



# **A Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in New York:**

**Building an Equitable Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19**

# 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.

# Signatory 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. For a full list of signatories and to sign on yourself go 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; **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.

Special thanks for the **New York Women's Foundation** for its ongoing support of PowHer™ New York.

\* Project leader and/or issue area facilitator

\*\* Member of PowHerNY Board

# 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 diverse organizations and experts, we lay out a Vision for an inclusive feminist paradigm shift and identifies eight key areas and 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>**.

## Language Choices

In **A Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in New York: Building an Equitable Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19**, we define the term woman to refer to anyone who identifies as a woman, including but not limited to cisgender, trans, and nonbinary women. We use the term inclusive feminism to express our belief that the only feminism that engenders transformative justice and equality is one that is anti-racist and inclusive of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations. Liberation for women is only realized with liberation for people of color, queer communities, and other marginalized populations.

We recognize the discrimination and inequity that people of color face. In this document, we also specify certain racial and ethnic groups, such as Black, Brown, and Latinx communities, and Indigenous peoples, to center the historical violence wrought on these communities and the particular discrimination they are subject to today.

# 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.

Fuller discussions with top recommendations can be found [here](#):

## ESSENTIAL RIGHTS

> [View Issue](#)

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

> [View Issue](#)

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

> [View Issue](#)

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

> [View Issue](#)

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, and trafficking. Now more than ever before, we must reach for sustainable approaches that center on prevention.

## GIRLS AND EDUCATION

> [View Issue](#)

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

> [View Issue](#)

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

> [View Issue](#)

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

> [View Issue](#)

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.

# TAKE ACTION FOR INCLUSIVE GENDER JUSTICE

Join us today to rise from the COVID-19 crisis toward inclusive gender justice in New York.

### Organizations:

- Add your organization's name to the *Vision of A Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in New York: Building an Equitable Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19* at <http://bit.ly/RoadmapNY>
- Ask other organizations you partner with to sign-on, too.

### Individuals:

- Add your name to the *Vision of A Roadmap to Create Inclusive Gender Justice in New York: Building an Equitable Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19* at <http://bit.ly/RoadmapNY>
- Share on social media with your friends and family.

**Together we can turn the COVID-19 crisis into real advances toward inclusive, lasting gender justice in New York and in our nation.**

# Essential Rights

We need a transformative shift in policy that puts people first, preserves public health and the environment, and promotes the dignity and human rights of all.

For too long the United States has considered itself separate and above international human rights agreements; our commitments to basic rights are viewed as partisan and political. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the global interconnection of nations and exposed long-standing, worldwide forms of systemic oppression, racism, and inequality. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the inherent dignity and the equal, inalienable rights of all people. It is time for our country to recognize and honor these rights and ensure the basic, essential needs of all people within our own borders are met.

To safeguard these fundamental rights, the United States must ensure that all people have access to housing, safe neighborhoods, quality healthcare, including mental health care, food security, universal basic income, as well as safe, accessible, and violence-free homes and communities. Through policy and inaction, our leaders have left too many families across the country in poverty, unable to secure adequate food, affordable housing, or other basic needs. This is especially true for Black, Brown, and Latinx individuals and families who have always experienced racism or discrimination and inequitable access to economic opportunities, health services, quality schools and housing to name but a few, resulting in poverty, instability, and health disparities across the board.

The pandemic exacerbates this national failure. Dependent on schools for their basic meals, students across the state were left vulnerable to food insecurity when schools closed. The federal government's initial response favored larger employers and those already well-established in the workforce, denying relief to millions of people who were already vulnerable and suffering. The ranks of the unemployed swelled dramatically and many small businesses struggled, resulting in increased economic instability, loss of their businesses, health insurance, mounting medical and other debt. A housing crisis looms as quick fixes such as no-eviction policies, rent moratoriums and deferral on mortgage payments expire. And these are just a few examples - the devastation is everywhere.

Now more than ever, we believe that government at all levels must commit resources and make systemic changes to alleviate poverty and

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **Pass a comprehensive Equal Rights Amendment to our state constitution** to prohibit discrimination based on a person's race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and sex including pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and strikes the right balance between protecting religious freedom and anti-discrimination laws.
- + **Affirm the principles of human rights as stated in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).**
- + **All levels of government should collect uniform, disaggregated data** and analyze it through intersectional gender and racial lenses so that decision-making at all levels can take proactive measures to set priorities and target mitigation strategies.
- + **Federal, state and local governments must fund community organizations**, including racial justice, feminist and women's rights organizations, to respond to the needs of the community they serve and be represented in the decision making
- + Housing is a basic right that New York should protect by creating sustainable policies for quality, safe, and accessible housing. In the face of the pandemic. **New York State must enforce no-eviction policies, rent moratoriums and deferral on mortgage payments** to assure that people can stay in their homes.
- + **Ensure food security to all in need** especially Black and Brown children and families, elderly, unemployed, homeless populations, rural populations and immigrants through SNAP benefits, food distribution programs, food pantries and food banks etc.
- + Commit to a fully accessible system in housing, employment, transportation and healthcare to **provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities and seniors.**
- + Continue **commitment to a subsistence replacement income for all people, especially women of color and those**

aid the millions of people who are in need of the basic services for survival. As a society we need to rebuild a strong, inclusive social safety net that includes all people living within our borders. We need a transformative shift in policy that puts people first, prioritizes economic and food security, affordable housing, public health and the environment, and promotes the dignity and human rights of all.

**excluded from COVID benefits because of immigration status, and those blocked from any access to unemployment benefits.**

**+ Make reparations for Black people in our economic, health, education, housing and other systems.**



# Employment Rights

We have an opportunity to reimagine the institutions that have long undermined the progress of women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community to ensure that people are fairly compensated and that everyone can work with dignity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare systemic inequalities that impose unacceptable burdens on women and people of color. Due to longstanding and widespread structural racism and discrimination, Black, Brown, and Latinx women have been disproportionately pushed into unstable, low-wage work. As a result, low income women and women of color disproportionately face high levels of unemployment and work on the frontlines under dangerous conditions with inadequate pay and support. These injustices must be corrected.

COVID-19 has made it impossible to ignore problematic gaps in our social and economic structures. Our unemployment system is totally inadequate, which harms women who now face high levels of unemployment, a more difficult time returning to work, and the loss of critical benefits like healthcare and paid family leave, if they even had them to begin with. Using COVID-19 constraints and efficiency concerns as pretext, workplaces continue to engage in unlawful discrimination, pushing out pregnant workers, which harms families, our economy, and the workplace. Our healthcare system is broken, reserving quality care for the wealthy and those employed in higher paying jobs. At the same time, the pandemic is widening cracks in our fragile childcare system and eviscerating childcare providers at a time when society is all the more aware of their intrinsic value. Without childcare options or realistic job opportunities, the pandemic is pushing a large number of women out of the workforce as the economy reopens, preventing them from supporting their families and exacerbating existing gender and racial disparities.

Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to correct these systemic injustices. We must ensure that going forward all people, regardless of identity, background, or immigration status, no longer face discrimination, that women's work is valued, and that all workers have access to equal opportunity in the workforce and economy. We now have an opportunity to reimagine the institutions that have long undermined the progress of women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community to ensure that people are no longer forced to work multiple jobs to support their children and that everyone can work with dignity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **Fund and implement a comprehensive childcare master plan** which includes universal and equitable access to quality childcare, just compensation and respect for those providing care.
- + **Expand paid family leave benefits** to be more accessible to all low-wage workers and ensure adequate guaranteed paid sick, safe, and personal time.
- + **Provide access to healthcare benefits, independent of employment**, to ensure that everyone has access to these critical benefits.
- + **Prioritize health and safety** especially for essential, older and disabled workers.
- + **Create and enforce laws and policies to end discrimination, including sexual harassment, in the workplace.**
- + **Enact aggressive measures to achieve pay equity and dismantle occupational segregation.** Enact a **true living wage** for all workers that increases the minimum wage to reflect the local cost of living and eliminates the tipped minimum wage in all industries. Not only must women earn higher wages in the jobs they are doing, they must be trained to do jobs that pay more.
- + **Amend existing protections** to ensure that women working in the most vulnerable sectors, such as home health care, those who work in the new "gig economy," domestic workers and tipped workers, are not excluded from labor and anti-discrimination protections.
- + **Equip state and local oversight agencies with the funding, capacity, and independent authority** to robustly tackle discrimination in the workplace.
- + **Guarantee all workers the right to organize** and engage in collective bargaining to safeguard their rights together.

# Caregiving

Our nation must recognize and justly reward the valuable work of providing quality care for children, people with illnesses, people with disabilities, and older adults.

The American economy has long depended on unpaid and undervalued caregiving work, including childcare and long-term care largely provided by immigrant women and women of color. As the world moved to a market economy, society rewarded the crafts and skills that men performed outside the home with monetary compensation, but relegated caregiving to women, often denying women that same remuneration or the ability to control their earnings. And as legalized slavery was abolished in the United States, Black women were pushed into domestic service that ultimately denied them the ability to be caregivers in their own homes. Care work within households and the marketplace remains gendered, undervalued or unpaid and largely provided by Black, Brown, Latinx, and immigrant women, and other people of color. Indeed, a vast majority of the care workforce today are women, largely Black and Brown women, earning poverty-level wages, typically without benefits. Even before the pandemic, low-wages left care workers concerned for their ability to pay for basic needs like housing and food.

Despite the increasing recognition that childcare and long-term care are essential to the larger economy and enable others to return to work, policy makers are failing. COVID-19 has devastated the already fragile child care sector, with half the state's child care programs unlikely to survive without public investment. Guidelines for operating care programs during the pandemic have been late, confusing, and unreliable. Further, government assistance commonly favors large and well-established nonprofit and private centers, leaving community and family-based care centers in limbo. And childcare providers and parents have largely been excluded from policymaking.

COVID-19 has similarly impacted the long-term care sector. Long-term care workers, including providers of home care and nursing home services, continue to work despite a lack of appropriate protective equipment, cleaning supplies or even health coverage, placing themselves and their families at great risk of illness and death. Meanwhile, funding and eligibility through Medicaid (the largest payer for long-term care) has been cut, leaving workers, providers, and the individuals they serve in increasingly perilous situations. In that 1 in 6 New Yorkers are over the age of 65, and our aging population is growing, the

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **Acknowledge the Importance of Paid Caregivers During a Crisis and Beyond.** Hazard pay, universally accessible paid leave, and access to personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies and testing should be guaranteed for all care workers. Care workers are essential and should not be asked to place their bodies and their loved ones at risk, while others work safely within their homes and offices.
- + **Provide Universal Access to Affordable Caregiving Services.** Affordable caregiving services, including childcare and long-term services and supports, are essential to all aspects of society. They enable others to work, improve health, and improve the economy. Universal access to caregiving services will benefit all of society, including care workers who also have personal caregiving needs.
- + **Compensate Care Workers Fairly.** Care workers should be compensated as professionals. Compensation should include a living wage and benefits such as health insurance that is not tethered to an employer. Public funding streams must be leveraged to set fair compensation standards.
- + **Include Care Work in Economic Recovery.** While other sectors of the economy will contract, jobs in the care sector will continue to grow. Public investment to make care jobs quality jobs will put people, especially women and people of color, back to work while keeping communities safe and healthy.
- + **Guarantee Access to Universal Healthcare.** Pass strong legislation to provide universal healthcare, including long-term care, to all people regardless of employment.
- + **Include care workers of all modalities in decisions about how the care system operates.**

opportunities for employment of home and long-term care providers will increase. We must ensure these workers are protected and paid fairly.

Our nation must recognize, value and appropriately invest in the work of providing quality care for children, individuals with disabilities, people with illnesses, and older adults. The importance of doing so cannot be overstated. Studies demonstrate the critical impact of early education and care on children's brain development and long term health. Similarly, studies demonstrate that long-term caregivers are essential to improve quality of life, chances of recovery, condition management, and pain reduction. Refusing to value or invest in this work is not only short-sighted but reflects a deeply rooted patriarchal and racist conception of the world. Care workers of all modalities must receive professional wages and benefits. A successful recovery requires investing in and supporting our paid and unpaid caregivers.

# Gender-Based Violence and Safety

We must take this moment as an opportunity to restructure New York’s approach to gender-based violence to ensure the safety of all women.

The reality of gender-based violence in the United States cannot be untangled from the racist and sexist actions upon which this country was founded — including the subjugation of women and children, genocide of Indigenous peoples, and enslavement of Black people. This shameful history perpetuates the sexual violence, anti-Black violence, anti-immigrant violence, race-based violence, and violence against LGBTQ+ people that we see today. This violence is rooted in oppression, privilege, and power. Until systemic oppression, including racism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, xenophobia, and economic injustice, is dismantled, violence will continue to exist.

From joblessness to food and healthcare shortages to the loss of educational structures, the COVID-19 pandemic created enormous disruptions and instability in our communities. These conditions exacerbate violence and have resulted in increased rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, cyber bullying, and harassment. It is absolutely imperative that we end the hidden pandemic of gender-based violence.

To do so, New York must take this opportunity to restructure its approach to gender-based violence, reaching for preventive policy solutions and avoiding measures that entrench the carceral state and reflect the very injustices that create violence, such as policing, prosecution, or imprisonment. The traditional criminal legal system often fails to offer healing or justice for survivors, especially Black women, Latinas, immigrant women, and other women of color, nor does it prevent violence or offer adequate paths to accountability for people who have done harm. In addition, the criminal law system is used to criminalize survivors of sex trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault. To ensure the safety of all survivors we need to reconstruct the criminal law and policing systems’ response to gender-based violence. While we envision and build new systems of accountability that are truly just, the work of preventing violence against women and providing redress for its victims remains more critical now than ever. We must continue to require justice system professionals and existing institutions that address gender-based violence to center the needs and rights of victims, and insist that they be held accountable when they fail to do so.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

+ **Make resources for survivors accessible and inclusive.** It is essential to ensure availability of comprehensive, effective methods that increase the safety and self-determination of BIPOC survivors and are grounded in the cultural, political, lingual, and economic realities of their communities. This includes educating faith institutions and family programs on how they can be safe resources for survivors and children.

+ **Adopt a new justice framework.** In this moment there is a real opportunity to support restorative justice practices and processes that strive to offer survivor autonomy, healing and accountability for survivors of violence.

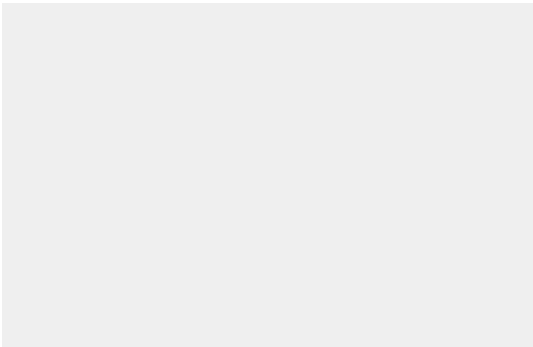
+ **Include and uplift impacted individuals and community-based organizations, especially survivors and survivor-led organizations, in re-envisioning solutions to gender-based violence.**

+ **Prioritize gender-based violence in safety decisions.** As law enforcement agencies are re-envisioned and overhauled, reforms must address the role police and community safety programs play in the response to gender-based violence.

+ **Strengthen gun regulations to ensure the safety of all intimate partners.** Domestic violence and gun violence are inextricably linked. New York must take the lead by fully implementing and enforcing its laws, while also supporting federal laws that strengthen gun regulations. This includes enforcing red flag laws and closing the “boyfriend loophole.”

+ **Enact K-12 Comprehensive Sexuality Education.** Schools must provide students with a firm foundation of knowledge about topics such as consent, healthy sexuality, healthy relationships and bodily autonomy. Mandating state-wide, comprehensive sexuality education for K-12 students, that is culturally affirming, LGBTQ+ inclusive, age appropriate and medically accurate, can lead to a reduction in all forms of violence, including gender-based.

Social and protective services must be inclusive, open to all women, men, children, elders, people with disabilities, gender expansive people, immigrants and people of color. Programs that work to prevent gender-based violence must receive the increased funding they need to be effective, including school-based educational programs. These programs must be in and known to all communities and readily accessible to survivors. All programs that respond to gender-based violence must be trauma-informed and culturally relevant to the community served.



# Girls and Education

This political moment demands 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 longstanding educational inequities imposed upon students, largely along race and class lines. While it is important to address challenges related to COVID-19 safety in educational institutions, we feel it is critical in this political moment to center educational justice for Black girls and gender expansive youth of color. In doing so, we acknowledge the urgency of this moment and the historical need for gender equity issues to be intersectional. The education system has created insurmountable barriers to attaining a quality education for Black and Brown girls and gender expansive youth of color in particular through zero-tolerance policies, the positioning of police in schools, the absence of culturally-responsive teaching and curriculum, systematic underfunding, interpersonal and institutional racism perpetuated by teachers and administrators, and the normalization of cultures that function to control young people – the enforcement of dress codes, for example. With school operation changing nationwide, we must use this moment to change how schools serve girls, Black and Brown girls and non-binary youth of color, and ensure healing-centered, restorative, anti-racist learning settings when schooling resumes.

New York State has and continues to violate students' constitutional right to a “sound and basic education” by leaving schools without necessary funding to achieve that minimum standard — disparities that disproportionately impact school districts serving Black and Latinx students. Efforts to transition to remote learning exposed the “digital divide” experienced by many young people of color who live in homes without internet access. As an additional burden, many girls, especially Black and Latinx girls, have assumed caregiving roles or essential work outside the home to support their families. The school year ahead must reckon with new disparities and respond to the collective trauma of living through stress, grief and new realities due to the pandemic.

Too often, students are criminalized in educational institutions, particularly Black girls and gender expansive youth of color. School police and an atmosphere of control lead to disproportionate punishment and school pushout. In the wake of national resistance to the violence of policing, students, families, educators and communities across New York raised

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **Eliminate top-down decision-making in schools and democratize the learning environment** to shift away from zero-tolerance policies or practices that control young people in schools.
- + **Incorporate culturally affirming teaching through culturally diverse teachers and resources** in virtual and in personal classrooms
- + **Move away from standardized tests as a measure of academic progress.**
- + **Remove technological barriers to education.** The government must liaise with tech corporations to develop creative, immediate solutions that provide free internet access to all students and end “digital redlining”. All high school students, priority given to low- income and students of color, should be given their personal laptop, free of charge and support for reliable internet access.
- + **Remove all law enforcement from schools and reappropriate that funding to schools.** The school police system siphons resources away from classrooms, curriculum, and restorative practices and exposes young people to the threat of police intervention.
- + **Fund and sustain restorative justice training, staffing, and implementation supports.**
- + **End the school-to-prison pipeline,** wherein student behavior is criminalized.
- + **Ensure funding for mental health services to provide in-school therapeutic support for young people,** especially Black, Latinx and gender expansive students at all levels in the education system.
- + **Provide social services services and funding to low income, students of color and immigrants in need** to ensure they have access to food, shelter and supplies like computers so they can stay in school or continue to learn.

alarm for the financial cost of school police, a system that siphons resources away from classrooms, curriculum, and restorative practices. Amid the pandemic, the people of Rochester successfully pushed their decision makers to remove police from Rochester Public Schools. New York City proposed the transfer of control over school policing from the NYPD to the DOE over the course of two years. At a time of tremendous momentum to disentangle police from school buildings, New York's largest school district has not moved forward meaningful reforms, ignoring the ways systemic racism and institutional violence permeate our school system. We must continue to push for restorative justice, the removal of police from schools, and culturally responsive education, a movement that has been led by Black women and femmes for decades.

Education is a human right for students of all identities. Equitably reopening schools must include attending to the social, health and emotional support that many students will need, especially Black and Latinx students who may have lost loved ones and face financial insecurity. COVID-19 relief packages must pay special attention to historically sidelined populations so that the additional cost schools face to reopen and the state and local budgets decimated by the pandemic do not hinder these students' learning. These populations include: Black and Latinx students, low income students, those with disabilities, English learners, students who are homeless and those in the juvenile justice system. The government must target funding to schools and districts hardest hit by the pandemic and, to maintain equity, it should protect the highest need districts from disproportionate cuts in public funding. To supplement online learning for these marginalized groups, local governments and school districts should create and fund "learning pods" and other innovative solutions to ensure that their education is not further compromised.

This political moment requires the creation of holistic and affirming schools where students have access to all the tools and resources needed to meaningfully engage in education that centers their freedom, self-expression, joy and well-being.

- + **Target public funding to students hardest hit by the pandemic**, including Black and Latinx students, low income students and those with disabilities, English learners and those in the juvenile justice system.
- + **The government should prohibit the use of public funding for privatization efforts** such as vouchers, tax credits, "scholarships" and other funding mechanisms that benefit wealthier private schools or initiatives.
- + **Local governments and school districts should equitably support learning "pods" or other solutions** to supplement the online learning of low income Black, Latinx and other students of color, those with disabilities and special needs.
- + **Protect students' civil rights by not giving waivers of requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act or the Disabilities Education Act to ensure all students have access to a high quality education.**

# Legal Justice

We seek a humane legal system that engages communities and promotes fairness, equity and compassion.

Prejudice within the legal justice system is often overlooked, woven as it is into legislation, the judicial process, and policing. Its impact is profound. The intersection of racism, misogyny, and socioeconomic inequality in the criminal and civil legal systems catastrophically affects New York women and girls—especially those who are Black, Latinx, Indigenous, gender-expansive, undocumented, or disabled. We must aim to address the inequalities that have so profoundly influenced their lives; in doing so, we further justice for all. **We need to say her name.**

We pay particular attention to the oppressions Black women, girls, and their communities face due to the enduring legacy of 400 years of unjust treatment in America. The brutalization, murder, incarceration, and unequal punishment of Black people is so pervasive and frequent that America has become desensitized to it. We are witnessing modern-day “lynchings” that are no different in kind to those of years past. They manifest due to over-policing in Black and Brown communities, insufficient legal representation for marginalized people, greater funding for prosecution entities than defense entities, and more. The reach of systemic prejudice cannot be underestimated. Unjust incarceration, for example, can trigger a wave of collateral consequences that range from the loss of child custody and housing to the loss of jobs and student loans.

While the breadth of harm marginalized people endure usually remains hidden from the public eye, this is a unique time in history. Systemic forms of oppression are colliding with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the result is a painful unearthing of overlooked injustices in our legal system. The cries for reform ringing in our streets are echoed across the country—and we must respond. During this pandemic, we have seen political will and public funds harnessed in unprecedented ways to respond to a health crisis. We propose that the same commitment and range of resources be employed to eradicate racism, misogyny, and socioeconomic inequality in our legal justice system. We call on all participants in the system, including the prosecution, the defense, judges, police, social workers and others to expose and address prejudice wherever it is found. We seek a humane legal system that engages communities and promotes fairness, equity and compassion.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **Avoid incarceration and limit collateral consequences**, such as loss of child custody, jobs, and the right to vote.
- + **Embrace trauma-informed, community-led solutions to end the incarceration of women and girls**, including access to vocational training and higher education.
- + **Eliminate mandatory minimum sentences**, which disregard mitigating factors.
- + **Decriminalize homelessness**: end inhumane policies, which are particularly cruel during this pandemic.
- + **Provide incarcerated New Yorkers a fair wage for their labor**; the average is \$.65.
- + **Ensure due process** for undocumented immigrants.
- + **Equalize funding** for public defense and family advocacy to funding for prosecution and policing.
- + **End policing as we know it.**
- + **Establish fair and higher financial eligibility criteria for indigent (family advocacy & criminal defense) legal representation** and services to serve more low-income families.
- + **In the era of COVID-19, protect prisoners' health rights** and **ensure technology adjustments don't roll back the rights** of criminal defendants and in family court.
- + **Stop abuse and ensure adequate medical care in prisons** by strengthening oversight.
- + **Require ongoing racial and gender bias training for all personnel in the criminal and civil legal systems**, including police, court personnel, lawyers, judges, and others.
- + **Mandate law school curricula on racism and gender bias** in the legal system.
- + **End the War on Drugs.**



# Reproductive Justice, Health and Rights

All people deserve access to social structures and supports that enable them to determine and achieve their reproductive destiny with dignity, security and free from state-sponsored coercion, violence and surveillance.

All people must have the right and ability to determine when, whether and how to become a parent, and the opportunity to have a family in a safe and sustainable environment. To do this the United States must confront and heal our past. Indeed, the history of this country reveals deep political, legal and social turmoil intentionally wrought upon girls, women, and gender expansive people because of their capacity to become pregnant and their role in the family. The motivation and consequences of this state and societal control have largely turned on race, class, as well as immigration and disability status. To be sure, the history of reproductive coercion, violence and forced sterilization, namely against enslaved Black women, Latinas, Indigenous women and women of color, underpin social norms, policies and disparate health access that ultimately communicate who is considered deserving or fit for motherhood. Across the board, these conditions undermine people's health, separate families, open doors to surveillance and criminalization of pregnancy, and reinforce stigma and discrimination. Enough.

We envision a future in which the state's relationship to the family is one of respect and support regardless of income, race, immigration status, or family composition. 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. To do this 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.

This means uplifting impacted individuals and community-based voices to inform policy. This means listening to women and gender expansive pregnant people to honor their needs and decisions surrounding pregnancy and childbirth and ensuring those needs are addressed at the systems level. This requires eradicating systemic racism from health care institutions in order to reduce maternal mortality rates and eliminate racial disparities; it requires dismantling systems that prevent people from accessing community-based options for birth, such as midwife-directed freestanding birthing centers and home birth; and it requires ensuring

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **Provide quality and safe education for all people** that reduces bias and stigma, accurately reflects our history, and gives students the tools to navigate healthy relationships, build healthy communities, and connect with community-based organizations (including comprehensive sex ed that covers all possible outcomes of pregnancy including miscarriage, abortion, stillbirth and birth).
- + **Provide resources to communities about the prevalence and connection between gender-based violence and reproductive coercion.**
- + **Guarantee all families high-quality health care.**
- + **Eliminate systemic racism, ableism, misogyny, sexism and heterosexism in the provision of health care** by adjusting the structure of health care delivery in response to systematically tracked data by race, disability, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation for everything from hospital administrators, professional associations, workforce, insurance, health outcomes and any other variable that impacts the structure of health care delivery.
- + **Provide comprehensive, medically accurate, non-biased, patient-centered pregnancy counseling.** Respect patient choices: to continue or end a pregnancy, to choose or not choose a form of birth control, or to prevent pregnancy permanently.
- + **Ensure that people who decide to carry a pregnancy to term have what they need** to support that physiologic process prenatally, during childbirth, and during the postpartum period, including high quality, patient-centered care, access to doulas and midwives, protection from discrimination, poverty, violence, surveillance, undue punishment, and paid leave.

access to safe abortion when a person needs it and regardless of how they became pregnant. We envision a future that prioritizes and trusts women.

+ **Stop the prosecutions and punishment of people for behavior during pregnancy that is not a crime for any other person.**

+ **End violence against women and trans people, including obstetric violence**, and ensure people have the autonomy to direct their own health care decision making.

+ **Abolish the policing relationship between communities and the so-called "child welfare" state** (aka the family regulation system), end family separation that is rooted in structural inequities, ableism, white supremacy and patriarchy, and stop the routine, medically unnecessary practice of drug-testing pregnant and laboring people.

+ **Ensure that young people who are pregnant or parenting have access to quality, seamless education** and pregnancy-related accommodations in schools and colleges, including lactation spaces and excused absences for any pregnancy or childcare related absence or sickness.

+ **Stop creating invasive and patronizing conditions for services that only apply to low income people.**

+ **End stigma related to people's sexual agency, single motherhood and other types of family formation, reproductive health care decisions** including abortion, substance use during pregnancy, disability, and gender supportive care.

+ **Support community-based options for birth**, halt the criminalization of midwives and expand access to midwifery licensure; promote free-standing, midwife-directed birthing centers; create parity in compensation between facility-based and community-based providers; and ensure that midwives and other birth workers are paid a fair wage for their work.

# Voting, Democracy and Representation

We must fight for expanded voting access, equal representation in all fields, and transparency in our government and business so that leaders and elected officials understand and address women's needs.

Many political leaders consider concerns over access to child care, reproductive healthcare, and equal pay as special interests or “women’s issues.” As long as our leaders and structures continue to devalue “women’s work” and degrade the ability to realize bodily autonomy, these issues will continue to be daily struggles that reinforce a culture of sexual harassment, assault, poverty, and domestic violence. Without equal access to the vote and robust representation, women and gender expansive people will continue to be marginalized by a democracy that treats them as less than.

For more than 100 years, women fought for the right to vote; and even after ratification of the 19th amendment, Black women, other women of color, and women in poverty faced insurmountable challenges to securing access to the ballot, including language and location based obstacles. Today these barriers continue to exist as many states create and implement restrictions that limit access to voting. It wasn't until 2019 that New York State passed critical legislation that allows for early voting. This enfranchised thousands of voters who were otherwise unable to vote on election day because of childcare issues or inflexible work hours. There remains a lot New York can do to fully enfranchise voters.

Early voting offers people the opportunity to vote on their own terms, however, when implemented voting sites were less accessible to low income and rural communities across the state. The COVID-19 pandemic left many locales struggling to make accommodations so voters could cast their ballot without risking their health. Despite the fact that New York quickly adjusted the absentee voting process to allow all people the option, many voters around the state were unable to vote in the June primary. Ballots were lost in the mail, never sent to voters, or arrived with only partial or incorrect documents. We must ensure greater access to the vote and secure representation in elective office that reflects community needs, especially Black and Brown communities who continue to be targeted for disenfranchisement.

To change policy makers' priorities, we must also create transparency in our government processes and decision-making. Although women make up more than 50% of the state's population, only 32% of our state elected officials are women, a very small percent being women of color. And while gender identity is no guarantee of

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **New York State must ensure equitable access to poll sites** during early voting and on election day, especially in communities of color.
- + **Absentee voting processes must be improved** so that any voter can request to vote absentee and have a tangible way to track the status of their vote. New York voters should not have to provide an “excuse” to vote by absentee.
- + **The removal of barriers to running for office.** New York must elect more women and people of color into public office so that issues of equity and equal opportunity are treated as priorities rather than special interests. Instituting Proportional Voting is one mechanism.
- + **Follow through on implementation of new public financing of elections program** to ensure money is not an obstacle for candidates and bring political power to all New Yorkers.
- + **Public companies must report on their board and management diversity annually** and should have a plan for the advancement of women, especially women of color, and gender expansive people, and data to track and monitor its progress.

progressive values, studies show that women’s political leadership tends to focus on our key issues and is more inclusive and collaborative.

Similarly, the lack of equal access to leadership positions in business, academia, sports and all arenas diminishes opportunities and economic security for women, gender expansive people, people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals. Research affirms that inclusive leadership and diverse teams attract and retain talent, lead to better decision making, break down stereotypes, and improve the bottom line for companies, individuals and, ultimately, the larger community.

