

FALSEWORK SCHOOL

SUMMER 2016, MAKING AMERICA AGAIN

VOLUME 5: FOR THE LOVE OF THE WORLD—ON THE SEVENTH DAY IN AMERICA

27 AUGUST 2016

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POETRY IS NOT A LUXURY

The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized. This is poetry as illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are, until the poem, nameless and formless—about to be birthed, but already felt. That distillation of experience from which true poetry springs births thought as dream births concept, as feeling births idea, as knowledge births (precedes) understanding.

As we learn to bear the intimacy of scrutiny, and to flourish within it, as we learn to use the products of that scrutiny for power within our living, those fears which rule our lives and form our silences begin to lose their control over us.

For each of us as women, there is a dark place within where hidden and growing our true spirit rises, "Beautiful and tough as chestnut/stanchions against our nightmare of weakness" and of impotence.

These places of possibility within ourselves are dark because they are ancient and hidden; they have survived and grown strong through darkness. Within these deep places, each one of us holds an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling. The woman's place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep.

When we view living, in the European mode, only as a problem to be solved, we then rely solely upon our ideas to make us free, for these were

"In this sense, in its need for beginners that it maybe begun anew, the world is always a desert."—Hannah Arendt

With the tireless efforts it takes from so many to build our communities, raise awareness, and right wrongs, this course seeks to provide a space of reprieve, retreat, and reflection for those who produce a world under rampant conditions of what philosopher Hannah Arendt called worldlessness. For this class, the fifth and last in Falsework School's Making America Again series for Summer 2016, we will ask everyone to bring one inspirational text that keeps everyone going and ever begin anew to do the work of producing a more just and fair "America," liveable for all. We will take time to speak of challenges and draws, exhaustions and rewards, and allow a space for the worldmakers—activists, educators, organizers, entrepreneurs, and the like—among us to create a quieter conversation after always projecting their voices to be heard, and share how they make room for thought and reflection as they embody the political and social stances that they hold dear. One of the main and timely foci of our study will be the Program released by the Movement For Black Lives this summer.

what the white fathers told us were precious.

But as we become more in touch with our own ancient, black, non-European view of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and therefore

lasting action comes.

At this point in time, I believe that women carry within ourselves the possibility for fusion of these two approaches as keystone for survival, and we come closest to this combination in our poetry. I speak here of poetry as the revelation or distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word poetry to mean — in order to cover their desperate wish for imagination without insight.

For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action.

Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.

As they become known and accepted to ourselves, our feelings, and the honest exploration of them, become sanctuaries and fortresses and spawning grounds for the most radical and daring of ideas, the house of difference so necessary to change and the conceptualization of any meaningful action. Right now, I could name at least ten ideas I would have once found intolerable or incomprehensible and frightening, except as they came after dreams and poems. This is not idle fantasy, but the true meaning of "it feels right to me." We can train ourselves to respect our feelings, and to discipline (transpose) them into a language that matches those feelings so they can be shared. And where that language does not yet exist, it is our poetry which helps to fashion it. Poetry is not only dream or vision, it is the skeleton architecture of our lives.

Possibility is neither forever nor instant. It is also not easy to sustain belief in its efficacy. We can sometimes work long and hard to establish one beachhead of real resistance to the deaths we are expected to live, only to have that beachhead assaulted or threatened by canards we have been socialized to fear, or by the withdrawal of those approvals that we have been warned to seek for safety. We see ourselves diminished or softened by the falsely benign accusations of childishness, of non-universality, of self-centeredness, of sensuality. And who asks the question: am I altering your aura, your ideas, your dreams, or am I merely moving you to temporary and reactive action? (Even the latter is no mean task, but one that must be rather seen within the context of a true alteration of the texture of our lives.)

The white fathers told us, I think therefore I am; and the black mothers in each of us—the poet-whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand, the implementation of that freedom. However, experience has taught us that the action in the now is also always necessary. Our children cannot dream unless they live, they cannot live unless they are nourished, and who else will feed them the real food without which their dreams will be no different from ours?

Sometimes we drug ourselves with dreams of new ideas. The head will save us. The brain alone will set us free. But there are no new ideas still

waiting in the wings to save us as women, as human. There are only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions from within ourselves, along with the renewed courage to try them out. And we must constantly encourage ourselves and each other to attempt the heretical actions our dreams imply and some of our old ideas disparage. In the forefront of our move toward change, there is only our poetry to hint at possibility made real. Our poems formulate the implications of ourselves, what we feel within and dare make real (or bring action into accord with), our fears, our hopes, our most cherished terrors.

For within structures defined by profit, by linear power, by institutional dehumanization, our feelings were not meant to survive. Kept around as unavoidable adjuncts or pleasant pastimes, feelings were meant to kneel to thought as we were meant to kneel to men. But women have survived. As poets. And there are no new pains. We have felt them all already. We have hidden that fact in the same place where we have hidden our power. They lie in our dreams, and it is our dreams that point the way to freedom. They are made realizable through our poems that give us the strength and courage to see, to feel, to speak, and to dare.

If what we need to dream, to move our spirits most deeply and directly toward and through promise, is a luxury, then we have given up the core—the fountain—of our power, our womanness; we have given up the future of our worlds.

For there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt, of examining what our ideas really mean (feel like) on Sunday morning at 7 AM, after brunch, during wild love, making war, giving birth; while we suffer the old longings, battle the old warnings and fears of being silent and impotent and alone, while tasting our new possibilities and strengths.—*Audre Lorde*

NEW INTERNATIONAL OF INSURGENT FEELINGS

1.

The *justification* of the boycott of Israeli academic and cultural institutions is quite simple and quite clear: the victims of a sovereign brutality instantiated in racial-military domination have come to an overwhelming consensus, in the very shadow of the state that has come to exemplify The State and its exception, that boycott is the most immediate form of international support they require. To be in solidarity with the Palestinian people is to enact and support the boycott. However, the *significance* of the boycott is a slightly more complicated matter. Arguments against the boycott that go beyond the rejection of whatever form either of criticism of Israel or Palestinian resistance or the sometimes open/sometimes veiled assertion of an assumed Israeli exception and exemption, focus on the negative impact the presumed isolation and withdrawal of support for Israeli dissidents will have, already a morally obtuse argument insofar as it shifts our primary political and ethical concerns away from the actual victims of racial-military domination. At the same time, one of the most

crucial possibilities that (the call for the) boycott instantiates is *support for the supporters* of the Palestinians not only *in* Israel but all over the world and particularly in the United States which is Israel's outsized and enabling evil twin. Here, support of the Palestinians denotes whatever operates in conjunction with, but also and necessarily in excess of, criticism of Israel. The critique of Israel, however necessary and justified, is not the equivalent of solidarity with Palestine which, in the U.S., can only ever augment and be augmented by our recognition of and resistance to the ongoing counter-insurgency in which we live. It is, therefore, of great significance that the boycott can help to refresh (the idea of) the alternative, both in the U.S. and in Israel, even in the midst of reaction's constant intensification. Such refreshment takes the form of an anti-national (and anti-institutional) internationalism—the renewal of insurgent thought, insurgent planning and insurgent feeling as a radical insolvent exchanged between those who refuse to be held by the counter-insurgent forces of an already extant two-state (U. S./Israel) solution. Standing with the Palestinians gives us something to stand upon precisely so that we can stand against the horrifically interanimate remains of state sovereignty and exceptionalism in its biopolitical, “democratic” form.

2.

The idea and reality of racial-military domination, whose most vulgar and vicious protocols are in a kind of eclipse that is properly understood as a kind of dissemination, but whose effects—the very order that it brings into a retroactively conferred sacred existence—remain as the afterlife of sovereignty in the regime of biopolitics, is emphatically and boisterously alive in the state of Israel and in the territories it occupies. Reference to this idea and its continuing necessity for already existing structures of power helps us understand why Israel is called almost everything but the settler colony that it is in official media and intellectual culture. This discursive exception turns out to be a reservoir for the sovereign exception. It is as if the essence of sovereignty remains available as long as it is manifest somewhere, as a kind of exemplary remainder. Because biopolitical containment often seems to liquidate the alternative, it's important to note how the assertion of the right of death and the power over life still must make its presence felt as the precondition of a liquidation of the very possibility of an alternative. One way to think about all this is to begin with the axiom that Israel has been thrust into, only partly by way of its own having volunteered for, the role of the exemplary remainder of sovereignty after its having taken the form of racial-military domination. The exemplary remainder of sovereignty is constrained, among other things, constantly to claim a kind of exemption that accompanies its enactment of exception. The state that constantly asserts its right to exist, and its right to insist that its right to exist be constantly recognized by the very ones upon whom that right is built and brutally exercised, is the one that bears the standard for the right of every other state so to exist and to behave. Such behavior is always, ultimately, the exercise of the right of death and the power over life that now constitutes the residue of sovereignty in the biopolitical regime. Insofar as the U.S. is also a settler colonial regime

whose very essence and protocols are racial-military domination, it shares with Israel, in an extraordinarily visceral way, this tendency violently to insist on its right to exist and on the rightness of its existence no matter what forms that existence takes, no matter how much the everyday life of the state contradicts its stated principles. But this is also to say that the state form, in whatever materialization of its various stages of biopolitical development, always shares in this insistence. What's at stake, precisely, are the stakes any state shares in Israel's right to exist, in the residue of sovereignty in the biopolitical, and in the traces of sovereignty that will have been carried in any state, anywhere. In the most general sense, always already residual sovereignty must respond violently to what brings it into existence—the already given, constantly performed capacity for the alternative. The alternative is always under duress and must continually be refreshed and rediscovered.

3.

I am speaking for the boycott, in solidarity with the Palestinians, because I am committed to the insurgent alternative, whose refreshment is (in) the anti-national international. The terms of that commitment are nothing more than another way of saying that I am committed to the black radical tradition. In preparing myself not only to speak, but also to write and teach from that commitment, a particular question has become, for me, quite persistent: how might discourses of globalization and, more pointedly, of diaspora become more than just another mode of turning away from the very idea of the international? I've been dwelling—in a way that is possibly quite problematic—on this question, which is a particularly urgent question now for black studies and which is deeply and unavoidably concerned with what the boycott—which is to say solidarity with Palestine—might mean for them. There is a particular kind of sub-political experience that emerges from having been the object of that mode of racial-military domination that is best described as incorporative exclusion that settler colonialism instantiates. It is not the experience of the conscious pariah, as Hannah Arendt would have it. Her misrecognition of this experience is at the root of her profound misunderstanding of black insurgency in the United States, which was not the unruly, sometimes beautiful, and ultimately unstable and pathological sociality of the ones who are not wanted, but was and is, rather, an unruly, always beautiful, sometimes beautifully ugly, destabilizing and auto-destabilizing sociality-as-pathogen for the ones whose desire precisely for that pathogen and its life-forming, life-giving properties is obsessive and murderous. This more than political, anti-political, experience of the ones who are brutally and viciously *wanted* is something to which anyone who has any interest whatsoever in the very idea of another way of being in the world must constantly renew their own ethical and intellectual relation. This experience, in its incalculable variousness, in the richness of its social, aesthetic and theoretical resources, is the very aim of black studies and the source of its significance. As someone whose intellectual orientation is defined by the study of that experience, I am interested in the refreshment of that orientation, for which I sometimes feel despair, in a moment that

isso often misunderstood as victorious. I believe this boycott, as a mode of international solidarity and exchange, can bring that refreshment. I think that anyone who shares this orientation (for peace, justice, freedom of movement and association, freedom from want and domination), under whatever of its local habitations and names, in Palestine, in Israel, and most certainly in the United States, simply must be attuned to the necessity, *and to this specific possibility*, of refreshment. Selfishly, I am interested in how this boycott might provide some experiential and theoretical resources for the renewal of a certain affective, extra-political sociality—the new international of insurgent feeling. This is to say, finally, that these remarks have been nothing other than a long-winded preface to an apology to Palestinians for the fact that, in the end, the boycott might very well do more for me than it does for you, precisely in its allowing me to be in solidarity with you and with the richness, impossibly developed in dispossession and deprivation as payment of a debt that was never promised and never owed, that also comprises Palestinian social life. Please allow me to augment my apology with an expression of gratitude for the chance that your call for solidarity, which is itself an act of solidarity, provides.—*Fred Moten*

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

PLATFORM

Black humanity and dignity requires Black political will and power. Despite constant exploitation and perpetual oppression, Black people have bravely and brilliantly been the driving force pushing the U.S. towards the ideals it articulates but has never achieved. 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 have come together with renewed energy and purpose to articulate a common vision and agenda. We are a collective that centers and is rooted in Black communities, but we recognize we have a shared struggle with all oppressed people; collective liberation will be a product of all of our work.

We believe in elevating the experiences and leadership of the most marginalized Black people, including but not limited to those who are women, queer, trans, femmes, gender nonconforming, Muslim, formerly and currently incarcerated, cash poor and working class, differently-abled, undocumented, and immigrant. We are intentional about amplifying the particular experience of state and gendered violence that Black queer, trans, gender nonconforming, women and intersex people face. There can be no liberation for all Black people if we do not center and fight for those

who have been marginalized. 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.

While this platform is focused on domestic policies, we know that patriarchy, exploitative capitalism, militarism, and white supremacy know no borders. We stand in solidarity with our international family against the ravages of global capitalism and anti-Black racism, human-made climate change, war, and exploitation. We also stand 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. We also recognize and honor the rights and struggle of our Indigenous family for land and self-determination.

We have created this platform to articulate and support the ambitions and work of Black people. 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 and believe we can achieve a complete transformation of the current systems, which place profit over people and make it impossible for many of us to breathe.

Together, we demand an end to the wars against Black people. We demand that the government repair the harms that have been done to Black communities in the form of reparations and targeted long-term investments. We also demand a defunding of the systems and institutions that criminalize and cage us. This document articulates our vision of a fundamentally different world. However, we recognize the need to include 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, but we understand that policy change is one of many tactics necessary to move us towards the world we envision. We have come together now because we believe it is time to forge a new covenant. We are dreamers and doers and this platform is meant to articulate some of our vision. The links throughout the document provide the stepping-stones and roadmaps of how to get there. The policy briefs also elevate the brave and transformative work our people are already engaged in, and build on some of the best thinking in our history of struggle. This agenda continues the legacy of our ancestors who pushed for reparations, Black self-determination and community control; and also propels new iterations of movements such as efforts for reproductive justice, holistic healing and reconciliation, and ending violence against Black cis, queer, and trans people.

DEMANDS (excerpted)

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 the criminalization, incarceration, and killing of our people. This includes:

1. *An Immediate End to the Criminalization and Dehumanization of Black Youth Across All Areas of Society Including, but Not Limited to, Our Nation's Justice and Education Systems, Social Service Agencies, Media, and Pop Culture.*
2. *An End to Capital Punishment*
3. *An End To Money Bail, Mandatory Fines, Fees, Court Surcharges, and "Defendant Funded" Court Proceedings*
4. *The End to the Use of Past Criminal History to Determine Eligibility for Housing, Education, Licenses, Voting, Loans, Employment, and Other Services and Needs*
5. *An End to the War on Black Immigrants Including the Repeal of the 1996 Crime and Immigration Bills, an End to All Deportations, Immigrant Detention, and Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) Raids, and Mandated Legal Representation in Immigration Court.*
6. *An End to the War on Black Trans, Queer and Gender Nonconforming People Including their Addition to Anti-Discrimination Civil Rights Protections to Ensure Full Access to Employment, Health, Housing and Education*
7. *An End to the Mass Surveillance of Black Communities, and the End to the Use of Technologies that Criminalize and Target Our Communities (Including IMSI Catchers, Drones, Body Cameras, and Predictive Policing Software).*
8. *The Demilitarization of Law Enforcement, Including Law Enforcement in Schools and on College Campuses.*
9. *An Immediate End to the Privatization of Police, Prisons, Jails, Probation, Parole, Food, Phone and All Other Criminal Justice Related Services.*
10. *An End To Public Jails, Prisons, and Detention Facilities As We Know Them and the Establishment of Policies and Programs to Address the Current Oppressive Conditions Experienced by People Who Are Imprisoned.*

REPARATIONS

We demand reparations for past and continuing harms. The government, responsible corporations and other institutions that have profited off of the harm they have inflicted on Black people — from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance — must repair the harm done. This includes:

1. *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, 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 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).

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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.

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2. Reparations for the Continued Divestment from, Discrimination toward, and Exploitation of Our Communities in the Form of a Guaranteed Minimum Livable Income for All Black People, with Clearly Articulated Regulations

What is the problem?

- Structural racism — particularly against Black Americans — has shaped the rules of our economy since the founding of the U.S. The combination of slavery, America's deep-rooted system of racial capitalism, and long-lasting discriminatory institutions have for centuries denied Black people equal access to the wealth created through their labor.
- Second, such racism continues to drive unequal economic outcomes and opportunities that are passed on intergenerationally. Today, an entire system of laws, regulations, policies, and normative practices explicitly exclude Black Americans from the economy and from leading safe, healthy, and economically secure lives. In the past, this took the form of Jim Crow and problematic racial and gender exclusions in New Deal social policies; now, the most glaring example is our racialized system of mass incarceration.
- In 2011, the median Black household had just \$7,113 in wealth, more than 15 times less than the \$111,146 in wealth held by the median white household. Today, a mere 42 percent of Black families compared to 72 percent of whites own their homes, driving the historically durable racial wealth gap. At the end of 2015, the unemployment rate for the general population was 5 percent, yet 9.2 percent for Black workers and just 4.4 percent for white workers. The unemployment rate for Black Americans has been roughly double that for whites since at least the early 1970s. There are also stark racial disparities in education, health access and outcomes, the criminal justice system, and social mobility, among many other arenas of economic security and well-being.

What does this solution do?

- A Universal Basic Income (UBI) provides an unconditional and guaranteed livable income that would meet basic human needs while providing a floor of economic security. UBI would eliminate absolute poverty, ensuring economic security for all by mandating an income floor covering basic needs. Unlike most social welfare and social insurance programs, it is not means tested nor does it have any work requirements. All individual adults are eligible.
- No other social or economic policy solution today would be of sufficient scale to eradicate the profound and systemic economic inequities afflicting Black communities.
- As patterns and norms of “work” change rapidly and significantly in the decades to come — no matter how profound those changes are — it is likely that Black America and other populations that are already disadvantaged will bear the brunt of whatever economic insecurity and volatility results.
- A pro-rated additional amount included in a UBI for Black Americans over a specified period of time.
- The revenue saved from divesting in criminal justice institutions could be pooled into a fund for UBI; this revenue could be earmarked for the “PLUS” aspect of the policy that would be targeted toward Black Americans. If combined with other funds, it would effectively function as reparations, in a grand bargain with white America: All would benefit, but those who suffered through slavery and continuing racism would benefit slightly more.

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

- UBI would then provide an individual-sustaining basic floor for people who are formerly incarcerated upon re-entry that does not currently exist.
- UBI would be an improvement on portions of today’s current safety net and would benefit cash poor Black people the most. Some benefits, such as food stamps, are replete with paternalistic restrictions that rest on racist tropes about recipients and their consumption habits. Others, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), are significantly tied to work, which is problematic when structural racism continues to create so many barriers to Black employment. UBI lacks these flaws.

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3. *Reparations for the wealth extracted from our communities through environmental racism, slavery, food apartheid, housing discrimination and racialized capitalism in the form of corporate and government reparations focused on healing ongoing physical and mental trauma, and ensuring our access and control of food sources, housing and land.*

POLICY BRIEF COMING SOON

4. *Reparations for the Cultural and Educational Exploitation, Erasure, and Extraction of Our Communities in the Form of Mandated Public School Curriculums That Critically Examine the Political, Economic, and Social Impacts of Colonialism and Slavery and Funding to Support, Build, Preserve and Restore Cultural Assets and Sacred Sites to Ensure the Recognition and Honoring of Our Collective Struggles and Triumphs*

What is the problem?

- The United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent [reported](#) after their country visit to the U.S. that they were “concerned by an insufficient recognition in the present day of the influence of the baggage of the past, which necessitates specific institutions and programmes tailored to the situation of people of African descent.” Stories of African American history are often left untold or are under-told, and many individuals have no understanding of the extraordinary sacrifices that were made and hardships that were overcome. We need cultural reparations to publically acknowledge the history of mass violence in the U.S. in order to begin to heal from the trauma.
- School curriculums often whitewash the history of slavery and the state’s role in oppressing Black people, such as through textbooks that refer to [slaves as immigrant workers](#), [claim thousands of Blacks fought for the South during the Civil War](#), or otherwise [downplay the horrors of slavery](#).
- Even in states and cities that require Black history education, the subject is often [taught sporadically](#) or only during Black History Month or Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. Teachers at D.C.’s Howard Middle School were even [fired for teaching Black history beyond the curriculum](#).
- There are too few acknowledged and preserved historical sites commemorating Black history. Of the 412 National Park Service sites in the U.S., only 25 (or 6 percent) are specifically devoted to Black history. According to the Institute of Museums and Library Services, there are 35,000 museums in the U.S., but only about 300 (or less than 1 percent) of these are specifically devoted to Black individuals or history. Despite their valuable programming and exhibitions, these organizations [do not receive adequate funding](#) from state legislatures or philanthropic organizations. The Smithsonian will open the [National Museum of African American History & Culture](#) in September 2016, making it the first and only national Black history museum to date.

What does this solution do?

- Demand a thorough and accurate public education curriculum on Black History, including not only slavery and civil rights, but also contributions of African and African American heritage at the local, national and global level. This must be integrated throughout the school year and taught in a way that presents the history as part of an

ongoing narrative of oppression and resilience, not as historical artifacts.

- Funding for cultural assets and sacred sites such as Black burial grounds; Black towns (e.g. Mound Bayou, Mississippi); houses of worship; meeting halls; one-room schools; and other significant institutions that speak to the triumphant quest of a determined people to create a new African community in this hostile land.
- These Black sacred sites, monuments, and museums must be preserved as permanent memorials to continuously inform and inspire future generations of people of African descent about this legacy of trials, tribulations and triumph, and to remind America of the white supremacist terror employed to obstruct the path to freedom of African Americans

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

By expanding Black history education, monuments, museums, and recognized heritage sites, the stories of those who were marginalized and forgotten will be elevated. As we expand the knowledge and understanding of this history with depth and breadth, we can honor the diverse experiences of Blacks in America, including the history of, for example, our trans, queer, and gender nonconforming brothers and sisters.

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5. *The Immediate Passage of H.R.40, the “Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act” or Subsequent Versions Which May Call for Reparations Remedies, and Similar Legislation In All 50 States in Order to Force the US to Acknowledge the Lasting Impacts of Slavery and Establish a Plan to Address Those Impacts*

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INVEST-DIVEST

We demand investments in the education, health and safety of Black people, instead of investments in the criminalizing, caging, and harming of Black people. We want investments in Black communities, determined by Black communities, and divestment from exploitative forces including prisons, fossil fuels, police, surveillance and exploitative corporations. This includes:

1. *A Reallocation of Funds at the Federal, State and Local Level From Policing and Incarceration (JAG, COPS, VOCA) to Long-Term Community Based Safety Strategies Such As Education, Local Restorative Justice Services, and Employment Programs*
2. *The Retroactive Decriminalization, Immediate Release, and Record Expungement of All Drug Related Offenses and Prostitution, and Reparations for the Devastating Impacts of the “War on Drugs” and the Criminalization of Prostitution, Including a Reinvestment of the Resulting Savings Into Restorative Justice, Health Services, Housing, Job Programs and Other Programs Based on the Needs Identified By Individuals and Communities Impacted by the Sex and Drug Trade*
3. *Real, Meaningful, and Equitable Universal Health Care that*

Guarantees: Proximity to Nearby Comprehensive Health Centers, Culturally Competent Services For All Our People, Specific Services for Queer, Gender Nonconforming, and Trans People, Full Bodily Autonomy, Full Reproductive Services, Mental Health Services, Paid Parental Leave, and Comprehensive Quality Child and Elder Care

4. *A Divestment From Industrial Multinational Use of Fossil Fuels and Investments in Community-Based Sustainable Energy Solution*
 5. *A Cut in US Military Expenditures and A Reallocation of those Funds to Invest in Domestic Infrastructure and Community Wellbeing*
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ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We demand economic justice for all and a reconstruction of the economy to ensure Black communities have collective ownership, not merely access. This includes:

1. *A Progressive Restructuring of All Tax Codes at the Local, State, and Federal Levels to Ensure a Radical and Sustainable Redistribution of Wealth*
2. *A Federal and State Jobs Program that Specifically Targets the Most Economically Marginalized Black People - Such As Those Who Are Queer, Trans, Femmes, Cash Poor, Working Class, Formerly Incarcerated, and Differently Able - Funds a Living Wage, and Encourages Support For Local Workers Centers, Unions, and Black Owned Cooperative Businesses*
3. *A Right to Restored Land, Clean Air, Clean Water and Housing*
4. *An End to the Exploitative Privatization of Natural Resources — Including Land and Water. We Seek Democratic Control Over How Resources are Preserved, Used and Distributed*

The Movement for Black Lives respects, supports, and stands in full solidarity with the rights of Indigenous peoples to the lands currently known as the United States. We make the following demands within a broader context of respect for Indigenous sovereignty.

5. *The Right For Working People to Organize in Public and Private Sectors, Especially in “On Demand Economy” Jobs*
6. *Restore the Glass-Steagall Act to Break Up the Large Banks, and Call For the National Credit Union Administration and the US Department of the Treasury to Change Policies and Practices Around Regulation, Reporting and Stopping Consolidation to Allow For the Continuation and Creation of Small Black Collectively Owned and Community Development Credit Unions, Insurance Companies, and Other Financial Institutions*
7. *An End to the Trans-Pacific Partnership and a Renegotiation of All Trade Agreements to Prioritize the Interests of Workers and Communities*
8. *Through Tax Incentives, Loans and Other Government Directed Resources, Support the Development of Cooperative or Social Economy Networks to Help Facilitate Trade Across and in Black Communities Globally*
9. *Financial Support of Black Alternative Institutions Including Policy*



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 the criminalization, incarceration, and killing of our people.



REPARATIONS

We demand reparations for past and continuing harms. The government, responsible corporations and other institutions that have profited off of the harm they have inflicted on Black people—from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance—must repair the harm done.



DIVEST-INVEST

We demand investments in the education, health and safety of Black people, instead of investments in the criminalizing, caging, and harming of Black people. We want investments in Black communities, determined by Black communities, and divestment from exploitative forces including prisons, fossil fuels, police, surveillance and exploitative corporations.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We demand economic justice for all and a reconstruction of the economy to ensure Black communities have collective ownership, not merely access.



COMMUNITY CONTROL

We demand a world where those most impacted in our communities control the laws, institutions, and policies that are meant to serve us – from our schools to our local budgets, economies, police departments, and our land – while recognizing that the rights and histories of our Indigenous family must also be respected.



POLITICAL POWER

We demand independent Black political power and Black self-determination in all areas of society. We envision a remaking of the current U.S. political system in order to create a real democracy where Black people and all marginalized people can effectively exercise full political power.

That Subsidizes and Offers Low-Interest, Interest-Free or Federally Guaranteed Low-Interest Loans to Promote the Development of Cooperatives (Food, Residential, etc.), Land Trusts and Culturally Responsive Health Infrastructures That Serve the Collective Needs of Our Communities

10. *Protections for Workers in Industries That Are Not Appropriately Regulated Including Domestic Workers, Farm Workers, and Tipped Workers, and For Workers — Many of Whom are Black Women and Incarcerated People— Who Have Been Exploited and Remain Unprotected. This Includes the Immediate Passage at the Federal and State Level of the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights and Extension of Worker Protections to Incarcerated People*

COMMUNITY CONTROL

We demand a world where those most impacted in our communities control the laws, institutions, and policies that are meant to serve us – from our schools to our local budgets, economies, police departments, and our land – while recognizing that the rights and histories of our Indigenous family must also be respected. This includes:

1. *Democratic Community Control of Local, State, and Federal Law Enforcement Agencies, Ensuring That Communities Most Harmed by Destructive Policing Have the Power to Hire and Fire Officers, Determine Disciplinary Action, Control Budgets and Policies, and Subpoena Relevant Agency Information*

What is the problem?

- Across the country, there are more 200 entities involved in direct oversight of local law enforcement agencies. However, despite national trends in the disproportionate impact of lethal force, excessive force, sexual assault and misconduct by law enforcement on the Black community — in conjunction with the lack of discipline of officers or effective measures to deter these force incidents — there remains no national standards for powers and features of civilian oversight of law enforcement.
- Sexual assault is the second most commonly reported form of police misconduct, but the majority of departments have no policy or measures in place to prevent, detect or ensure accountability for this form of police violence disproportionately affecting Black women, cis and trans, gender nonconforming, and queer people. Accountability for police sexual harassment, assault, and violence is usually solely the responsibility of police departments and prosecutors, preventing many survivors from coming forward or obtaining justice.
- In 30 states, state law in fact makes it impossible to change the contractual bargaining power to hire and terminate police.
- These functions and powers should apply to civilian oversight entities overseeing law enforcement practices in the both patrol and custody settings including local jails, hold cells, and detention centers.
- Lack of empowered civilian oversight with the above features creates significant roadblocks to law enforcement transparency and accountability and prevents any means for communities most impacted by lethal force, excessive force and misconduct to effectively reduce other types of violence .
- Federal law enforcement agencies also inflict violence, and have almost no accountability to the most impacted communities.
- Restorative justice and other community based safety measures across the country are being used by communities who aspire for real community safety and reject police violence as being capable of ever delivering safety.

What does this solution do?

By requiring all civilian oversight agencies to retain the power to hire and fire officers, determine disciplinary action in cases of misconduct related to excessive and lethal force, determine the funding of agencies, set and enforce policies, and retain concrete means of retrieving information — such as subpoena power — from law enforcement and third parties as it pertains to circumstances involving excessive, sexual and lethal force; communities will be able significantly to reduce the number of Black people impacted by police violence.

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

- According to a 2012 study by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 48 percent of LGBTQ survivors of violence reported incidents of police misconduct when reporting to the police. According to the same study later conducted in 2014, of the survivors who interacted with the police and experienced hostility and police misconduct, 57.38 percent reported being unjustly arrested by the police
- Federal policies incentivize local law enforcement's collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with no oversight of how these collaborations impact rates of misconduct against undocumented communities.
- According to a 2013 study by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, trans people were 3.32 times more likely to experience police violence. Trans people of color were 2.46 times more likely to experience physical violence by the police. Trans women were 2.9 times more likely to experience police violence.
- The Department of Justice (DOJ) has investigated multiple jurisdictions across the country for use of force and abuse of people with mental health conditions in both patrol and custody operations.
- Practices of gentrification and displacement increase law enforcement interactions amongst homeless communities and increase the likelihood of incidents of excessive and lethal force.
- Lack of effective measures to deal with homelessness result in jails being used as de facto housing. There is very little effective oversight of law enforcement agencies involved in custody operations despite patterns of excessive and lethal force/lethal conditions in custody across the country.
- A recent DOJ investigation exposed the practices of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department whereby deputies were targeting recipients of Section 8 housing, causing them to lose their housing support.
- In 2010, a study by the Cato Institute found sexual misconduct to be the second most common complaint against law enforcement. 52 percent of these cases involved a minor.

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2. An End to the Privatization of Education and Real Community Control by Parents, Students and Community Members of Schools Including Democratic School Boards and Community Control of Curriculum, Hiring/Firing, and Discipline Policies

What is the problem?

Sixty years since *Brown v. Board of Education*, the school-to-prison pipeline continues to play a role in denying Black people their human right to an education and privatization strips Black people of the right to self-determine the kind of education their children receive. This systematic attack is coordinated by an international education privatization agenda, bankrolled by billionaire philanthropists such as Bill and Melinda Gates, the Walton Family, and Eli and Edythe Broad, and aided by the departments of Education at the federal, state, and local level. Inequitable funding at the school district, local and state level leave most public schools — where poor communities of color are the majority — unable to provide adequate and high quality education for all students, criminalizing and targeting Black students through racist zero-tolerance discipline policies. The cutting of key staff such as teachers, counselors and nurses, and the inability to provide learning resources such as textbooks and science equipment, leave Black school districts unable to ensure their students graduate on time, college and career ready, and leave them vulnerable for privatization and education profiteers. Using mayoral control and state takeover, they impose their experimental, market-based approach to school reform. Key stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, and students are left out of the decision making process. Their concerns and needs are ignored by those appointed to run the school districts — individuals who are more accountable to the institutional leaders who have appointed them than to the communities they are tasked to serve. This leaves room for corporations, lobbyists, and big philanthropy to play influential roles on education policy at the local, state, and federal level where their money can buy access into a cash-strapped system. Their aims are to undermine Black democracy and self-determination, destroy organized labor, and decolor education curriculum, while they simultaneously overemphasize Standardized Testing, and use school closures to disproportionately disrupt access to education in Black communities.

What does this solution do?

- Build an international movement of people of African descent to force nations to ratify and recognize education as human right, and end privatization.
- Guarantee public education is protected by federal government
- End state takeovers and mayoral control of public education while building new democratic structures, such as people's assemblies, that prepare parents to govern again.
- All states should have Full Funding Formulas that adequately weigh the needs of all districts in the state.
- Federal funds can only go to districts that have elected school boards.
- Place a moratorium on charter schools and school closures.

- Increase federal funding for schools, forcing federal government to help out states and pay for a bigger chunk than they currently do.
- Repeal the “convert-charter-close” model and offer what was the fifth option at the time, community led transformation, which was articulated as sustainable school transformation; it calls for a community-based model of school transformation.
- End corporate backed market reformer programs such as Teach For America and the Broad Superintendents Academy.
- Eliminate the privately backed lobby from all levels of the federal Department of Education.
- Put a moratorium on all out-of-school suspensions.
- Shut down all juvenile detention centers.
- Remove police from schools and replace them with positive alternatives to discipline and safety.

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

The education crises plaguing most of our public school districts are the result of corporate-controlled, state-sanctioned and federally-funded attacks to reverse *Brown v. Board of Education*, and create a desuetude discrimination and educational apartheid that must be challenged and overturned. State governments are abdicating their civic responsibility of preparing all Black children for full and first class citizenship. First, by criminalizing Blacks students through the school-to-prison pipeline, then stripping their parents of the democratic control of their schools. Finally, we must stop closing their schools and selling them to corporate school reformers to be made into test subjects of experimental, market-based education reforms. Budget cuts, standardized tests, and rabid charter expansion places Black students in buildings that are falling apart, creates unhealthy learning environments (physically and emotionally), and robs them of the futures —graduating unprepared for college, career or community. These same students, instead, are subject to increased police violence, disproportionate suspensions and expulsions, and are likely to be pushed out of school all together. Generations of Black students are sent out into the world, unprepared for the realities of a shrinking job market, increasing gentrification of the neighborhoods, and the high costs of higher education.

3. Participatory Budgeting at the Local, State, & Federal Level

What is the problem?

- Current public budget and revenue processes are not designed to ensure racial and economic justice and human rights for Black communities.
- Deficits in this arena include the lack of community control over budget and revenue decisions, and the lack of a values based

framework for Black liberation and the liberation of all peoples against which to make budget and revenue decisions.

What does this solution do?

Integrating human rights and participatory budgeting models into a new approach to public budgets and revenues provides a path towards transforming the use of resources to ensure they follow the needs and respect the full human rights of Black communities.

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

Revenue and budget decisions impact everyone and are a key driver of racial oppression as well as a range of intersectional oppressions. To ensure an intersectional approach, representation from specific populations of people differently situated such as youth, elderly, queer, gender nonconforming, formerly and currently incarcerated, and others should be required by statute, and equity metrics should include all these specific populations.

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POLITICAL POWER

We demand independent Black political power and Black self-determination in all areas of society. We envision a remaking of the current U.S. political system in order to create a real democracy where Black people and all marginalized people can effectively exercise full political power. This includes:

1. *An End to the Criminalization of Black Political Activity Including the Immediate Release of All Political Prisoners and an End to the Repression of Political Parties*

What is the problem?

- While the criminal justice system has managed to create a pipeline from schools to prisons for Black and Brown communities, it has also been used as a tool of the state to delegitimize and neutralize people’s movements throughout history.
- The criminalization of freedom movements and activists has resulted in the incarceration of hundreds of people, many of whom are recognized as legitimate freedom fighters. Black communities have been disproportionately targeted by the state and have become political prisoners incarcerated in local, state and federal prisons. The FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) outlined the purpose, objectives, methods and tools used to criminalize freedom movements.
- Today, direct victims of COINTELPRO (and similar law enforcement initiatives) remain exiled and incarcerated, while indirectly Black communities remain under surveillance by all levels of law

enforcement with the intention of preventing the growth of another nationwide movement.

- The tradition of surveillance and harassment of activists and freedom movements, has fostered fear, mistrust and suspicion in movement spaces that would otherwise function effectively.

What does this solution do?

We are calling for the release of all political prisoners held in the U.S. and the removal of legitimate freedom fighters from the International Terrorists list. Additionally, we call on Congress to hold hearings on the impact of COINTELPRO as the Church Committee hearings in 1975 did not offer remedies to individuals and communities negatively impacted by this government initiative.

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2. Public Financing of Elections and the End of Money Controlling Politics Through Ending Super PACs and Unchecked Corporate Donations

What is the problem?

- Our country's legacy of racism and persistently racialized politics depresses the political power of Black people, and creates opportunities for exploitation and targeting — exemplified by the subprime lending crisis, mass incarceration, and voter suppression laws. The dominance of big money in our politics makes it far harder for poor and working-class Black people to exert political power and effectively advocate for their interests as both wealth and power are consolidated by a small, very white, share of the population.
- Elections funded primarily by wealthy, white donors mean that candidates as a whole are less likely to prioritize the needs of poor and working class Black people; and that Black candidates are less likely to run for elected office, raise less money when they do, and are less likely to win. Ultimately, Black people are not adequately represented by elected officials.
- Today, an elite and tiny donor class — comprised of an extremely wealthy, 90 percent white, and overwhelmingly male subsection of the population — determines who runs for office, who wins elections, and what policies make it onto the agendas in Washington, D.C. and state legislatures across the country.
- Because donor and corporate interests often diverge significantly from those of working families on economic policies such as minimum wage and paid sick leave, Black people are disproportionately harmed because a larger percentage are poor or working class.
- The dominance of white donors disadvantages Black people in two key ways. First, candidates running for office (in all races) are less likely to prioritize issues of concern to Black Americans because they are forced to spend a significant majority of their time dialing for

dollars to wealthy (usually white) donors. Second, Black communities are underrepresented in elected office, as Black candidates without access to networks of wealthy (usually white) donors find it more difficult to compete in the “wealth primary” necessary to run competitive campaigns.

- A recent study of Black candidate success concluded that “the underrepresentation of Black people is driven by constraints on their entry onto the ballot” and that the level of resources in Black communities is “an important factor for shaping the size of the Black candidate pool.”
- Although people of color are 37 percent of the U.S. population, 90 percent of our elected leaders are white. White men are just 31 percent of the population but 65 percent of elected officials. At the other end of the spectrum, women of color hold just 4 percent of elected positions in spite of being 19 percent of the population.
- Candidates of color raised 47 percent less money than white candidates in 2006 state legislative races, and 64 percent less in the South.
- In 2009, just 9 percent of all state legislators were Black.
- In a 2011 study, researchers found that white state legislators of both major political parties were less likely to reply to letters received from assumed constituents with apparently Black names (like “DeShawn Jackson”).
- The policy outcomes resulting from this big-money campaign finance system fail to address the needs of Black people, and in some cases, actively restrict progress on racial equity in America.

What's the solution?

- Implement public financing of elections at the local, state and federal levels to encourage candidates for public office to listen to constituents and help Black people — particularly those that are poor and working class — have their voices heard in the political process.
- Public financing of elections are campaign finance reforms that provide some type of public funding for election campaigns with the purpose of curbing the influence of political donors and special interests in our electoral process. Designed and implemented effectively, these programs can bring more racial and socio-economic diversity to the candidate pool, and improve policy responsiveness and accountability with voters.
- How a system is designed and implemented — which includes the composition of the members and organizations who are driving the design and implementation — will have determining impacts on whether or not the system can be 1) considered a racial and economic justice reform, and 2) be used to build independent political power.
- Because programs vary widely, it is critical that a particular system be well matched with local demographics and conditions for it to optimally serve as a racial and economic justice reform and be used to build independent political power (which usually requires effective

participation by stakeholder groups in policy design). There are three types of public financing programs: a) “clean money” programs provide an equal, lump-sum grant to candidates who demonstrate sufficient public support and prohibit further fundraising; b) small donor matching programs match each small contribution to a qualifying candidate with public funds according to a specified ratio, which have been as high as six-to-one; and c) voucher, refund, or tax credit programs, which allocate public funding through contributors themselves.

- Overturn the Supreme Court’s Citizens United
- Over four decades, the Supreme Court has turned the First Amendment into a tool for use by wealthy interests to dominate the political process. Time and again, the Court has stepped in to dismantle democratically-enacted policies intended to prevent wealthy interests from translating economic might directly into political power — from 1976’s Buckley v. Valeo, which struck campaign spending limits and equated money with speech;¹²⁸ to 2010’s Citizens United, which gave corporations the same speech rights as individuals and opened the door to billionaire-funded Super PACs and unlimited, undisclosed “secret” to McCutcheon v. FEC in 2014, which eliminated caps on the total amount that one wealthy donor is permitted to contribute to federal candidates, parties and PACs.
- Ensure that newly appointed justices share the public’s common-sense understanding of the role that money should play in our electoral system.
- Develop and promote robust interpretive frameworks that go beyond fighting corruption as compelling values that our Constitution protects.
- Fight back in the courts to establish an enduring interpretation of the Constitution that empowers the people.
- Pass sensible limits on the use of big money in elections

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

- Public financing of elections increases political equality for Black poor and working class people.
- Makes governing bodies more representative and reflective of our communities by electing more low-and moderate-income people, more women, and more people of color, particularly Black working class people.
- Providing on-ramps to building independent political power by lowering the barriers to entry for candidates who wish to challenge the status quo, and creating systems that mass-based membership organizations can use to advance a political platform.
- Making local communities, instead of large donors and corporations, the primary constituents of elected officials.

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3. *Full Access, Guarantees, and Protections of the Right to Vote For All People Through Universal Voter Registration, Automatic Voter Registration (AVR), Pre-Registration for 16-Year-Olds, Same-Day Voter Registration (SDR), Voting Day Holidays, Enfranchisement of Formerly and Currently Incarcerated People, Local and State Resident Voting for Undocumented People, and a Ban on Any Disenfranchisement Laws*

What is the problem?

- Participating in elections is a public good and fundamental right; a necessary element of what it means to be a free, self-governing people. Yet the U.S. has a voter participation problem. In 2012, 66 million voters chose President Obama, 61 million voted for Governor Romney, and 82 million eligible people did not vote at all.^[1] Further, the low overall voting rate is compounded by significant voter turnout gaps among different demographic groups. We see significantly less participation by low-income people, people of color, and young people compared to higher rates of participation by older and more affluent white voters. As a result, demographics of our elected officials are dominantly older, whiter, and wealthier than the actual electorate.
- Because of the demographic gaps in voter participation, our elected officials are dominantly older, whiter and wealthier than the actual electorate they are charged to represent. These officials in turn are far more likely to be more responsive to the policy positions of older, whiter and wealthier voters. At the same time, many states have erected barriers to voting and/or maintain voting rules that discourage turnout and limit registration. These factors have cumulatively lead to policy decisions and outcomes that disproportionately (and negatively) affect people of color, poor and working class people, people with disabilities, and the elderly.

What does this solution do?

A number of legislative reforms proactively facilitate and protect the right of every person to participate in elections, by expanding and streamlining the processes of voter registration and casting a ballot. These reforms have the ultimate goal of assigning responsibility to government, instead of putting the burden on individuals, to ensure that people can participate in our electoral system. Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) and Same-Day Registration (SDR) are two major structural legislative reforms. Both ease the process of voter participation by reducing the steps required in order to be properly registered to vote, which is significant because properly registered voters are much more likely to cast ballots than non-registered voters. AVR uses voter eligibility information that certain government agencies already collect to add voters to the rolls; SDR creates a process for eligible voters to properly register and then vote, as a single transaction. Additional reforms, such as pre-registration for 16-year-olds, enfranchisement of formerly and currently incarcerated people, local and

state resident voting for undocumented people, and a ban on all disenfranchisement laws, expand the range of eligible voters, while reforms such as early voting and voting day holidays expand the times and opportunities that are available to cast a ballot.
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How does this solution address the specific needs of some of the most marginalized Black people?

These reforms cumulatively provide a counterbalance against the current landscape of voter suppression efforts throughout the U.S., efforts which have disproportionately impacted Black people. Increased access to voter registration and voting can change the demographics of our electorate in ways that 1) alter the demographics of our elected officials; and 2) make our elected officials more responsive to the policy preferences of Black folks.
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4. Full Access to Technology — Including Net Neutrality and Universal Access to the Internet without Discrimination — and Full Representation For All

What is the problem?

- The Internet is the most powerful and creative communications advancement of the 21st [Yet, more than 100 million people in the U.S. live without it](#). A recent [Pew Research](#) report found that at-home broadband access for Black people is far below that of the national average. Closing the digital divide means bringing offline communities to the same Internet all of us experience.
- In February of 2015, the Federal Communications Commission [passed the strongest Net Neutrality rules](#) in history by regulating the Internet as a utility. The CEOs of the major Internet Service Providers in the U.S. challenged these net neutrality rules in court and lost. That hasn't stopped companies from engaging in discriminatory behavior that exposes their users to a second class Internet experience.
- If our communities can access an open and affordable Internet, then we can shape a future that sustains our communities and is good for the country.

What does this solution do?

Ensure universal, affordable, and community-controlled access to the Internet, for all Black people and oppressed communities at large.

5. Protection and Increased Funding for Black Institutions including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Black Media, and Cultural, Political and Social Formations

What is the problem?

- HBCUs play a crucial role in providing access to higher educational opportunities for many Black people. HBCUs represent only three percent of the nation's four-year higher education institutions, but

graduate 22 percent of Black people who earn bachelor's degrees. These schools disproportionately enroll low-income, first-generation, and academically underprepared college students. More than 75 percent of students at HBCUs rely on Pell Grants and nearly 13 percent rely on these grants and loans to meet their college expenses. HBCUs are uniquely equipped to support these students with successful outcomes. In fact, public four-year HBCUs are the only institutions that consistently approach or achieve parity in enrollment and degree completion in the South.

- However, these institutions lack the sufficient funding they need from the federal government, states, and private donors to survive and thrive. A 2013 [report by the Association of Public Land-grant Universities \(APLU\)](#) found that, from 2010 to 2012, states were failing to meet the required 100 percent match of federal funding to HBCUs. In recent years, state public HBCUs in South Carolina and Maryland have sued their respective states for receiving less funding and inequitable program offerings compared to the states' predominantly white institutions. Moreover, HBCU endowments are one-eighth of the average size of those of historically white colleges and universities. Underfunding prevents these universities from competing for students, improving infrastructure, and increasing their offerings.
- Black owned media organizations are struggling to survive. There are only about 200 black newspapers, only 4 major black magazines (2 of which were recently [sold](#)), very few black radio programs, and [no black owned and operated full-power television stations](#). There is very little black television news programming, black people only make up about 10 percent of TV newsroom staff and 4.7 percent of journalists. While Black digital media has been successful and Black people have carved out spaces on Facebook and Twitter, many times the online news is on mainstream websites with a black-aimed vertical. Protecting and promoting Black-owned and operated media is critical. These organizations provide a unique and authentic perspective that reflects the diversity of views of the Black community and should be supported.
- Black political, cultural and social organizations, especially those engaged in activism, face threats of surveillance, police violence, and arrest. For example, in August 2015, [The Intercept](#) released documents demonstrating government surveillance of people engaged in public protest or online social media activity concerning #BlackLivesMatter. These documents demonstrated that the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation tracked public protests concerning police accountability and the deaths of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and Eric Garner. Other [reports](#) indicate geospatial mapping of protests, emails tracking protesters' movements, and emails between government officials discussing the dates, times, and locations of planned protest activities. Further [reports](#) reveal that law enforcement at various levels use digital tools, such as Media Sonar and Digital Stakeout, to monitor

online social media activity of people who use the #BlackLivesMatter and related hashtags. Additionally, Black Lives Matter protests have been met with militarized police responses and the use of crowd-control weapons. In just the past couple of weeks [hundreds](#) have been [arrested](#) across the country during [protests](#) in response to [police killings of unarmed black men](#).

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. This applies to nearly half of all HBCUs that are public institutions. 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. By protecting and supporting these institutions, we can

provide a meaningful pathway to higher education and social mobility.

- Reauthorize the 1965 Higher Education Act with increased funding for both public and private HBCUs.
- Increase federal and state funding for HBCUs' building maintenance and upgrades, operational budget, staffing (with incentives to hire and retain), research, and efforts to expand graduate and post-secondary courses and programming.
- Provide institutional support to Black media
- Protect and promote the First Amendment rights of Black Cultural, Political and Social Formations.

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

HBCUs offer support and opportunities for low-income, first-generation, and academically underprepared students who may struggle or are denied opportunities in other educational environments.



WHAT DOES BLACK LIVES MATTER WANT?

On August 1 the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), a coalition of over sixty organizations, rolled out [“A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom & Justice,”](#) an ambitious document described by the press as the first signs of what young black activists “really want.” It lays out six demands aimed at ending all forms of violence and injustice endured by black people; redirecting resources from prisons and the military to education, health, and safety; creating a just, democratically controlled economy; and securing black political power within a genuinely inclusive democracy. Backing the demands are forty separate proposals and thirty-four policy briefs, replete with data, context, and legislative recommendations.

But the document quickly came under attack for its statement on Palestine, which calls Israel an apartheid state and characterizes the ongoing war in Gaza and the West Bank as genocide. Dozens of publications and media outlets devoted extensive coverage to the controversy around this single aspect of the platform, including [The Guardian](#), the [Washington Post](#), [The Times of Israel](#), [Haaretz](#), and the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#). Of course, M4BL is not the first to argue that Israeli policies meet the UN definitions of apartheid. (The 1965 International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the 1975 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid [define](#) it as “inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them.”) Nor is M4BL the first group to use the term “genocide” to describe the plight of Palestinians under occupation and settlement. The renowned Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, for example, [wrote](#) of the war on Gaza in 2014 as “incremental genocide.” That Israel’s actions in Gaza correspond with the UN definition of genocide to “destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious

group” by causing “serious bodily or mental harm” to group members is a legitimate argument to make.

The few mainstream reporters and pundits who considered the full M4BL document either reduced it to a laundry list of demands or positioned it as an alternative to the platform of the Democratic Party—or else focused on their own benighted astonishment that the movement has an agenda beyond curbing police violence. But anyone following Black Lives Matter from its inception in the aftermath of the George Zimmerman verdict should not be surprised by the document’s broad scope. Black Lives Matter founders Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi are veteran organizers with a distinguished record of fighting for economic justice, immigrant rights, gender equity, and ending mass incarceration. “A Vision for Black Lives” was not a response to the U.S. presidential election, nor to unfounded criticisms of the movement as “rudderless” or merely a hashtag. It was the product of a year of collective discussion, research, collaboration, and intense debate, beginning with the Movement for Black Lives Convening in Cleveland last July, which initially brought together thirty different organizations. It was the product of some of the country’s greatest minds representing organizations such as the Black Youth Project 100, Million Hoodies, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Dream Defenders, the Organization for Black Struggle, and Southerners on New Ground (SONG). As Marbre Stahly-Butts, a leader of the M4BL policy table explained, “We formed working groups, facilitated multiple convenings, drew on a range of expertise, and sought guidance from grassroots organizations, organizers and elders. As of today, well over sixty organizations and hundreds of people have contributed to the platform.”

The result is actually more than a platform. It is a remarkable blueprint for social transformation that ought to be read and discussed by everyone. The demands are not intended as Band-Aids to patch up the existing system but achievable goals that will produce deep structural changes and improve the lives of

all Americans and much of the world. Thenjiwe McHarris, an eminent human rights activist and a principle coordinator of the M4BL policy table, put it best: “We hope that what has been created carries forward the legacy of our elders and our ancestors while imagining a world and a country profoundly different than what currently exists. For us and for those that will come after us.” The document was not drafted with the expectation that it will become the basis of a mass movement, or that it will replace the Democratic Party’s platform. Rather it is a vision statement for long-term, transformative organizing. Indeed, “A Vision for Black Lives” is less a political platform than a *plan* for ending structural racism, saving the planet, and transforming the entire nation—not just black lives.

If heeded, the call to “end the war on Black people” would not only reduce our vulnerability to poverty, prison, and premature death but also generate what I would call a *peace dividend* of billions of dollars. Demilitarizing the police, abolishing bail, decriminalizing drugs and sex work, and ending the criminalization of youth, transfolk, and gender-nonconforming people would dramatically diminish jail and prison populations, reduce police budgets, and make us safer. “A Vision for Black Lives” explicitly calls for divesting from prisons, policing, a failed war on drugs, fossil fuels, fiscal and trade policies that benefit the rich and deepen inequality, and a military budget in which two-thirds of the Pentagon’s spending goes to private contractors. The savings are to be invested in education, universal healthcare, housing, living wage jobs, “community-based drug and mental health treatment,” restorative justice, food justice, and green energy.

But the point is not simply to reinvest the peace dividend into existing social and economic structures. It is to *change* those structures—which is why “A Vision for Black Lives” emphasizes community control, self-determination, and “collective ownership” of certain economic institutions. It calls for community control over police and schools, participatory budgeting, the right to organize, financial and institutional support for

cooperatives, and “fair development” policies based on human needs and community participation rather than market principles. Democratizing the institutions that have governed black communities for decades without accountability will go a long way toward securing a more permanent peace since it will finally end a relationship based on subjugation, subordination, and surveillance. And by insisting that such institutions be more attentive to the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable—working people and the poor, the homeless, the formerly incarcerated, the disabled, women, and the LGBTQ community—“A Vision for Black Lives” enriches our practice of democracy.

For example, “A Vision for Black Lives” advocates not only closing tax loopholes for the rich but revising a regressive tax policy in which the poorest 20 percent of the population pays on average twice as much in taxes as the richest 1 percent. M4BL supports a massive jobs program for black workers, but the organization’s proposal includes a living wage, protection and support for unions and worker centers, and anti-discrimination clauses that protect queer and trans employees, the disabled, and the formerly incarcerated. Unlike the Democratic Party, M4BL does not subscribe to the breadwinner model of jobs as the sole source of income. It instead supports a universal basic income (UBI) that “would meet basic human needs,” eliminate poverty, and ensure “economic security for all.” This is not a new idea; some kind of guaranteed annual income has been fundamental to other industrializing nations with strong social safety nets and vibrant economies, and the National Welfare Rights Organization proposed similar legislation nearly a half century ago. The American revolutionary Thomas Paine argued in the eighteenth century for the right of citizens to draw a basic income from the levying of property tax, as Elizabeth Anderson [recently reminded](#). Ironically, the idea of a basic income or “negative income tax” also won support from neoliberal economists Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek—although for very different reasons. Because eligibility does not require means

testing, a UBI would effectively reduce the size of government by eliminating the bureaucratic machine of social workers and investigators who police the dispensation of entitlements such as food stamps and welfare. And by divesting from an unwieldy and unjust prison-industrial complex, there would be more than enough revenue to create good-paying jobs and provide a basic income for all.

Reducing the military is not just about resources; it is about ending war, at home and abroad. “A Vision for Black Lives” includes a devastating critique of U.S. foreign policy, including the escalation of the war on terror in Africa, machinations in Haiti, the recent coup in Honduras, ongoing support for Israel’s occupation of Palestine, and the role of war and free-trade policies in fueling the global refugee crisis. M4BL’s critique of U.S. militarism is driven by Love—not the uncritical love of flag and nation we saw exhibited at both major party conventions, but a love of global humanity. “The movement for Black lives,” one policy brief explains, “must be tied to liberation movements around the world. The Black community is a global diaspora and our political demands must reflect this global reality. As it stands funds and resources needed to realize domestic demands are currently used for wars and violence destroying communities abroad.”

Finally, a peace dividend can fund M4BL’s most controversial demand: reparations. For M4BL, reparations would take the form of massive investment in black communities harmed by past and present policies of exploitation, theft, and disinvestment; free and open access to lifetime education and student debt forgiveness; and mandated changes in the school curriculum that acknowledge the impact of slavery, colonialism, and Jim Crow in producing wealth and racial inequality. The latter is essential, since perhaps the greatest obstacle to reparations is the common narrative that American wealth is the product of individual hard work and initiative, while poverty results from misfortune, culture, bad behavior, or inadequate education. We have for too long had ample evidence that this is a lie. From

generations of unfree, unpaid labor, from taxing black communities to subsidize separate but unequal institutions, from land dispossession and federal housing policies and corporate practices that conspire to keep housing values in black and brown communities significantly lower, resulting in massive loss of potential wealth—the evidence is overwhelming and incontrovertible. Structural racism is to blame for generations of inequality. Restoring some of that wealth in the form of education, housing, infrastructure, and jobs with living wages would not only begin to repair the relationship between black residents and the rest of the country, but also strengthen the economy as a whole.

To see how “A Vision for Black Lives” is also a vision for the country as a whole requires imagination. But it also requires seeing black people as fully human, as producers of wealth, sources of intellect, and as victims of crimes—whether the theft of our bodies, our labor, our children, our income, our security, or our psychological well-being. If we had the capacity to see structural racism and its consequences not as a *black* problem but as an *American* problem we have faced since colonial times, we may finally begin to hear what the Black Lives Matter movement has been saying all along: when all black lives are valued and the structures and practices that do harm to black communities are eliminated, we will change our country and possibly the world.—*Robin D. G. Kelley*

WE SHALL WITNESS

It is certain that we too, shall witness
The day that has been promised
Of which has been written on the slate of
eternity
When the enormous mountains of tyranny
Blow away like cotton.
Under our feet- the feet of the oppressed-
When the earth will pulsate deafeningly
And on the heads of our rulers
When lightning will strike.
From the abode of God
When icons of falsehood will be taken out,
When we- the faithful- who have been barred
Out of sacred places
Will be seated on high cushions
When the crowns will be tossed,
When the thrones will be brought down.
Only The name will survive
Who cannot be seen but is also present
Who is the spectacle and the beholder, both
I am the Truth- the cry will rise,
Which is I, as well as you
And then God's creation will rule
Which is I, as well as you
We shall Witness
It is certain that we too, shall witness
--Faiz Ahmed Faiz

As a project of the Hic Rosa Collective, the Falsework School is committed to educational experiences as collations of concrete moments of study, thought, expression, and practice that dismantle the walls between teacher and student, artist and audience, participant and observer, and theory and practice. A typical learning day will be conducted like a facilitated community of study and practice. There will be a close study component, as well as guided discussion, ending with the production of a work of art or writing. While hailing from various academic contexts, we maintain that community education is not an extension or dilution of the academic classroom but an occasion to practice education without the various conceits, prerequisites, and instrumentalist and technocratic qualifications that beset institutions. Our approach to community education includes:

- (1) A concern not with methods of teaching and learning wielded by expert teachers and educationalists in a formalized system, but with what we all do every day, how we read, write, speak, and relate; with what it is to teach and learn in any situation, whenever or wherever it may be; and how we might change these toward a more just world.
- (2) An emphasis on relations within spaces we occupy, and communities we build and inhabit. A focus away from possessing knowledge toward how a community recognizes something as known. Activities of reading, studying, and working in each other's company allow the distinctions between doing, meaning-making, and knowing, and between various kinds of physical, mental, and emotional work to collapse.
- (3) A belief that communities of education are not supposed to perfect the object of knowledge for the community, but educate the community about itself and about the relations of power and inequality within it, making room for it to confront that knowledge. The fundamental premise of equality among learners in the educational space, with no qualifications or expertise placing one above the other, is what allows the inequalities within the wider community to become visible and able to be reflected upon. Hence, we are working not to instruct toward equality but to educate through equality, resisting institutionalizations of inequality and injustice, old or new.
- (4) A hope that, in the Berkshires and wherever else The Falsework School "pops up," this is an effort at collective study and self-reflection around social inequalities and injustices because it seeks to not replicate certain burdens of teaching and learning, presenting and spectating, evidence and ignorance, and their bearers, but to collectively own the task of building an ethos of equality and justice that works outward from the space of education.