

A Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in New York: *Building an Equitable Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19*



Vision Statement

For so many across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought pain and loss, disproportionately felt by those who have been systematically and historically sidelined by racism, patriarchy, and institutionalized economic tyranny. In spite and because of this, the COVID-19 pandemic and the heightened collective consciousness around issues of systemic racism uncover an opportunity to reimagine and reconstruct our identity and our institutions.

As organizations that work to advance social justice and gender equity, we believe we must step into this opportunity. New York has been the epicenter of the pandemic in America and we must be a leader in shaping our recovery to create lasting justice.

We believe that equality and justice mean taking affirmative steps to advance anti-racist policies that promote the health, safety and economic security of all people, and in particular those of us who experience entrenched, historical and overlapping forms of discrimination: women, people of color, people in poverty, people with disabilities, young people, older people, indigenous communities, immigrants and LGBTQ+ people.

We believe our institutions must prioritize the full humanity and dignity of all people, and function to reflect and promote our collective interdependence across communities. To do this, we believe we must abolish systems that reflect a mentality of policing that have for far too long operated to oppress Black and Brown people.

We believe our identity must embrace our interconnectedness through non-violent problem solving and in cooperation with each other and the planet.

We believe in an inclusive feminist vision for the future where we value equity, community and caregiving as powerful and the only way to rectify past injustice. This is not a “women’s issue” — this is an issue that deeply implicates all of us and our ability to thrive in the future.

We call on our leaders to ensure that solutions are viewed through a gender justice and anti-racist lens. This will require diverse representation both in those who are chosen to chart the path forward and throughout our institutions generally. But diverse representation alone is nowhere near enough.

This document presents a vision of the radical transformation that is necessary in order to heal from the wounds inflicted by our violent history and create a society in which we create inclusive, lasting gender justice together.

Our institutions and our country’s inherited cultural identity are built to protect an exclusive power structure that serves and protects its privileged. Because of this, shifting this paradigm will not be easy, but a future where we all have the opportunity to collectively and independently thrive requires nothing less. This is our vision and this is our work.

Sign-On Statement

We support the Vision set forth in *A Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in New York: Building an Equitable Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19*. We call on New York State leaders and citizens to take action to end continuing, historic injustices and systemic causes of inequality. Together we can address the past and create a better future for all. List in formation. To sign on, go to: <http://bit.ly/RoadmapNY>.

The Process

The [PowHer New York Network of over 100 organizations](#) has been working together for five years to successfully push a multi-issue, shared agenda for women's economic equality. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected women, especially low-income workers and women of color, PowHerNY facilitated a series of conversations and working groups made up of Network Partners and diverse organizations to craft **A Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in New York: Building an Equitable Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19**. Developed through an intensive, collaborative drafting and vetting process by over 50 organizations and experts, we lay out a Vision for an inclusive feminist paradigm shift and identify eight key areas with policy recommendations to achieve the transformation we envision for gender and racial justice. These are certainly not all the issues New York must address, but the ones identified as critical to our community.

It will take all of us working together to achieve the necessary reforms to put people first and create a more just, equitable and inclusive society. Join this call to reduce inequality through systemic change. We invite you to **sign on to our Vision Statement by going to <http://bit.ly/RoadmapNY>**.

Thanks

Thank you to the organizations, advocates and content experts that worked together to create the Vision Statement and eight issue area narratives and recommendations by writing or reviewing its content. Your time and dedication to this project during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic reflect the urgency and relevance of our collective work.

A Better Balance, Meghan Racklin; **AAUW NYS**, Janice Brown, Edwina Martin, Jane Pendergast; **AAUW of Rockland County**, Ann Mulligan; **Alliance for Quality Education**, Jasmine Gripper, Marina Marcou O'Malley; **Brennan Center for Justice**, Jennifer Weiss-Wolf; **Bronx Defenders**, Muriel Bell, Miriam Mack; **Center for Children's Initiatives**, Betty Holcomb; **Center for the Women of New York**, Victoria Pilotti; **Citizen's Action of New York**, Blue Carreker; **Community Service Society NY**, Nancy Rankin; **CWA Local 1180**, John O'Malley; David Palmer; **Empire State Campaign for Child Care**, Blue Carreker; **Erie County Commission on Women**, Karen King***; **Gender Equality Law Center**, Allegra Fishel, Gaby Rendon; **Girls for Gender Equity**, Ashley Sawyer*; **Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network**, Ilana Berger; **If/When/How**, Farah Diaz-Tello; **Institute of Women's Policy Research**, Ariane Hegewisch; **Latina Surge**, Elisa Charters; **League of Women Voters NYS**, Barb Thomas*, Jennifer Wilson*; **League of Women Voters of Tompkins County NY**, Kathy Stein; **Legal Momentum**, Seher Khawaja*; **MomsRising**, Nadia Hussain, Diana Limongi; **National Association for Female Executives**, Betty Spence; **National Advocates for Pregnant Women**, Indra Lusero; **National Domestic Workers Alliance**, MARRISA SENTENO; **National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs-NYC**, Francesca Burack; **National Institute of Reproductive Health**, Danielle Castaldi-Micca; **National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice**, Elizabeth Estrada; **NELA/NY**, Miriam Clark; **New York Statewide Leave Coalition**; **New York Women's Foundation**, Ana Oliveira; **North Country Matters**, Donna Seymour; **Nontraditional Employment for Women**, Carolyn Kossow; **NOW Brooklyn-Queens**, Sherry Rogers; **NYCLU**, Katharine Bodde*, Jenna Lauter; **NYSCADV**, Joan Gerhardt; **NYSCASA**, Selena Bennett-Chambers; **One Fair Wage**, Gemma Rossi; **PHI**, Allison Cook*, Paul Luniewski; **Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts**, Georgana Hanson; **PowHer™ New York**, Donna Dolan**, Abby Grimshaw, Nancy Haffner, Linda C. Hartley**, Dawn Kavanaugh**, Beverly Neufeld**, Ry Walker*, Deana Yu; **Raising Women's Voices**, Lois Uttley; **ROC New York**, Taylor Jackson, Prabhu Sigamani; **SAG-AFTRA**, Maria Cabezas, Rebecca Damon*; **Time's Up**, Ankita Kanakadandila; **UN Women USA**, Mary Luke***; **Voices of Women**, Raquel Singh; **WNY Women's Foundation**, Sheri Scavone; **Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement**, Merble Reagon***; **Women in Development New York**, Yolanda F. Johnson**; **Zonta Club of Brooklyn**, Leslie Wright; **Zonta Club of Greater Queens**, Anne Perzeszty, Karen Siegel.

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* Project leader and/or issue area facilitator ** Member of PowHerNY Board

The Issues

A Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in New York presents a Vision Statement which groups and individuals are invited to sign. To achieve that paradigm shift, leading organizations and experts outline eight key issues, summarized below, which need significant reform. While these are not the only issues New York must address, they are especially relevant to our community. *For the full document with issue narratives and top recommendations, go to <http://bit.ly/RoadmapNY>.*

ESSENTIAL RIGHTS

We must value the humanity of all people, starting with the human rights and essential needs of all those living within our borders regardless of immigration status. The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare longstanding systemic oppression, institutional racism, and economic inequities rooted in our history of warfare and colonialism. We need to make a radical shift to invest in a social safety net that prioritizes economic and food security, housing, public health, and the environment, and promotes the dignity and human rights of all people.

EMPLOYMENT

We must reimagine our institutions to ensure that all working people are paid enough to support their children and that everyone can work with dignity. COVID-19 has made it impossible to ignore gaps in our social and economic structures that have long undermined the progress of women, people of color and the LGBTQ+ community. We have an opportunity to correct these systemic injustices to ensure that all workers have access to equal opportunity in the workforce and our economy, that women of color and immigrants are no longer held back by discrimination and bias, and women's work is valued.

CAREGIVING

We must invest in the work of providing quality care for children, individuals with disabilities, people with illnesses, and older adults. Caregiving has historically been conducted by women of color and immigrant workers and is deeply undervalued and underpaid. But COVID-19 has emphasized our interdependence and the value of quality care. In this moment we must provide care workers with living wages, childcare, and access to healthcare that is not tethered to their employment.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SAFETY

We must ensure that all women and gender expansive people are safe from sexual violence, anti-Black violence, race-based violence, anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ+ violence – in their homes, schools, institutions, workplaces, and communities. COVID-19 has exacerbated the pandemic of violence against women, trans women, queer people, and their communities, resulting in higher rates of domestic abuse, sexual assault, & trafficking. Now more than ever, we must reach for sustainable approaches centering on prevention

GIRLS AND EDUCATION

We must demand the creation of holistic and affirming schools where students have access to the resources they need to meaningfully engage in education that centers their freedom, self-expression, joy, and well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated long standing educational inequities imposed upon students, largely along race and class lines. With school operations changing nationwide, we must use this moment to change how schools serve gender expansive youth and all girls, with special attention to Black and Brown girls, and ensure healing-centered, restorative, and anti-racist and gender affirming learning settings when schooling resumes.

LEGAL JUSTICE

We must eradicate inequities in the criminal and civil legal systems with the same urgency and resources employed to eradicate COVID-19. The U.S. legal system has subjected generations of women and girls to the triple plague of racism, misogyny, and socioeconomic inequality, leaving suffering and loss in its wake. Its devastating impact on Black communities in particular has lasted over 400 years, entwined as it is with the legacy of slavery. The systemic nature of this crisis requires a systemic response. We seek a humane legal system that engages communities and promotes fairness, equity and compassion.

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE, HEALTH AND RIGHTS

We envision a future in which reproductive health care is treated as all other health care should be: universally covered, accessible, patient-centered and inclusive of the full diversity of patients. Throughout our history, society has wrought political, legal and social turmoil upon women because of their capacity to become pregnant and their role in the family. The motivation and consequences of this control have largely turned on race, class, immigration and disability status. We must transform delivery of health care so that all people have access to quality, non-stigmatized care, including pregnancy-related and childbirth care, regardless of whether that person is seeking to have a healthy pregnancy, to maintain their fertility, or to have an abortion.

VOTING, DEMOCRACY, AND REPRESENTATION

We must guarantee that women have equal access to the vote. Without it, women will continue to be marginalized by a democracy that devalues their work and right to bodily autonomy. Still, 100 years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment, barriers to voting persist, particularly for Black, Brown, Latinx and other women of color. We must fight for expanded voting access, equal representation in all fields, and transparency in our government and businesses so that leaders and elected officials approach power through an inclusive feminist lens to dismantle historical exclusion, and listen and respond to community needs.