

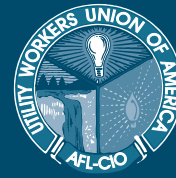


SOLIDARITY FOR

RACIAL EQUITY



BLUEGREEN
ALLIANCE



AUTHORS

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Errors remain the responsibility of the authors.

Design by Winking Fish

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This photo, by Occupational Photojournalist, Earl Dotter shows Anna Amaya, a leader in the Washington, DC Justice for Janitors campaign. Anna, an immigrant from El Salvador, is at work in an office on Capitol Hill.

Other Dotter photos appear on the cover and on pages 9, 12, 17, 18, 20, 21 and 23. You may view additional Earl Dotter workplace photography at www.earldotter.com.

INTRODUCTION

The BlueGreen Alliance (BGA) was founded in 2006 on the principle that good jobs and a healthy environment must be intertwined goals—that our economic and environmental problems must be addressed together to truly be solved. Systemic racism and oppression are knotted into all of the challenges to building a clean, healthy, and thriving economy for all—the issues that the BlueGreen Alliance was created to address.

Intertwined problems require solutions that address the impact on all of the strands. This platform is designed to ensure that the BlueGreen Alliance’s environmental and economic policy work will lessen economic, racial, and environmental injustice across the United States in ways that are as mutually reinforcing as their causes and lead to a more just society.

In June, 2019, the partners of the BlueGreen Alliance issued the *Solidarity for Climate Action* platform with nine principles: climate stability, high quality jobs, community resilience, repair America, rebuild American manufacturing, clean air, clean water, safe and healthy workplaces and communities, equity for marginalized communities, fairness for workers and communities, and inclusive public dialogue.¹ Each of these principles offers up the opportunity for policies and programs that address racism, inequity, and injustice. This document builds on that platform and provides more details for how government actions can address structural racism.

Defining the problem so it can be addressed:

What do we mean by structural racism?

What does it look like in the United States?

It looks like the gap in wealth—a household’s assets minus its debts. The typical white family has eight times the wealth of the typical Black family and five times the wealth of the typical Hispanic family.² The Federal Reserve lists the gaps in opportunities for home-ownership and intergenerational transfers, tax-sheltered savings plans, and individuals’ savings and investments as factors for the gap in wealth.

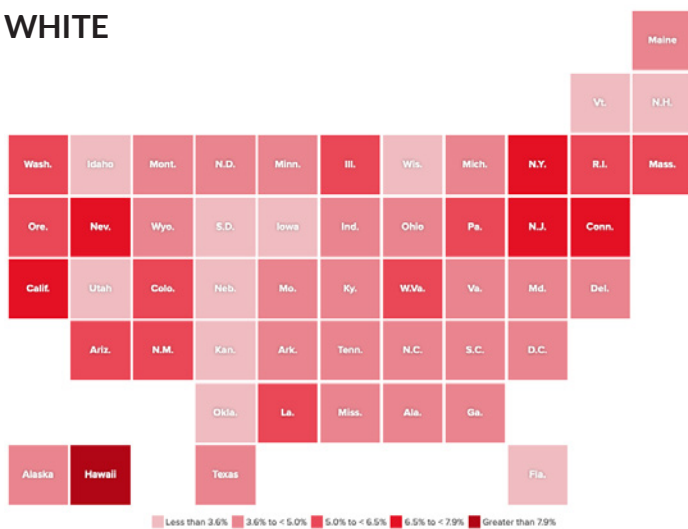
It looks like the gap in hourly wages. The average gap in 1979 between white and Black workers was 17.3%. In 2019 it grew to 26.5%.³ Compared to the typical white man, Black women take home \$7.63 less per hour and Hispanic women take home \$8.90 less per hour.⁴ About 44% of all workers are low-wage—earning less than \$15 an hour. Both Latine and Black workers are overrepresented among low-wage workers and overrepresented in the percentage of low-wage workers who have essential occupations that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19.⁵

It looks like the gap in employment. Since the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) started collecting data on the African American unemployment rate in 1972, the Black unemployment rate has always been

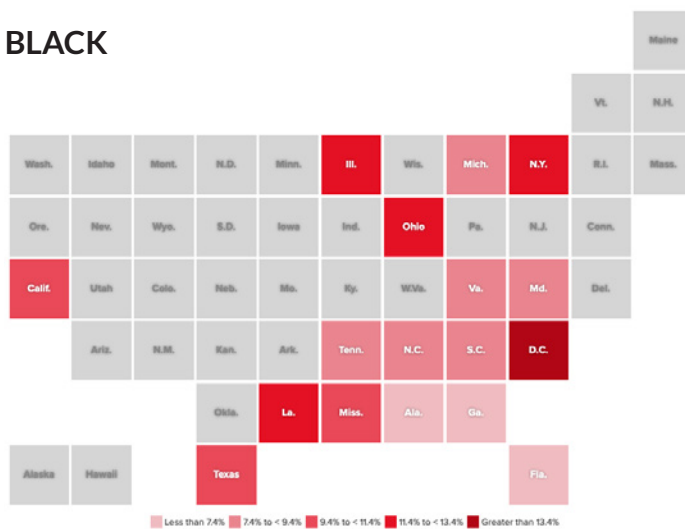
about twice as high as the white unemployment rate.⁶ Since the COVID-19 virus first shut down most of the U.S. economy, disparities in unemployment between Blacks, Latines, and whites have widened.⁷

Unemployment Rate by Race: Q2 of 2021

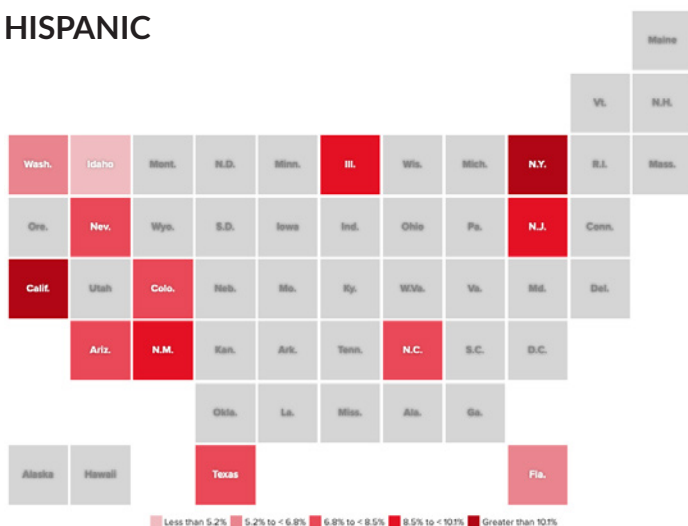
WHITE



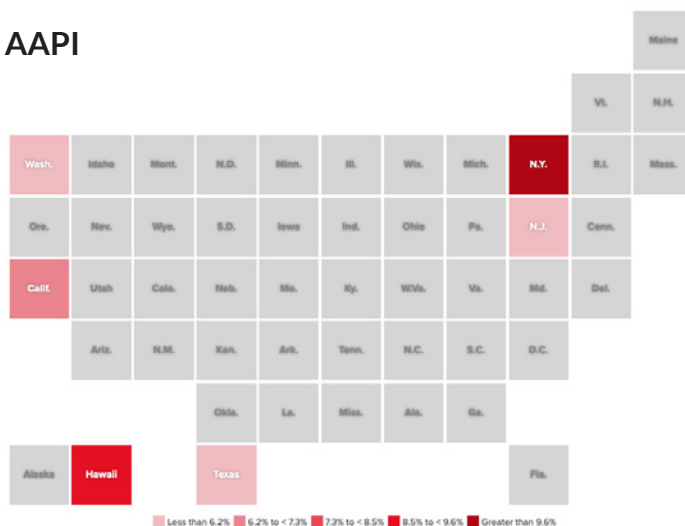
BLACK



HISPANIC



AAPI



Source: Economic Policy Institute, July 2021⁸

It looks like the gap in air and water quality. People of color are 1.5 times more likely to live in an area with poor air quality than white people leading to more asthma, heart attacks, strokes, lung cancer, reproductive harm, premature birth and low-birth weight, and even early death.⁹ Black people have a three times greater risk of death compared to white people due to PM2.5 air pollution exposures.¹⁰ And race is the strongest factor in determining whether a family has access to safe drinking water.¹¹

It looks like the inequities in public school facilities. One study of 146,000 local school projects found that high wealth zip codes were able to invest more than three times more on school infrastructure improvements than the schools in the lowest-wealth zip codes.¹² Predominantly student of color districts spent \$2,930 less than the \$7,102 that predominantly white districts spent per student on construction. Non-white school districts receive \$23 billion less than white districts for the same number of students.¹³

It looks like the gap in police involved deaths. Black men are 2.5 times more likely to die at police hands than white men. About 1 in every 1,000 Black men can expect to be killed by police. Black women, American Indian and Alaska Native men and women, and Latine men all face higher lifetime risk of being killed by police than do their white peers.¹⁴

It looks like the gap in climate change resilience. A study by Rice University and the University of Pittsburgh found that white counties saw an increase in average wealth because of reinvestment **after** natural disasters while predominantly minority counties saw a decrease in wealth.¹⁵

It looks like the COVID-19 statistics. Black and Latine workers are more likely to have jobs that require them to physically report to a workplace where there are lower wages and a higher risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. While Black, Hispanic, American Indian and Alaska Native people are only slightly more likely to be diagnosed with COVID-19, they are three times as likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 and twice as likely to die.¹⁶

It looks like the gaps in the rates of disease and death. According to the CDC, when a Black mother gives birth, she is four to five times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related death within a year of the event. American Indian and Alaska Native women also have a two to three times higher maternal mortality rate than white women. Black, Latine, and Native people also have higher rates of diabetes. And asthma rates are higher among Black people, American Indians and Puerto Ricans.^{17, 18}

The two principles and ten priorities that follow all aim to shape government programs so they are effective components of a national effort to lessen systemic racism and build a more just, inclusive, and equitable future for all Americans.

TWO OVERARCHING EQUITY PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE ONE:

Require a Significant Percentile of Government Investments Go to Communities in Need

We measure what matters. To ensure new government policies address structural racism, relevant program funding should include a percentile requirement for a defined set of communities. President Biden's Justice40 Initiative proposes that 40 percent of federal investments are targeted at disadvantaged communities, as defined by the establishment of an Environmental Justice Scorecard. The Sierra Club's Build Back Better plan expands on Justice40, proposing at least 50 percent of investments be directed toward low-income communities, communities of color, deindustrialized communities, and other communities facing disproportionate impacts from the COVID-19 crisis, toxic pollution, and/or climate change.¹⁹

The current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) definition of overburdened community is, "minority, low-income, tribal, or indigenous populations or geographic locations in the United States that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks."²⁰ The BlueGreen Alliance supports adopting the Justice40 recommendation to expand the EPA's EJSCREEN tool to include pollution burden and exposure, health, and socioeconomic indicators. In addition, we propose expanding the Justice40 Initiative goal to 50% to address this larger definition of communities in need, and to include communities that have been disproportionately harmed by deindustrialization and other forms of job loss.²¹

PRINCIPLE TWO:

Utilize Standards to Enhance Community and Worker Benefits

There are key policy levers that can be used to vastly improve the lives and health of the most historically marginalized groups in the country. Prevailing wage standards and requirements; safety and health protections; state and local licensing laws; specialty skill certifications; pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs; responsible contractor policies; project labor and community benefit agreements; local hire; Buy America(n); anti-privatization provisions; and environmentally

preferable and healthy product purchasing can all improve the economic and environmental well-being of disadvantaged communities.

Attaching standards such as these to all the recommended spending outlined below will improve the ability of Black, Latine, American Indian and Alaska Native and other people of color to make a fair wage, live a healthier life, and have greater opportunity for social mobility.

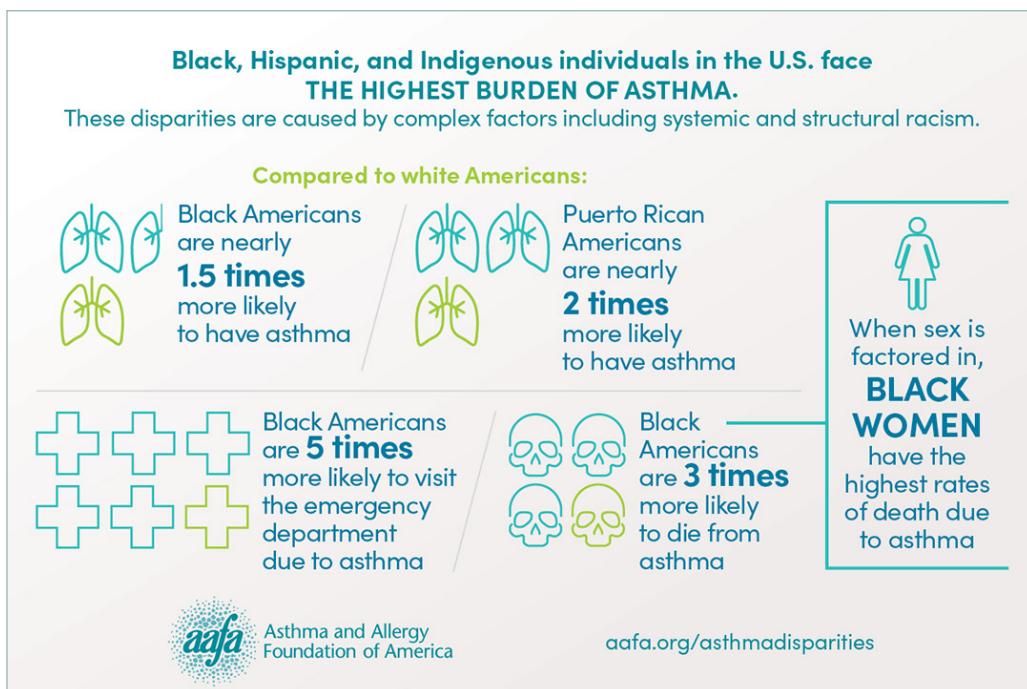
POLICY PRIORITIES

PRIORITY ONE:

Fund Holistic Upgrades for Schools and Housing for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and Other Disadvantaged Communities to Create Efficient, Healthy, Accessible, and Climate Resilient Buildings

Indoor air quality is a significant threat to the health and well-being of our communities. Hazards such as mold and pests or their waste, and environmental issues such as high moisture and chemicals leaching from products can exacerbate respiratory diseases such as asthma. Foam insulation, paints, adhesives, floors, and carpets can contain asthmagens—substances that can cause asthma. Pollution and

pollen can also trigger asthma attacks unless ventilation systems equipped with filters prevent these outdoor asthmagens from getting inside. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Alaska Native people are disproportionately burdened by asthma. These groups have the highest asthma rates, deaths, and hospitalizations.²²



In addition to asthma, two legacy toxic chemical problems, lead (from sources like lead paint, contaminated drinking water, and contaminated soil) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) (from sources like old caulk, leaking fluorescent lighting, and paint) disproportionately impact children of color. According to the EPA's America's Children and the Environment report, Black, Non-Hispanic children still have the highest levels of blood lead.²³ The U.S. Department of Housing and

Urban Development (HUD) estimates that 62,000 public housing units around the country need lead abatement. And, according to the National Housing Law Project, over 90,000 children in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program have lead poisoning and an additional 340,000 children living in federally subsidized housing are at risk.²⁴

On June 29, 2020, the EPA posted a new webpage stating the agency was, “concerned that there is potential widespread use of PCB-containing building materials in schools and other buildings constructed or renovated between about 1950 and 1979.”²⁵ According to the Build America’s Schools Infrastructure Coalition (BASIC), low-income white and all children of color are still much more likely to attend schools that have unhealthy, unsafe, and inadequate facilities.²⁶

An estimated 30 million affordable housing units are considered substandard because of physical or health hazards, including asthmagens and lead, along with gas leaks and inadequate heating systems.²⁷ Over 60% of low-income renters are people of color. The cost of energy disproportionately burdens the poor and can account for up to 20% of their income expenditure, a significantly higher proportion than middle or high-income earners.²⁸ Part of the reason for this energy burden is the energy inefficiency or poor repair of low-income people’s homes. At both the state and federal level, we need resources that ensure no community is left behind on the path to safer, healthier homes that produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

People need targeted funds to address deficiencies in the built environment at the building and community levels. Energy Efficiency Assistance programs and U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Weatherization assistance program can administer energy efficiency upgrades for low-income residents, but these should be expanded to multi-family units.^{29,30} Further holistic programming for healthy housing efficiency upgrades at the national level must be created and implemented to address misappropriations of wealth and injustices in energy, for marginalized communities.

Policy Recommendations

1. To address the equity issues of housing quality, water and energy affordability, and efficiency, the federal government should commit funds for energy-efficient retrofits as well as green construction and repairs for affordable housing that are conditioned on Buy American and meet the highest standards for health, energy efficiency, resilience, and fair labor:
 - a. Fully fund the **Public Housing Capital Fund** to address the \$70 billion backlog of repairs and improvements needed to preserve the current public housing stock and expand the national **Housing Trust Fund** as the primary mechanism to meet the deficit of affordable housing stock within ten years;
 - b. Expand the **Low Income Housing Tax Credit**, authorizing state and local tax credits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households;
 - c. Establish a debt relief program for household utility bills;
 - d. Provide utility and rental assistance that incentivizes energy efficiency for affordable housing developers and public housing agencies; and
 - e. Provide incentives and/or tax credits for new, green, affordable housing that co-locates near public transit and walkable amenities.
2. Support President Biden’s American Jobs Plan proposal to build and rehabilitate more than 500,000 homes for low- and middle-income homebuyers in underserved communities by passing the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act (NHIA);
3. Build on President Biden’s American Jobs Plan to upgrade and build new public schools by passing the Reopen and Rebuild America’s Schools Act (RRASA) (S.96 and H.R. 604), which requires new construction and renovation to be done using recognized green building frameworks. The AJP

should include the increased funding laid out in RRASA: \$100 billion in direct grants and \$50 billion in bonds. These funds will eliminate lead and PCB contaminants, improve indoor air quality and ventilation, and make schools more energy-efficient and resilient;

4. Boost funding for the Healthy High Performance Schools grant program as proposed in the Get Toxic Substances Out of Schools Act of 2021, including PCB removal and increase funding for EPA's Lead Testing School and Child Care Drinking Water Grant Program;
5. Pass the Environmental Justice Legacy Pollution Clean Up Act, including its \$45 billion for a HUD grant program to remediate lead-based paint hazards in housing;
6. Expand federal and state residential energy property tax credits (e.g., equipment tax credits for primary residences) for implementing holistic

energy efficiency upgrade programs for low- or no-income persons by targeting efficient HVAC systems, window treatments, and insulation—with further expansion for appliances such as electric stoves, and more;

7. Improve upon current building and energy code requirements and policies for HUD-sponsored housing to ensure developers are creating and maintaining energy-efficient, non-toxic, safe homes as affordable housing units; and
8. Create, fully fund, and implement programming for environmental justice and potentially precarious populations using current programs and initiatives as building blocks (e.g., the USDA's Rural Utilities Services program), and expand upon them to address high energy bills via healthy, energy-efficient upgrades, high-quality building materials, improved residential water infrastructure, and broadband services.



PRIORITY TWO:

Make Drinking Water Safe and Affordable Starting with Lead Service Lines in Disenfranchised and Marginalized Communities

The EPA estimates that 6 to 10 million homes in our country get water through lead pipes that can release harmful amounts of the toxic heavy metal.³¹ An analysis of EPA data by NRDC found that between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2020, **186 million people** in the United States—56 percent of the country's population—drank water from drinking water systems detecting lead levels exceeding the level of 1 part per billion (ppb) recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics to protect children from lead in school water fountains.³² More than **61 million people** were served by drinking water systems that detected lead levels that exceeded the limit of 5 ppb set by the Food and Drug Administration for bottled water, which NRDC recommends as a tap water standard.³³ **Seven million people** were served by systems that exceeded the EPA's Lead Action Level of 15 ppb—a level that is supposed to trigger additional actions by water systems to reduce their lead levels.³⁴



The NRDC study showed that nearly **30 million Americans** were served by systems that violated EPA's Lead and Copper Rule.³⁵ Water systems in counties with higher percentages of people of color were more likely to be in violation and to remain in violation due, in part, to ineffective government intervention, according to an analysis by NRDC, the Environmental Justice Health Alliance, and Coming Clean.³⁶

No level of lead exposure is safe. Formula-fed infants face the greatest risks, with higher exposures to lead in drinking water, pound for pound, than any other family member, at a time in life when the brain is most vulnerable to lead-induced harm such as lowered IQ or learning and behavioral problems. Lead in the drinking water used to mix with formula puts Black babies, who are more likely to be exclusively formula fed, at greatest risk.³⁷

Despite these obvious health threats, the EPA during the Trump administration relaxed regulations extending the prior 14-year timeline to a new 33-year grace period for utilities to replace lead pipes with safer materials. The rollback creates the prospect of even more generations of children harmed by lead in water.

Infrastructure funding for drinking water lines should require that lead water pipes be fully replaced. Partially removing a lead line and leaving the rest still in use can make lead contamination worse by increasing the corrosion on the remaining lead lines.³⁸ Requiring homeowners to pay for the replacement of the pipes leading into their homes adds an additional layer of economic burden and environmental injustice. The Environmental Defense Fund and American University reviewed the data on the more than 3,400 lead service line replacements in Washington, D.C. from 2009 to 2018 and found residents in wealthier areas were over two times more likely to pay to have their lead pipe fully replaced during water utility

infrastructure projects.³⁹ In October 2019, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser addressed this injustice by appropriating \$1.8 million in her Fiscal Year 2020 budget to fund the Lead Pipe Replacement Assistance Program, to replace the lead service lines that remained on private property.

According to a February 2021 Morning Consult poll done for EDF, Black Millennials for Flint, and the BlueGreen Alliance, four in five voters (80%) support funding the replacement of lead pipes in communities across the U.S.—this included 74% of those that voted for Donald Trump in the 2020 election.⁴⁰

As documented in the BlueGreen Alliance’s *WATER WORKS: The Job Creation Potential of Repairing America’s Water Infrastructure*, eliminating lead exposure in our water systems not only keeps communities safe and healthy, but also creates family-sustaining jobs and boosts local economies across the country, particularly when members of the impacted communities themselves are trained and hired to do this work. The excavation of water pipes under city streets also offers opportunities for water conservation, flood control, the installation of fiber optic cables, door-to-door organizing, and the restoration of native tree canopies in communities where such improvements are sorely needed.⁴¹

Lead is not the only water problem threatening the health of people of color in the United States. Twice as many Black people and Latines lack basic access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Native Americans are 19 times more likely than whites to lack access to basic indoor plumbing.⁴² Residents of rural, predominantly Black counties like Lowndes County, Alabama struggle with untreated sewage caused by failed septic systems.⁴³ More than 800 U.S. cities are plagued with combined sewer overflows that spread untreated sewage into homes, businesses and waterways whenever there is heavy rain or flooding.⁴⁴

Policy Recommendations:

1. The American Jobs Plan states that no American family should still be receiving drinking water through lead pipes and service lines. Building on the plan, Congress should fund the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) at \$80 to \$100 billion and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund at \$50 to \$100 billion. **At least 50%** of this new funding should be provided to disadvantaged communities in the form of grants, along with technical assistance to help communities access these funds. In addition, Congress should invest \$45 billion over 10 years in lead service line removal; provide \$17.5 billion for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program to reduce lead exposure in 400,000 schools and childcare facilities; and \$4.5 billion over 10 years in the cleanup of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).
2. Enact provisions in the Environmental Justice Legacy Pollution Clean Up Act of 2021. This bill includes \$45 billion to replace lead service lines and prohibits any contribution to the cost of the replacement of lead services lines by any individual homeowner. The Environmental Justice Legacy Pollution Clean Up Act also provides \$3 billion to the Indian Health Service (IHS) to build and renovate sanitation infrastructure, \$10 billion in funding to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Decentralized Water Systems Program, so non-profit organizations can provide grants to construct or improve individual household water wells and wastewater systems, and \$25 billion to the EPA to address combined sewer overflows.
3. Permanently extend the Buy America provision for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and incentivize the expansion of lead service line replacement programs that include other neighborhood improvements in stormwater management, replacement of the tree canopy, installation of fiber optic cable, and community education on the benefits of these actions;
4. Create grant programs at the EPA to assist low-income households with affordable and efficient water and sewer services.

PRIORITY THREE:

Improve Total Worker Health Starting with Higher Wages and the Right to Organize

Wages must be raised to account for the decades of stagnant wages in the United States, especially for people of color. The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) calculates that an increase in the minimum wage would directly benefit nearly one-third of Black workers and 26% of Hispanic workers.⁴⁵ The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is combating proposed minimum wage increases despite seeing CEO compensation increase by 940% since 1978.⁴⁶ During this time, the minimum wage has not even kept up with the rate of inflation, with tip-based workers not receiving an increase since 1991.

Expanding the right to organize a union will also help increase the incomes of people of color. Union employees make an average of 30% more than non-union workers and 92% of union workers have job-related health coverage versus 68% of non-union workers.⁴⁷ Additionally, Black union workers' hourly wages are 14.7% higher than their non-union counterparts while white union workers experienced a 9.6% wage increase, illustrating the potential role unions can play in reducing the racial, wage, and wealth gaps present in the U.S.⁴⁸ This is true for workers in the private sector as well as the public sector where the majority of workers are often women of color. Right now, labor laws in the United States make it difficult to form a union. Employers can intimidate and fire pro union workers with virtually no deterrence or punishment. Even when workers successfully unionize, employers will often refuse or delay negotiating a first contract, essentially killing a new union through delay. Reforming American labor laws would empower workers to unionize, allowing them to fight more effectively for increased wages, benefits, workplace safety, and job security.

Wages make up one facet of holistic worker health. The National Institute of Occupational Health

(NIOSH)'s Total Worker Health Initiative highlights the impact of psychosocial exposures in the workplace that can negatively or positively impact workers' health and well-being.⁴⁹ Factors such as poor safety climate, racism in the workplace manifested as implicit or explicit biases, high job demands but low control over the work being done, work-life interference, poor benefits, discrimination, unstable work hours, and concerns over losing a job can all negatively impact well-being. Raising workers' benefits, reducing work-life interference, and improving the workplace safety climate have been shown to result in significant



increases in workers' health and in some cases retention and growth in the workplace. As a result, it is clear that we need to approach worker health in a new and innovative way by opposing discrimination against people of color, disabled, LGBTQ+, previously incarcerated, and migrant and aging workers, and by promoting equity and justice within all work environments.

Policy Recommendations

1. Increase the federal minimum wage for employees and contractors to \$15 and guarantee continuous indexing to inflation by 2023. Furthermore, for cities and/or counties with higher costs of living, increase the proposed \$15 minimum wage to a living wage;
2. Pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act to ensure workers can assemble and collectively bargain for better wages and safer working conditions by ending prohibitions on collective and class action litigation; prohibiting employers from permanently replacing striking employees; and amending how employees are defined to ensure that no one is misclassified as an independent contractor;
3. Improve our social safety net by requiring access to paid leave, including paternity leave, affordable healthcare, and child care, and protect workers' retirement plans;
4. Expand unemployment insurance to allow immediate access, increase benefit size, expand work-sharing eligibility, allow for extensions, and expand coverage to self-employed and gig workers;
5. Require wage transparency from employers to help reduce income inequality based on discrimination including, but not limited to, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, arrest history, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture;
6. Mandate the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to develop and implement stronger protections and clear, timely follow-up protocols for whistleblowers and people who are arbitrarily fired, coerced into quitting, or retaliated against (e.g. cutting hours) to eliminate worker discrimination and unjust firings;
7. Mandate the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to grant workers engaged in alternative work arrangements (i.e. non-traditional full-time or part-time positions) the right to collectively bargain and be protected under the National Labor Relations Act;
8. Fund grant programs for businesses and organizations aiming to meet NIOSH's Total Worker Health goals to create a more holistic approach to health in the workplace, and reduce psychosocial exposures which adversely impact well-being;
9. Reinstate non-discrimination protections, including those for people of color, LGBTQ+, migrant, disabled, and aging people curtailed by the Trump administration; and
10. Using existing offices, committees, councils, or creating new ones, ensure local, state, and federal government agencies implement a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Framework into internal and external action plans and require all grant awardees to follow a DEIJ framework. These plans should be implemented to ensure retention of workers while gaining a better understanding and acceptance of cultural differences in the workplace. Workers should not be required to assimilate wholly into workplace culture; their cultural differences should be welcomed and accepted to combat racial injustice and oppressive systemic structures upheld in our government.

PRIORITY FOUR:

Enhance Career Pathways and Expand Job Quality and Opportunity for People of Color

The NIOSH concept of holistic worker health, also known as Total Worker Health (TWH) must be applied to an economy that is changing rapidly not only due to the effects of COVID-19, but also due to automation, the transition to a cleaner, more sustainable environment, and changes driven by technological innovations and new demographics. The premise of TWH is to factor in the less accounted for health effects caused from psychosocial exposures through the development and implementation of programs, policies, and practices focused on improving the quality of American worklife. By using an integrated approach to protect workers, NIOSH believes worker health can improve and advance worker well-being across sectors and industries.

This shift in approach to worker health brings opportunities for workers to obtain family-sustaining, safer and less toxic jobs, but we must prepare effectively for this potentially bright future. That preparation must include investing in registered apprenticeship programs, historically black colleges and universities (HBCU), community colleges, union training centers and skill certifications for workers, and ensuring that people of color and disinvested communities are primary beneficiaries of this investment. Workers across sectors often express their concerns regarding resources and low wages as pay has remained rather stagnant compared to CEO pay, and teachers are still paying for resources from their annual salaries.



An investment in our society and essential workers must be made to improve the working conditions and compensation to promote these industries, sectors, and fields. For example, home care workers and other allied health workers are often overworked and underpaid. Currently, essential home care workers—who are disproportionately women of color—are among the lowest paid workers in the United States, earning less than \$12 per hour.⁵⁰ Other mental healthcare providers such as nursing assistants struggle with low wages, high debt, and high work demands at roughly \$15 per hour. Social workers, including those with master's degrees, often earn less than \$25 an hour.⁵¹ We need to compensate and promote our healthcare workers fairly and limit their workloads to ensure their mental health does not suffer, and to align with NIOSH's Total Worker Health initiative.

Policy Recommendations

1. Ensure robust implementation of DOL's final rule modernizing the equal employment opportunity regulations that govern registered apprenticeship programs. The rule, which went into effect in 2017, prohibits all forms of discrimination and requires affirmative action to provide equal employment opportunity in such programs. It is particularly essential given the history of systemic racial and gendered exclusion that persisted in many of these programs.
2. Invest in registered apprenticeships by addressing historical, systemic discrimination in labor, and creating new registered apprenticeships slots and workforce development opportunities for jobs in clean energy, manufacturing, and infrastructure targeting underserved communities;
3. Strengthen the capacity and discrete pathways of people of color accessing opportunities through successful pre-apprenticeship programs, and through wraparound services (e.g., childcare, mental health, and transportation support for children), income supports, counseling, and case management in all workforce development programs;
4. Support the American Jobs Plan investment in job training for formerly incarcerated individuals and justice-involved youth;
5. Create clear pathways or pipelines for students to transition into good, well-paying trade jobs by calling for stronger support of training programs beginning at the high school level. These pathways/ pipelines should have students in high school progress into apprenticeships and on to union jobs. At the same time, we should lay the groundwork for robust career pathways by investing in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) and project based learning in preK-8. Furthermore, continued, long-term investments in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs) are needed to create diverse, inclusive, and anti-racist workforces;
6. Develop and expand effective pre-apprenticeship programs that have the capacity and show a continuous track record of successfully placing historically marginalized workers into registered apprenticeship programs linked to meaningful jobs and future career opportunities. These programs can be identified by collecting longitudinal data to monitor trends of entry and retention for apprenticeship pipelines;
7. Support the provisions of the American Jobs Plan expansion of Home and Community Based Services under Medicaid to ensure that caregiving jobs will include benefits and the ability to collectively bargain;
8. Amend the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act of 1988 (WARN) to strengthen requirements to increase advanced notice, community engagement, and tracking of plant closing and mass layoffs. In addition, direct the DOL to regularly analyze and report on trends in WARN notice data; and
9. Develop and implement a federal Responsible Contractor policy that ensures construction is done in a safe, timely, reliable, high quality, and cost-effective manner.

PRIORITY FIVE:

Reduce Disproportionate Exposures from Pollution

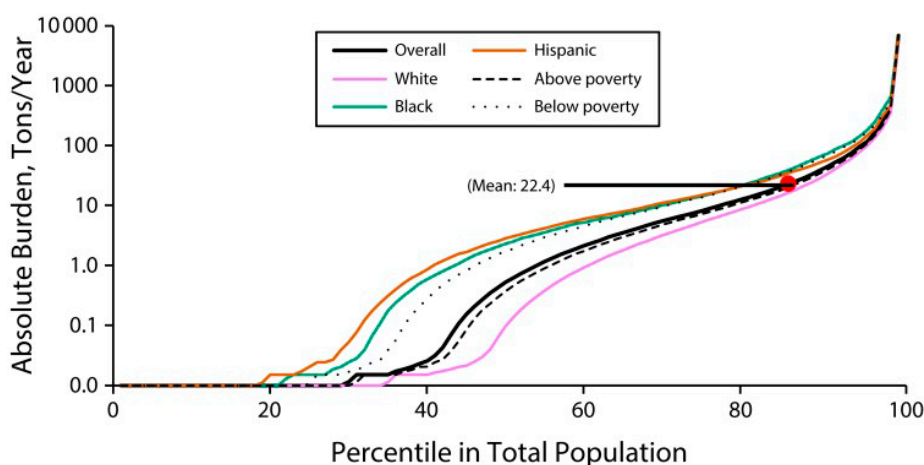
The stark disparities in the hospitalization and death rates amongst white, Black and Latine people with COVID-19 are tied to the higher rates of chronic diseases like asthma, diabetes, and hypertension. These chronic diseases are all linked to harmful environmental contaminants including polluted air. A 2018 study of EPA emissions data published in the American Journal of Public Health found that exposure to particulate matter air pollution is 1.35 times higher for all people living in poverty compared to the overall population. People of color were exposed to air pollution levels that were 1.28 times worse than the overall population. Black people, whether or not they were poor, were 1.54 times more likely to have a higher burden of air pollution than did the overall population.⁵²

A 2021 analysis of all major emission source sectors found that nearly all of them consistently affect people of color more.⁵³ Hazardous waste facilities and polluting industries are more likely to be located in predominantly people of color and low-income communities.⁵⁴ Biomonitoring data consistently shows that people of color, especially Black and Latine women have higher levels of pesticides, parabens, phthalates, mercury, and arsenic in their blood and urine.⁵⁵

Policy Recommendations

1. Restore and strengthen EPA air and water standards, one hundred of which were rolled back during the Trump administration. Strong and well-enforced state and national rules can effectively limit air and water pollution and improve the health of people of color;
2. Restore EPA restrictions on chlorpyrifos and pesticide application buffer zones to protect farmworkers and bystanders from accidental exposure;
3. Strengthen and finalize the EPA's Lead and Copper Rule;
4. Design transportation, clean power, and infrastructure investments to reduce air pollutants; and
5. Get EPA back to the business of clean up and enforcement. Funding for the cleanup of Superfund and Brownfield sites and Superfund emergency response and removal should be increased, and the Environmental Justice Small Grants Program should be enhanced by the addition of a super grants program as well. The Environmental Justice Legacy Pollution Act provides \$3 billion for grants to remediate brownfield sites and also commits \$3 billion to the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program.

Distribution of Absolute Burdens of PM_{2.5} Emissions From Nearby Facilities in the 2011 National Emissions Inventory, Stratified by Race/Ethnicity and Poverty Status: American Community Survey, United States, 2009–2013



Source: American Public Health Association 2018

PRIORITY SIX:

Make Fenceline Communities Safer

There are more than 12,000 facilities in the United States that the EPA considers potential chemical disaster sites because of their use or storage of large quantities of dangerous chemicals.⁵⁶ In 2016, the Center for Effective Government calculated that nearly 23 million residents—7.5 percent of the total U.S. population—lived within one mile of one of these facilities that must submit a Risk Management Plan (RMP) to the EPA. Nearly half of the people (11.4 million) who live in the danger zones are people of color. According to the Center's calculations, children of color make up almost two-thirds of the 5.7 million children who live within one mile of a high-risk chemical facility in the United States.⁵⁷ A strong federal Chemical Disaster Rule can make existing facilities safer and assure that new industrial development is sited and designed to minimize the risk to the surrounding community.

Policy Recommendations

1. EPA current RMP should be strengthened to protect the communities outside the fence line and the workers inside;
2. The use of safer chemicals and technologies should be required when feasible. California's 2017 *Process Safety Management for Petroleum Refineries* provides a model for this requirement by mandating hierarchy of hazard control analyses to determine if the hazard can be eliminated instead of just being controlled;⁵⁸
3. Require chemical facilities to continuously monitor and report their fenceline-area emissions and health hazards;
4. Create rules and incentives for new industrial development to ensure the design of inherently safer production facilities. A Green Industrial Policy can motivate employers to invest in technologies that are less inherently dangerous, emit less carbon and toxic substances, are more climate resilient, and produce greener products;⁵⁹
5. Fund reclamation, remediation to health protective standards, and repurposing of industrial sites that spur economic development in hard-hit communities and position communities to thrive in a net-zero emissions economy; and
6. Rebuild the investigative and recommendations capacity of the US Chemical Safety Board and set clear priorities for that agency's actions; reform its governance policies; and increase public transparency and engagement.



PRIORITY SEVEN:

Invest in Community Prosperity and Resilience to Climate Change

Growing community resilience is essential to ensuring the stability of a community or neighborhood in times of financial precarity and natural disaster. People of color are more likely to live in areas most vulnerable to flooding and other climate change-related weather events.⁶⁰

A 2012 study found that if the Safe Building Code Incentive Act of 2011 was implemented back in 1988, it would have saved the federal government an annual average of \$500 million a year in hurricane relief payments.⁶¹ Furthermore, a 2020 investigation conducted by the National Institute of Building Sciences' Multihazard Mitigation Council found that every dollar invested in mitigation of climate change yielded \$13 in savings in losses due to weather events.⁶² With U.S. disasters such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and fires, the U.S. averages \$100 billion in losses of property annually. Comparing

these costs to the 1% increase in construction to make buildings more climate resilient, it is evident that we need to invest in long-term resiliency versus short-term savings and profits in retrofitting and new construction.

A strong local and state economy is necessary to sustain communities through disasters—whether they are caused by climate change, recession or a pandemic. A vibrant economy strengthens relations between neighbors, improves activism in local politics, and gives communities the ability to sustain difficult times. This starts, however, with allocating funding for local economies and systems to ensure they have a strong foundation to build upon as they continue to develop. Historically, communities have been hampered from solidifying community resilience due to implicit and explicit segregation laws and policies, especially those created and employed by the federal and state governments.⁶³

These policies reduced the capacity of communities to rebuild and sustain after disasters and societal changes that have disproportionately impacted people of color. As climate change continues to exacerbate weather events, these communities should have financial resources and mechanisms to enhance their resilience to avoid irreparable damages to their homes, community, and their livelihood.



Policy Recommendations

1. Establish a National Climate Adaptation Program that provides funding and resources to vulnerable, and low-income communities for climate change planning, response, resilience, and adaptation, and include services for non-disaster readiness community development (e.g. resources to combat extreme heat);
2. Increase funding to HUD's Community Development Block Grant program;
3. Increase funding for EPA's National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC), International Human Rights and Rights of Indigenous People, and federal interagency working group on environmental and climate justice;
4. Bring broadband to communities in need. Black and Latine families are less likely to be able to access home broadband internet than white families, compounding systemic barriers to opportunity and economic equality. The American Jobs Plan prioritizes building "future proof" broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas so that we finally reach 100% high-speed broadband coverage;
5. Prioritize grant awards for low-income, historically disenfranchised communities to receive grassroots project funding for projects such as local clinics and schools in rural communities, or urban gardens that support nutritional education to help improve health in low-nutrition communities;
6. Further invest in FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program to create climate resistant homes for low-income/ EJ communities to rebuild and/or repurpose homes and commercial buildings for shelter, particularly during extreme weather events;
7. Fully fund the Public Health Emergency Fund in HHS to support the development of emergency climate change and extreme weather response programs for underserved and rural communities, and vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities/limitations;
8. Financially support community buyback programs, community development block grants, and community land trusts to allow communities to preserve and renovate housing and private properties in low- or no-income residents at lower costs;
9. Financially invest in establishing and maintaining community consultations and/or committees, similar to Indigenous communities, where new projects have to be considered by a local community organization. This allows communities to better protect themselves from the displacement often associated with gentrification, and societal development that disproportionately caters to specific, wealthier demographics;
10. Transition the HUD's Competitive National Disaster Resilience competition into a sustained program and increase its funding to better promote innovative community-based programming. Furthermore, require new low-and extremely low-income housing be energy-efficient and climate resilient; and
11. Increase DOE research funding for battery technology and invest in pilot projects that target real-world application of battery technology in disadvantaged communities to ensure homes can withstand extreme weather events such as extreme temperatures.



PRIORITY EIGHT:

Protect Our Workers by Making Jobs Cleaner and Safer

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was established in 1971. In the agency's first years both the federal agency and its state partners implemented these rules and enforcement systems on benzene and lead, machine guarding and equipment lock outs, trenching and other construction safety rules that saved tens of thousands of workers' lives. But over the decades, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and industry groups and their allies in Congress and the courts have blocked OSHA from issuing strong protections and weakened the agency's enforcement capacity.

OSHA's inability to live up to its mission "to assure as far as possible every working man and woman in the nation safe and healthful working conditions" is tragically evident in the disproportionate number of COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths among people of color. The CDC provides an explanation for part of the disparity:

People from racial and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately represented in essential work settings such as healthcare facilities, farms, factories, food production and processing, grocery stores, and public transportation. People who work in these settings have more chances to be exposed to COVID-19 because these types of jobs require frequent or close contact with the public or other workers, involve activities that cannot be done from home, and may lack benefits such as paid sick days.⁶⁴

Missing from the CDC's statement are two important details.

First, people of color occupy most of the low-wage, non-union positions in these sectors. EPI calculates that in 2019 the average white essential worker made \$5 more per hour than Black and Hispanic essential workers. Connected to this statistic is the finding that the most high-risk for COVID-19 industries have the lowest unionization rates with health care at 10% and food and agriculture at 8%.⁶⁵ Furthermore, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2018 people of color made up 53% of workplace violence fatalities, indicating their jobs are also risky compared to white workers.⁶⁶

Second, OSHA, under President Trump, refused to issue strong safety and health rules to protect these essential workers from COVID-19. Under President Biden, OSHA and its sister agency, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, have the opportunity to rebuild health and safety protections for all American workers.

Policy Recommendations

1. OSHA should swiftly issue the infectious disease rule for health care workers that was proposed during the Obama administration and begin work on public health emergency standards for other industries. Incorporating the scientific and workplace findings of the COVID-19 pandemic will be an essential part of strengthening these rules;
2. OSHA should restart the process of promulgating the Prevention of Workplace Violence in Healthcare rule. The proposed rulemaking should be expanded to include other industries and fully implemented. H.R. 1195 requires OSHA to issue a workplace violence prevention standard that will mandate employers in the health care and social service sectors to develop and implement a plan to protect their employees from workplace violence;
3. OSHA should promulgate a new heat rule to protect workers in high-heat environments, both outdoor and indoor, that use the NIOSH, ACGIH guidance, California, and Washington state OSHA rules as foundational standards. New standards that address the other safety and health hazards of climate change should also be promulgated;
4. OSHA should collaborate with EPA and NIOSH on the implementation of Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) and protecting workers effectively, efficiently, and reliably;
5. The Mine Health and Safety Administration should promulgate a silica standard;
6. Workplace reports on occupational injury and illness and agency enforcement activities should be made publicly available;
7. OSHA should require multilingual safety programs and trainings for workers;
8. Congress should amend Section 20 of the OSH Act to explicitly direct NIOSH to expand its research on climate change and occupational safety and health, and ensure NIOSH is sufficiently funded to carry out the research; and
9. Congress should extend OSHA protections to all public employees, home based service workers including home health workers, landscapers, and gig workers, prison laborers, and undocumented workers as well to ensure no worker faces deportation for reporting unsafe working conditions or other violations of labor and employment rights.



PRIORITY NINE:

Promote Inclusive and Evidence-Based Dialogue and Protect Peaceful Demonstration and the Right to Vote

Historically, people in the United States have used their voice and ability to protest as a means of protection from unsafe work environments, discrimination within our society, and for environmental protections. These peaceful protests have changed the landscape of our society, yet they have often been deliberately and systematically delegitimized through misinformation campaigns. When communities and people are labeled as “bad areas” or as “poor lifestyle choice-makers,” the most vulnerable and historically marginalized and disenfranchised are prohibited from progressing, resulting in the further reinforcement of prejudices and discrimination of these communities and populations.

Combating misinformation and disinformation is essential in protecting advocates’ right to protest and the right to vote; it must continue to be protected as they are foundational tools to elucidate labor and human rights issues.

Workers and communities must have a central role in framing the economic, environmental, and injustices they are facing and the best solutions to those problems. These public dialogues must challenge the messages designed to prop up racism and destroy worker and community solidarity, especially when they are used to promote anti-protest bills like the one proposed by Florida Governor DeSantis and voting restrictions like those passed by the Georgia State Legislature. Systemic racism can only effectively be reduced if the Constitutional “right of the people to peaceably assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” and “the right of citizens of the United States to vote” are fully protected and communities and workers can meaningfully engage with employers and the government to inform practices and policy at the local, tribal, state, and national levels.

Policy Recommendations

1. Pass the For the People Act and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act (H.R. 4) to protect the freedom to vote, especially for people of color. Voter protections should include same day voter registration, national voting day holidays, pre-registration for 16-year-olds, the elimination of voter ID laws, and bans on voting due to criminal history;
2. Protect peaceful protestors and their right to protest by redirecting funding allocated for police for community taskforce training in de-escalation and First Amendment protections;
3. Prohibit the use of lethal and/or severely injurious equipment or “riot control” equipment on non-violent protestors;
4. Encourage the involvement of workers and communities of color on boards and committees to ensure inclusive dialogue and decision making. EPA’s Guidance on Considering Environmental Justice During the Development of Regulatory Actions provides one framework for meaningful involvement;⁶⁷ and
5. Fund training programs on how to effectively communicate scientific evidence and dispel misinformation to government agencies, academic and healthcare institutions and non-governmental organizations, and ensure these programs pass rigorous ethical examination to ensure a lack of exploitation of communities targeted by these programs.

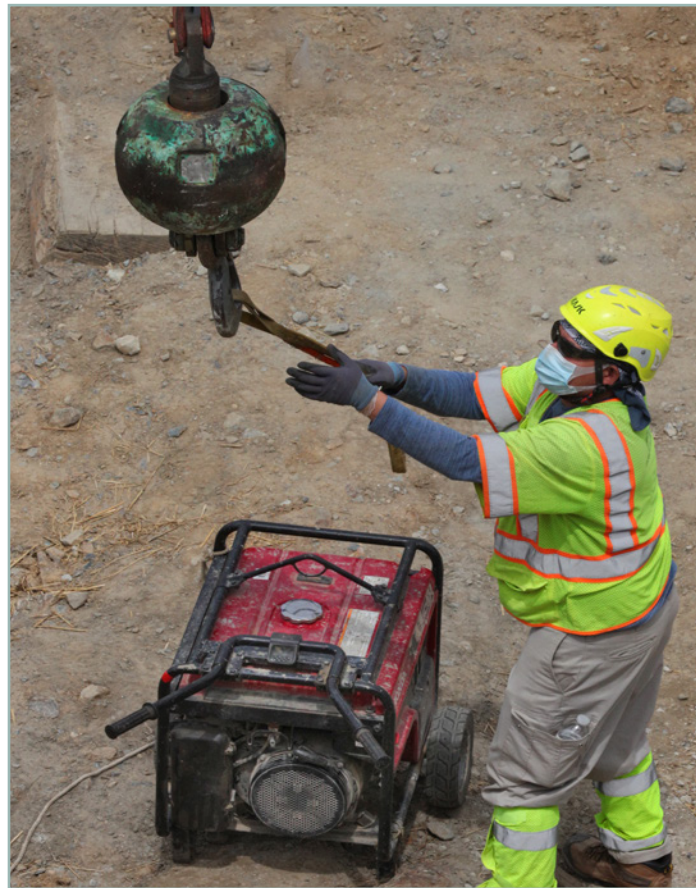
PRIORITY TEN:

Ensure Equity in Transportation Resources and Land Usage

Land use and transportation play a vital role in shaping our lives, but have particular impact on our most vulnerable populations. Studies on residential migration observe poor and working class households being priced out of denser urban cores nationwide, and relocating to more affordable suburbs and exurbs. This requires that they have to travel longer distances and incur higher costs to access destinations like work, school, care facilities, and relatives' and friends' homes.^{68,69} This displacement to less-dense areas often means that public transit is no longer a real mobility option, while individual car ownership remains costly and largely out of reach for many low-income households.⁷⁰

In the United States, Asian and Black workers commute by public transit at nearly four times the rate of white workers, with Black pedestrians being more likely than white pedestrians to be killed in traffic accidents.⁷¹ Yet while federal and state governments have spent heavily in highway and road infrastructure, especially in the wake of the 1956 Interstate Highway Act, investments in bus, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and other options have lagged far behind. Major federal investments in highways and bridges frequently and intentionally cut through Black and Brown communities; the use of the Coronado Bridge to split San Diego's Barrio Logan community, and the devastating impact of the construction of I-94 on the historically Black neighborhood of Rondo in St. Paul, MN are just two examples of how today's cities and suburbs have been planned to maximize wealthier and whiter communities' access to jobs and amenities, while establishing and deepening patterns of residential segregation.

Just as transportation and land use policies and investment decisions of the past have exacerbated racial and economic inequity, we can leverage the same tools to build a more equitable future—one that improves the mobility options, physical and mental health, and economic outcomes of historically disadvantaged populations. The transportation sector



is undergoing a technological and business shift. There are over 1 million electric vehicles on the road today and autonomous vehicles are being piloted in a range of contexts and terrains, transportation network companies are drawing riders out of transit and into rideshare vehicles, and cities are incorporating micro-mobility options (e-scooters, e-bikes, bikeshare systems) into their active transportation plans.⁷² Equity-focused policies can support the scaling of these transportation system changes through meaningful, transparent community engagement and robust public participation processes, which ensure that transportation investments serve the needs of the community and workers—not private interests—and are implemented to maximize access and affordability.

Truly participatory planning and decision-making, such as described in the Greenlining Institute's mobility equity framework, can facilitate a modern, safe, and healthy transportation system that centers the needs of low-income communities of color. Communities want and need mobility options, including reliable and affordable transit, safe and accessible active transportation networks, and uncongested roads. It is essential to create spaces for community leadership and feedback integration at every stage of the decision-making process, with particular emphasis on elevating the voices of those who are most impacted by transportation planning decisions. While funding flows downward from federal and state governments, decision-making must flow upward, beginning with community advocates and organizers who are best positioned to determine the mobility needs of their communities.

Policy Recommendations

1. Establish an interagency task force chaired by DOT, EPA, and DOE and including other agencies and key stakeholders to identify equity—and justice-based programs and projects that address disproportionate transportation challenges. The stakeholders should include leaders of impacted communities including those at-risk of being negatively impacted due to rising housing costs in the area, transit worker unions, and local and national Environmental Justice organizations;
2. Ensure transit systems are equitable in their construction, maintenance, and operation by implementing measures such as high labor standards, targeted and local hire, and pre-apprenticeships to ensure sustainable transit jobs are created;
3. Prioritize safe and accessible transportation, particularly nonmotorized, clean and no-emission transportation methods, for people with disabilities and the aging population;
4. Require future transportation infrastructure projects to conduct environmental impact assessments (EIAs) showing they do not disproportionately negatively impact the health and growth of communities of color or low-income communities, nor displace or eliminate the community's historic, environmental, agricultural, cultural, and aesthetic resources. Utilize environmental justice-focused bodies such as the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) to review the process and its parameters to ensure it is an effective tool that can be used to protect communities;
5. Implement Complete Streets and Transit Oriented Development policies, programs, and infrastructure while involving community stakeholders in the decision-making process to promote community involvement, buy-in and adherence to new policies they will set forth;
6. Fully fund public transit programs—both capital and operating costs—and allow low-income and precariously employed families to receive no cost-fares to ensure efficacious transit to workers and students. Fare-free pilots across the country and the world have demonstrated that removing the cost barrier (and the associated psychological barrier) substantially increases transit use in a short period of time;⁷³
7. Require transportation agencies and partners at all levels of government to account for linkages between housing, employment hubs, healthcare facilities, healthy food retailers, physical activity resources, and schools, particularly in low-income communities; and
8. Establish a standard timeline at all levels of government for authentic and comprehensive engagement to take place with community stakeholders using the mobility equity framework and ensure that project budgets include funding for these events that are accommodating to a community's transit needs.

CONCLUSION

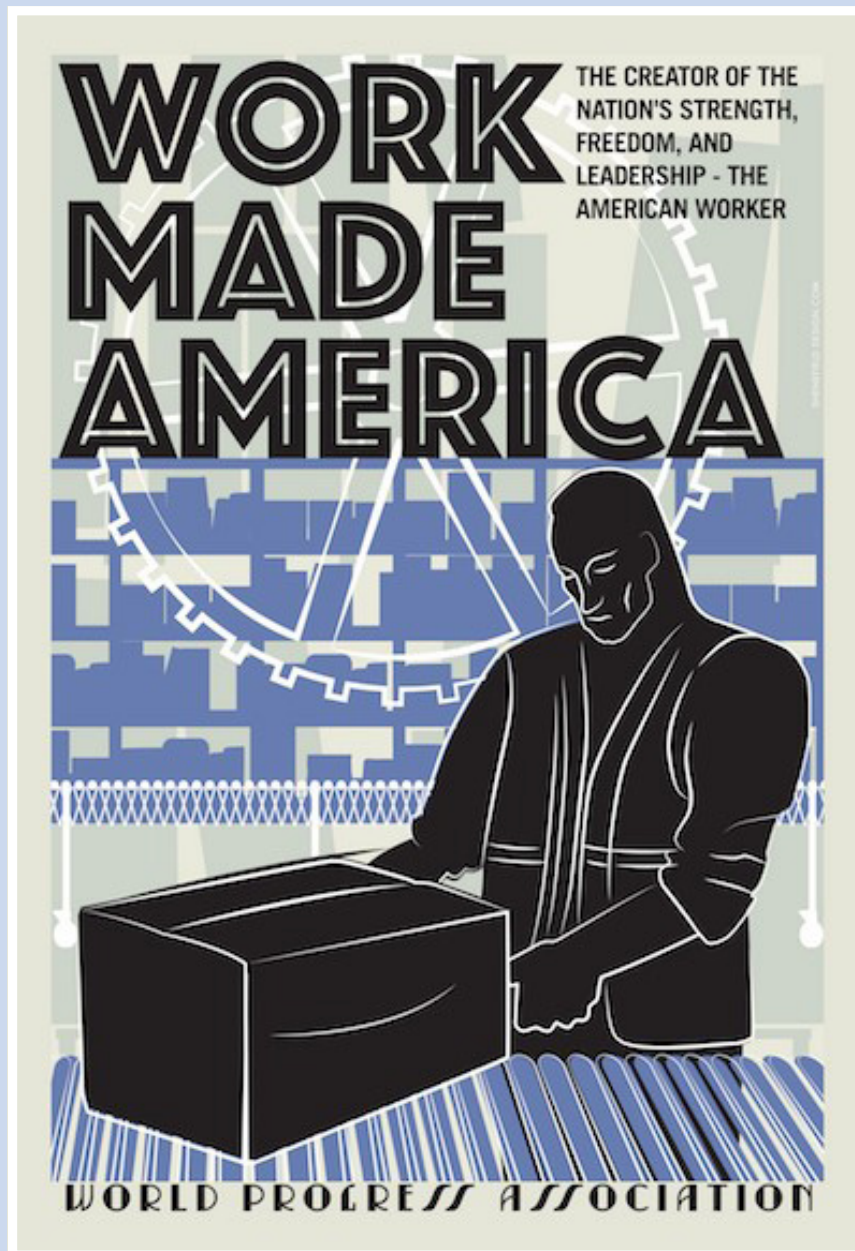
None of these proposed actions will undo the damage of 400 years of racism, bigotry, discrimination, disenfranchisement, and implicit and explicit biases targeted towards people of color. It will take a deep understanding of how we got here, a willingness and desire to change our present and future, and an acceptance of cultural differences that lead to a transformational shift of those historically in power, those benefiting from white privilege, and from those upholding the status quo. Each successful policy improvement, however, will lay the foundation of a future where every person of every race, gender identity, disability status, and ethnicity shares in the abundance of a healthy and equitable economy, and a clean, safe, and healthy environment.

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