JEP EJOURNAL of Education Policy

## **Organizations Currently Working on Policy:**

- The Debt Collective
- Ohio Students Association
- DEMOS
- Wisconsin Hope Lab

## **Authors & Contributors of this Policy Overview**

- Kesi Foster, Urban Youth Collaborative
- Montague Simmons, Organization For Black Struggle