

A VISION FOR BLACK LIVES

POLICY DEMANDS FOR BLACK POWER, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE

END THE WAR ON BLACK PEOPLE



INTRODUCTION

POLICY PLATFORM 1 OF 6

M4BL

THE MOVEMENT
FOR BLACK LIVES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Vision for Black Lives is a collaboratively sourced document drawing on the wisdom of the Movement for Black Lives' ecosystem of over 170 Black-led organizations. We are deeply grateful to each of the authors and contributors to these policy briefs, to the members of the M4BL Policy Table who reviewed them, and to the external experts who contributed their time and brilliance to perfecting them. We want to specifically acknowledge and express our deepest gratitude, respect, and appreciation to the *Harriet Tubman Collective*, *Black Women's Blueprint*, and many individual Black feminists and Black trans women for calling us into more deeply integrating a Black queer and trans feminist lens and a disability justice analysis throughout the Vision. We also want to acknowledge with profound appreciation everyone who participated in the visioning and writing retreats that informed the process of researching, deepening, expanding, and updating the Vision for Black Lives 2020. Sincere appreciation to all of our translators and ASL interpreters for helping to make our Vision accessible to more of the fullness of Black communities. Finally, we are deeply grateful to Matters of the Earth for rendering our Vision so beautifully.

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HISTORY & CURRENT CONTEXT

The Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) launched the Vision for Black Lives, a comprehensive and visionary policy agenda for the post-Ferguson Black liberation movement, in August of 2016. The Vision, endorsed by over 50 Black-led organizations in the M4BL ecosystem and hundreds of allied organizations and individuals, has since inspired campaigns across the country to achieve its goals, including campaigns to end money bail, divest from policing and invest in community needs, and build political power. During that time, we have also produced critical popular educational tools, webinars, and teach-ins to support our movements to actualize the vision, including a bail reform curriculum and reparations toolkit.

The Vision for Black Lives is an iterative project, a call and response leading us toward our North Star. Over the past several years we have updated the policy briefs accompanying each of our demands to reflect the dramatically changed political climate and legislative and policy landscape since the Vision was launched, and in response to calls to deepen, expand, and center a Black queer and trans feminist and disability justice analysis in the platform.

Please note that the contents of this document were completed before the onset of the COVID19 pandemic or the 2020 uprisings - please visit the policy platforms specific to the pandemic and demands to #DefundPolice at m4bl.org

We plan to continue update the policy briefs going forward to ensure that the V4BL remains a dynamic and timely document charting the path to freedom for Black people in the U.S. diaspora.



After three years of consultations, writing retreats and Zoom sessions, research and outreach, we are relaunching the Vision for Black Lives 2020. We will be rolling out revised, updated, and expanded policy briefs for each of the six planks of the platform over the coming months, leading up to a National Black Convention in the summer of 2020. We begin with the first plank of our Vision: *End the War on Black People*, released on Juneteenth as we converge across the country in resistance to police and state sanctioned violence.

This document does not represent the entirety of our Vision - it is only the first section of six, and focuses on state violence. *We will be re-releasing revised and expanded policy briefs in each of the remaining sections of the Vision - Reparations, Economic Justice, Invest/Divest, Community Control and Political Power - over the course of 2020.*

The policy briefs accompanying each demand of the Vision for Black Lives are intended to offer a concise, yet expansive, nuanced, and intersectional analysis of the problem we are tackling, bolstered by facts and figures, an aspirational description of the solution we are seeking - the vision of the new world we are seeking to build - and a list of federal, state, and local legislative, policy and program steps that will help bring us closer to our vision.

In addition to helping us shape our advocacy efforts toward a shared vision and goals, the policy briefs will serve as important tools during this election season to help us assess and push candidate platforms, and to articulate and advance our vision within the broader coalitions we lead, such as *The Rising Majority*.

Each policy brief includes:

- a summary sheet,
- an introduction to the issue,
- a detailed assessment of the problem we seek to address,
- our vision for change,
- a list of federal, state, and local legislation representing steps toward achieving the vision,
- resources and organizations working to achieve policy change,
- authors and contributors, and
- a list of related briefs.

We are deeply committed to making the Vision for Black Lives accessible to all members of Black communities through translation into languages commonly spoken in the Black diaspora, including American Sign Language, and creation of audio recordings and visual representations of the policy briefs.

We are profoundly grateful and indebted to everyone who has been part of drafting, challenging, researching, and revising the Vision and accompanying policy briefs, and to all who have pushed us to acknowledge and be accountable for our limitations, expand our analysis and reach for the highest version of our vision.

PREAMBLE

Black life and dignity require Black political will and power. Despite constant exploitation and perpetual oppression, Black people have bravely and brilliantly been a driving force pushing toward collective liberation. In recent years, we have taken to the streets, launched massive campaigns, and impacted elections, but our elected leaders have failed to address the legitimate demands of our Movement. We can no longer wait.

In response to the sustained and increasingly visible violence against Black communities in the U.S. and globally, a collective of more than 50 organizations representing thousands of Black people from across the country came together in 2015 with renewed energy and purpose to articulate a common vision and agenda. We are a collective that centers, and is led by and rooted in, Black communities. And we recognize our shared struggle with all oppressed people: collective liberation will be a product of all of our work.

We are intentional about amplifying the particular experiences of racial, economic, and gender-based state and interpersonal violence that Black women, queer, trans, gender nonconforming, intersex, and disabled people face. Cisheteropatriarchy and ableism are central and instrumental to anti-Blackness and racial capitalism, and have been internalized within our communities and movements.

There can be no liberation for all Black people if we do not center and fight for members of our communities who are living at the intersections of multiple and mutually reinforcing structures of oppression.

We believe in elevating the experiences and leadership of the most marginalized Black people, including, but not limited to, women, femmes, queer, trans, gender nonconforming, intersex, Muslim, disabled, D/deaf, and autistic people, people living with HIV, people who are criminalized, formerly and currently incarcerated, detained or institutionalized, migrants, including undocumented migrants, low and no-income, cash poor, and working class, homeless and precariously housed people, people who are dependent on criminalized substances, youth, and elders. It is our hope that by working together to create and amplify a shared agenda, we can continue to move towards a world in which the full humanity and dignity of all people is recognized.



We recognize that building toward this world requires us to make demands of a state which has consistently created conditions of violence, deprivation, and exclusion for Black people, and to enter into a new covenant with each other. *We seek solutions to violence within our communities that do not lie in the violence of a state and institutions created to destroy us, but in self-governance and mutual commitment and responsibility to each other's safety and well being. We are committed to uprooting the ableism and cisheteropatriarchy we have internalized, and to transforming the conditions that drive sexual, gender-based, homophobic, transphobic, abelist, and other forms of violence in our communities.*

While this platform is focused on domestic policies, we know that cisheteropatriarchy, ableism, exploitative racial capitalism, imperialism, militarism, and white supremacy and nationalism are global structures. We move in solidarity with our international family against the ravages of global racial capitalism and anti-Black racism, human-made climate change, Islamophobia, war, and exploitation. We join with descendants of African people all over the world in an ongoing call and struggle for reparations for the historic and continuing harms of colonialism and slavery, including structural and systemic sexual and gender-based violence, and *we recognize and honor the rights and*

struggle of our global Indigenous family for reparations, land, sovereignty, and self-determination.

We have created this platform to articulate and support the ambitions and work of Black people toward our collective liberation. We also seek to intervene in the current political climate and assert a clear vision, particularly for those who claim to be our allies, of the world we want them to help us create. *We reject false solutions which place profit over people, and rely on surveillance, policing, punishment, and exile to address every form of harm, need, and conflict.* We believe we can achieve complete abolition and reimagination of current systems. We are already dreaming and practicing the world we want to live in.

Together, we demand an end to the wars against Black people. We demand repair for the harms that have been done to Black communities, in the form of reparations and targeted long-term investments. We demand economic justice. We demand defunding and dismantling of the systems and institutions that criminalize, control, and cage us. We demand divestment from ideologies, laws, policies, and practices that harm us, and investment in our communities and movements. We demand political power and community control over the institutions which govern our lives.

We demand nothing short of liberation.

We have come together now because we believe it is time to forge a new covenant. We are dreamers and doers. This document articulates our vision of a fundamentally different world. And it recognizes the need to fight for policies that address the immediate suffering of Black people. These policies, while less transformational, are necessary to address the current material conditions of our people, and will better equip us to win the world we demand and deserve. We recognize that not all of our collective needs and visions can be translated into policy, and we understand that policy change is one of many strategies necessary to move us towards the world we envision. The policy briefs linked to each demand provide roadmaps and incremental steps to get there, elevate the brave and transformative work our people are already engaged in, and build on some of the best thinking and dreaming in our history of struggle.

This agenda continues the legacy of our ancestors who pushed for reparations, Black self-determination, and community control, and propels new iterations of movements for reproductive justice, gender justice, disability justice, migrant justice, healing justice, transformative justice, and climate justice.

We offer this renewed vision in the historic Black tradition of call and response, of principled struggle, and in a continued commitment to deepen our analysis, broaden our visions, and respond to changing conditions. We will continue to update the vision and our roadmaps in an iterative process leading us toward our North Star, as our movements, and the conditions we struggle in, grow and evolve.

- Juneteenth 2020



INTRODUCTION TO END THE WAR ON BLACK PEOPLE

We demand an end to the war against Black people.

Since this country's inception, there have been named and unnamed wars on our communities. We demand an end to state-sponsored surveillance, criminalization, incarceration, detention, deportation, and killing of our people.

WE DEMAND:

- ❖ END THE WAR ON BLACK YOUTH
- ❖ END THE WAR ON BLACK COMMUNITIES
- ❖ END THE WAR ON BLACK WOMEN
- ❖ END THE WAR ON BLACK TRANS, GENDER NONCONFORMING AND INTERSEX PEOPLE
- ❖ END THE WAR ON BLACK HEALTH AND BLACK DISABLED PEOPLE
- ❖ END THE WAR ON BLACK MIGRANTS
- ❖ END ALL JAILS, PRISONS AND IMMIGRATION DETENTION
- ❖ END THE DEATH PENALTY
- ❖ END THE WAR ON DRUGS
- ❖ END THE SURVEILLANCE OF BLACK COMMUNITIES
- ❖ END PRETRIAL DETENTION AND MONEY BAIL
- ❖ END MILITARIZATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
- ❖ END THE USE OF PAST CRIMINAL HISTORY

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