



Build Back Bolder:

A Black Mandate for the
Biden-Harris Administration



Black communities are working hard for democracy — but democracy isn't working for Black communities. Generations of rigged rules have left our communities out and left our communities behind. COVID-19 has ravaged Black communities, with severe impacts on our health and our economic security. According to the Center for Disease Control, Black communities contract the disease at 1.4 times the rate of white communities, are hospitalized at 3.7 times the rate of white communities, and are dying at 2.8 times the rate of white communities¹. Racism has greatly contributed to these disproportionate rates of impact — crumbling infrastructure in Black communities makes us even more vulnerable to disaster when it strikes.

According to the Black Census Project, the largest survey of Black communities in America in 155 years, the top concern keeping Black families awake at night are wages that are too low to support a family, followed by a lack of access to affordable healthcare, and a lack of access to affordable housing. The average wealth of white families is \$919,000, while

the average wealth of Black families is \$140,000 — a gap of over \$700,000. Our communities are beleaguered by solutions that privilege individual achievement over community investment — jobs that pay a fair wage, access to capital for those who want to start their own businesses, and the safety net they need to ensure a dignified life.

Within periods of crisis, there is opportunity — and it lies in meeting the needs of Black communities in America so that all of America can reach its promise. 2020's general election was driven by unprecedented voter turnout — Black voters in particular were critical, despite rampant efforts to suppress the Black vote with intimidation and threats of white supremacist violence, and other methods and policies designed to keep Black voters from exercising our right to have a say in how our democracy serves us. Driven to the polls by a desire for changes in the issues we care about, Black voters pushed the Biden campaign over the finish line. As the Biden/Harris administration is now officially underway, here are our policy imperatives.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>



OUR ORIENTATION TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

Racism, and how to address it in public policy, is widely misunderstood. Most treat racism as instances of bad behavior, rather than as a series of rigged rules (and the cultural practices

that reinforce those rigged rules) that have serious and often devastating impacts on people's lives and life outcomes.

In order to undo the rigged rules that cause misery for so many people, at the Black to the Future Action Fund we believe government must respond accordingly by applying three principles to designing solutions that address racism in our society, our democracy, and our economy:

1. Race Matters.

We must acknowledge, address, and focus on the root causes of inequality in order to disrupt the cycle of racism. Race-neutral policies will not resolve structural racism; race-forward policies will.

2. Government Must Be Held Accountable.

Government, and the people who operate it, must be held accountable for laws, policies, and practices that marginalize and perpetuate disparities for Black communities and Black people. Policymakers must take action to bridge racial gaps in health, wealth and other social outcomes by eliminating laws, policies and practices that do harm to Black people, as well as by outlawing private sector practices that exploit racial disparities in order to boost profits.

3. The Black Agenda is a progressive agenda.

Progress for Black communities requires progressive thinking. Old ideas, “play it safe” strategies, incremental movement, or focusing on the people in our communities who are in the middle or at the top will not secure Black futures. We need bold, innovative ideas that drive us forward.

Racial justice is not a separate issue from economic justice, democracy, climate justice, or relief and recovery from COVID-19. We must achieve racial justice in every aspect of our lives.



Black to the Future Action Fund's racial justice strategy includes the following pillars

- Remove policies that lock us out of good jobs, and instead, invest in the health and wealth of our communities
- Confront those who conspire to steal our votes, and finally build the democracy that is promised to us all
- Challenge the policies and practices that leave us living sick and dying younger, and deliver the care we need to live long and live well
- Reject the toxic culture of white nationalism by calling it out at every opportunity and in front of every audience
- Act on the climate crisis as a national priority before more of our communities are hit first and worst by climate disasters
- End the use of incarceration to solve the problem of migration, poverty and disinvestment, and return millions of us to our families and communities

The First 100 Days of The Biden-Harris Administration Must:

Enact A Just Covid-19 Relief And Recovery Plan For Black Communities

Relief and recovery for Black communities, hit hardest by the lack of a robust response to the COVID-19 crisis, exacerbated by government neglect of Black communities in the first place, has been insufficient. COVID-19 relief and recovery, with a focus on racial justice, is needed immediately.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

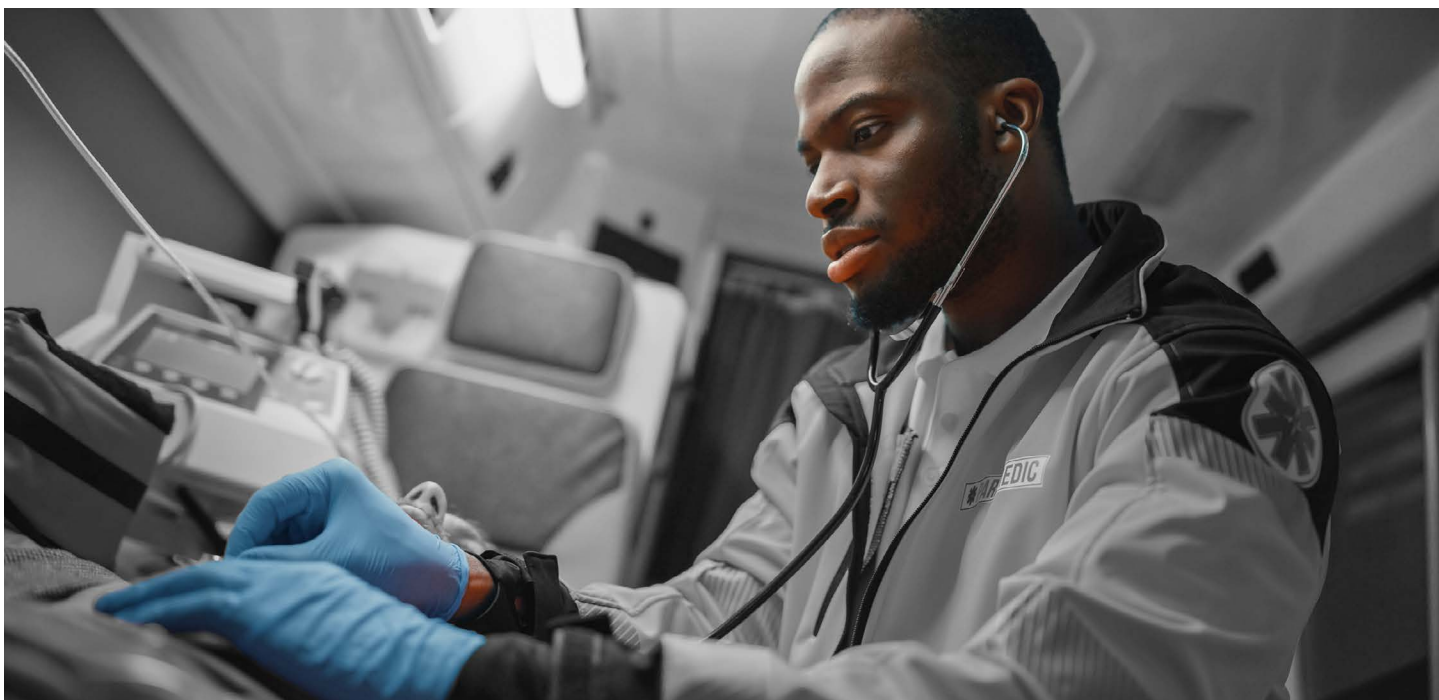


- Expand social security payments
- Debt relief and deferred payments until the employment rate rebounds to pre-pandemic levels on loans, mortgages, and other debt payments
- Penalties for price gouging essential items
- Eliminate child support debt as a barrier to accessing relief and recovery funds
- A guarantee of priority for all Black owned small businesses in the next round of PPP
- Guarantee of relief for every person in America, despite immigration status
- Release non-violent offenders; Guarantee care and prevention measures for violent offenders
- Halt immigration enforcement
- Guaranteed free testing and 100% coverage of covid-19 treatments for all persons in America despite citizenship and incarceration status
- Expanded emergency health care coverage via a public plan
- Ensure racial equity in Covid-19 vaccine distribution:
 - Prioritize allocation in states whose distribution plans center racial equity, mitigating health inequities, and includes providers with a track record of reaching diverse populations
 - Address equitable allocation within priority groups, especially health care, nursing home, and essential workers, who are disproportionately Black and Latinx
 - Include pregnant people in the list of priority groups to prevent further maternal health inequities within Black and Brown communities
- Passage of retroactive hazard pay and the [Essential Workers Bill of Rights](#)
 - A broad and inclusive definition of essential workers to include “any worker who cannot telework and who the state or local government deems to be essential during the COVID19 pandemic”
- Put cash directly into the hands of people via the [Emergency Money to the People](#) plan until the economy recovers
- \$15 minimum wage
- Restoration of supplemental unemployment insurance to \$600/wk
- Expand and make permanent the child tax credit
- Student loan forgiveness - at least \$50,000 per student



- The vaccine must be offered 100% free of charge, including administrative fees
- National database of free testing centers
- National proactive messaging campaign that addresses our country's history of medical and public health injustices towards communities of color and which counters misinformation while highlighting vaccine safety and efficacy
- Permanent expansion of Paid Sick and Family Medical Leave
- Implement culturally relevant and sensitive medical guidelines
- Increased rapid testing sites in underserved and rural communities, prioritizing counties with 20%+ Black residents
- Mandatory race, gender, and class specific data collection (local, state, and federal) to inform future relief and recovery efforts
- Rent, mortgage, and eviction moratoriums for those who've lost their jobs due to covid-19 including accruing interest and taxes; incentivize landlords to keep people in their homes until the economy recovers
- Moratorium on all public utilities + the internet until the economy recovers
- Safe housing options for victims of domestic violence and multi-generational families of essential workers
- Guarantee needed funding for and protection against sabotage for the United State Postal Service
- Pass "[For the People Act of 2021](#)" H.R. 1/ S. 1
- Pass "[John Lewis Voting Rights Act](#)" H.R. 4

[Read Our Full Covid-19 Relief & Recovery Plan for Black America](#)



Remove Policies That Lock us Out Of Good Jobs, and Advance Policies That Invest in The Health And Wealth of Our Communities

The Black to the Future Action Fund released the Black Agenda 2020, a legislative roadmap for how to make Black lives matter from City Hall to Congress. [The Black Agenda 2020](#) is informed by the largest survey of Black people in America in over 150 years, conducted by the Black Futures Lab. [The Black Census](#) surveyed Black people in all 50 states, across political affiliation and across a wide range of demographics to better understand what our communities experience every day in the economy, society, and our democracy, and what solutions our communities would like to see to address the most persistent challenges of our time.

Economic recovery is of utmost importance to Black communities. Before the pandemic, the Black unemployment rate stood at 6.3% nationally² — higher than any other race/ethnicity. In 15 states and the District of Columbia, Black unemployment was at or more than twice the rate of white workers. Today, the Black unemployment rate stands at 10.3% nationally — a drop since July 2020 when the unemployment rate in Black communities hovered around 16%. This drop likely represents the number of Black workers who are no longer actively looking for work in the economy.

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Trickle down approaches to Black economic relief and recovery don't work — even when they are spear-headed by Black people. Investing resources in wealth and asset building, homeownership, entrepreneurship and the like is important — but it's only a part of the picture. The economic devastation in Black communities is far too vast to merely focus on those who might be considered middle class, and hoping that investing in them will trickle down to those who are working poor. To ensure stability and mobility in Black communities, we must ensure increased wages for Black workers in the economy, workplace protections for Black workers, including the ability to form and join a union, and ensure good jobs with a safety net for Black workers and their families.

2 <https://www.epi.org/indicators/state-unemployment-race-ethnicity/>

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, with a requirement that jurisdictions apply a formula to adjust upward to meet or exceed the living wage in more expensive regions of the country
- Pass the [Domestic Workers Bill of Rights](#), amending federal labor laws to include protections for domestic workers
- Pass the [Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act](#), allowing workers to recover the full value of back pay they were denied, compensating victims of wage theft at triple back pay, substantially increasing civil fines for wage theft, particularly for companies that are repeat offenders, allowing employers to be referred for criminal prosecution in egregious cases of wage theft, strengthening whistleblower protections, and making it easier for workers to recover stolen wages
- Enact universal family care social insurance policies, ensuring paid leave and access to affordable health care, including childcare and long term care
- Eliminate the sub-minimum wage loophole in the Fair Labor Standards Act that allows employers to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage. Eliminate asset limits that cost people with disabilities thousands of dollars
- Strengthen the capacity of public sector workers to unionize
- Support the right of private sector workers to unionize
- Establish wage and standards boards as a mechanism to facilitate worker organizing and raise labor standards
- End the Landrum-Griffin Act restrictions on the ability of unions to hire some formerly incarcerated people
- Pass the [American Housing and Economic Mobility Act](#), which controls rent and home prices, incentivizes local governments to reduce land restrictions that drive up the costs of new home construction, strengthens anti-discrimination protections and improves the housing voucher program
- Fully fund Housing and Urban Development budgets for public housing and Section 8/voucher housing
- Make a federal investment in the supply of affordable rental homes
- Promote homeownership by expanding homebuyer programs and enacting federal government assistance programs for historically redlined communities that provide down payment assistance and closing costs assistance
- Ban predatory lending practices and protect consumers from mortgage discrimination
- Enact strict guidelines to ensure fairness in academic spending guidelines
- Eliminate zero tolerance policies and ban the presence of police in schools
- Require schools to stop using restraints on students with disabilities
- Establish debt-free public colleges and universities by increasing access to need based financial aid and ensure that college tuition costs do not exceed what families can reasonably afford
- Forgive student loan debt
- Strengthen historically Black colleges and universities by providing federal assistance for infrastructure and capacity building
- Roll back corporate tax cuts and close tax loopholes, and re-distribute those funds towards building back the safety net and critical infrastructure
- Expand the earned income tax credit
- Pass the [Fair Chance Act](#), prohibiting the federal government and federal contractors from requesting a job applicant's arrest or conviction record until after a conditional offer of employment is made





Act On The Climate Crisis as a National Priority Before More of Our Communities Are Hit First and Worst by Climate Catastrophes

Black communities are often hit first and worst by climate change and the resulting climate disasters. Race, even more than income, is the primary determinant of where toxic facilities are placed. Addressing racial justice as it relates to climate justice is also about breathing clean air, drinking clean water, and having access to fresh and healthy food free

of chemicals that cause debilitating illnesses. Addressing our growing climate crisis requires a transformation of how we produce, consume, and distribute — which means not just a shift in how we regulate industry, but a shift in how we create economies that work for everyone.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase federal emergency management funding and develop guidelines to deploy federal funds to help states rapidly respond to climate and contamination crises
- Use federal monies to incentivize states to invest in community-led climate action plans
- Strengthen the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and re-institute regulations undone by the previous Administration

Reject the Toxic Culture of White Nationalism and White Supremacist Movements by Addressing it at Every Opportunity and in Front of Every Audience

January 6, 2021 will forever be remembered as the day that white nationalism attempted to foment a coup, at the behest of the former President of the United States.

But the truth is, white nationalism and white supremacist movements have forever changed the landscape of our communities, and our government. These movements have become more extreme, and the mechanisms to address them and prevent them from causing harm have been all but dismantled under the previous administration. As a result, Black communities are particularly vulnerable to these attacks — enraged by our participation and our increased power,

these movements will stop at nothing to keep meaningful and substantive change from occurring. White nationalism is one of the greatest domestic threats to the safety and security of Black communities specifically, and to the nation at large. We must intervene, proactively and at every opportunity, in the white nationalist violence that has been used to subjugate, terrorize, malign and murder Black people.

We cannot afford to address this threat with broad strokes — the best approach to addressing this threat is to get specific about the threat that we are facing. Racial terror has been used as a strategy, for decades, to deter Black communities and other communities of color from accessing their rights and from being treated fairly. Racial terror is intricately connected to a strategy to enforce and maintain white supremacy and white power, in society, in government, and in the economy.

In previous attempts to address domestic threats, lawmakers have enacted or proposed legislation that have caught Black communities and other marginalized communities in its dragnet. The federal government has unjustly attacked civil rights organizers, immigrants, religious communities and organizations that fight to make this country live up to its values, particularly using surveillance to monitor the activities of those who only work to make America live up to its promise of freedom, liberty, and justice for all. This government must be different — new laws and enforcement measures must be targeted to ensure that they are not unfairly used to surveil and silence Black communities.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Combat white nationalist terrorism by:
 - Requiring ongoing and specific data collection and regular reporting on the true breadth of white nationalist and white supremacist groups in America, so that adequate resources can be dedicated to addressing the problem
 - Requiring regular and transparent reporting on the government's efforts to curb white nationalist violence, including data on surveillance and policing tactics
 - Requiring regular, accurate and transparent reporting on government efforts to disrupt the systems and networks that foster white nationalist terrorism
- Enforce all civil rights statutes consistently and comprehensively by:
 - Strengthening the Office of Civil Rights by requiring greater transparency, data collection and reporting on their work of protecting the civil rights of marginalized communities and holding accountable those who violate them
 - Enacting stricter guidelines around surveillance funding and ensure that budgets approved to protect civil rights cannot be allocated in ways that ultimately thwart them.



ABOUT US:

The [Black to the Future Action Fund](#) works to make Black communities powerful in politics, so that we can be powerful in the entirety of our lives. We work to enact policies that improve the lives of Black communities, and to elect Black and pro-Black legislators with progressive values who move progressive policies. Together we work to ensure that Black people have what all people deserve — dignity, safety, and power.