



**2026-2027 ACTION AGENDA
FOR TRUTH AND REPAIR**

>4:1 BLACK TO WHITE INFANT MORTALITY
Highest Disparity in U.S.

>5:1 BLACK TO WHITE ADULT
DEATHS DUE TO ASTHMA

61% INCARCERATED PEOPLE DENIED THE VOTE
WHO ARE BLACK (VS 15% POPULATION)

29:1 BLACK TO WHITE KIDS LOCKED UP
Highest Disparity in U.S.

12:1 BLACK TO WHITE ADULT INCARCERATION
Highest Disparity in U.S.

5:1 BLACK TO WHITE LIKELIHOOD
OF FACING POLICE FORCE

SEVENTH MOST SEGREGATED STATE
IN THE NATION FOR BLACK STUDENTS

77% VS
WHITE HOMEOWNERSHIP

43% BLACK HOMEOWNERSHIP
41% LATINA/O HOMEOWNERSHIP

\$662,500 VS
WHITE FAMILY MEDIAN NET WEALTH

\$19,700
BLACK & LATINA/O FAMILIES





**TRUTH &
REPAIR NJ**

2026-2027 AGENDA FOR TRUTH AND REPAIR IN NEW JERSEY

New Jersey likes to see itself as progressive and forward-thinking – and in many ways, it is.

Yet one of the country's most prosperous and diverse states is also one of its most unequal.

That is no accident.

From New Jersey's founding as a colony, slavery took deep root here in what has been called the “slave state of the North.”

A direct line can be drawn from slavery, through generations of New Jersey's own Jim Crow, to the stark disparities we see today in wealth, health, education, environmental exposure, incarceration and school segregation.

Yet, 56 percent of New Jerseyans do not know that slavery happened here.

In a moment when we are facing relentless attacks on Truth itself, it's more important than ever that we confront it.

In a moment when we are facing daily assaults on our multiracial democracy, it's more important than ever that we fight for it.

New Jersey faces a choice: follow the path of erasure – or lead the nation on a path rooted in Truth so that we can achieve Repair.

Truth & Repair requires us, like the Sankofa bird, to look back in order to move forward – to confront our history honestly and take responsibility for shaping a different future.

A future where Black, Brown and other people of color – and all of us – can truly thrive, and where every resident can share in New Jersey's extraordinary prosperity and diversity.

It is through this lens that the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice advances its 2026–2027 policy agenda to:

- Close the Racial Wealth Gap
- Transform the Youth Justice System
- Keep Communities Safe
- Ensure Democracy for All
- Advance Environmental Justice
- Confront New Jersey's History of Slavery and Systemic Racism through Reparations

TO CLOSE THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP

- **Expanded Homeownership with Equitable Financial Returns.** Open doors to homeownership for Black and other families of color by removing barriers, advancing new initiatives, and ensuring that Black families have equitable opportunities to build and sustain wealth through homeownership.
 - Increase supply of housing for purchase and rent, with a focus on integration and equitable access to New Jersey's vast resources.
 - Bolster down-payment assistance and other supports for first-generation homebuyers.
 - Ensure that homeowners can protect themselves from foreclosure, predatory lending and preventable loss of home equity.
- **Affordability Protections.** Ensure families are able to make ends meet and have the resources they need to thrive and build a foundation for long-term security.
 - Expand access to quality jobs with living wages, workplace benefits and worker protections at the state and local level.
 - Support guaranteed income programs and other programs that provide unrestricted funds for economically vulnerable residents of New Jersey to enhance economic stability.
 - Enact targeted programs that protect against rising costs, and invest in food security, childcare and transportation.
- **Baby Bonds.** Help equalize the playing field for young people through a fully funded Baby Bonds program that is progressively designed to support children from low-wealth households and reduce wealth disparities.
- **Accessible, Inclusive Higher Education.** Expand access to and equity in higher education to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse state, and remove financial barriers by expanding investments and increasing awareness of existing support systems.
 - Advance automatic enrollment in community college.
 - Establish a student financial emergency fund.
- **Fair Lending and Equitable Access to Financial Services.** Root out discrimination in lending and ensure banks, credit unions and non-bank financial institutions are equitably serving and investing in New Jersey communities.
 - Pass the New Jersey Community Reinvestment Act (S2722).
 - Expand consumer protections and fair lending enforcement.

TO TRANSFORM THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

- **Youth Prison Closure & Investment in Community-Based System of Care for Youth.** Close New Jersey's three youth prisons and invest \$100 million in front-end youth services and programs to keep kids out of the system, including expansion of the programming implemented by the Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot program bill (A4663/S2924).
- **Minimum Age of 14 for Prosecution of Youth.** Advance S1319 to establish a minimum age of 14 for juvenile delinquency in accordance with international standards.
- **Addressing Police Interrogations of Young People.** Protect youth due process rights and eliminate police officers lying to youth to extract confessions.
- **Reducing Police Enforcement of Non-Serious Offenses, Particularly for Youth.**

TO KEEP COMMUNITIES SAFE

- **Culture of Accountable Policing.** Ensure that law enforcement is guided by policies and systems designed to build a culture of accountability and that are created and implemented through engagement with community members.
 - Ban and criminalize use of police chokeholds (A870/S1494).
 - Advance measures that reduce racial disparities in police car stops.
 - End law enforcement qualified immunity.
 - Create strong municipal civilian complaint review boards (A3441/S1551).

- **Investments in Community-Based Public Safety Options.** Rethink policing by investing in community-based approaches to public safety that will decrease law enforcement’s footprint.
 - Develop mental health first responder and crisis intervention systems that rely on highly trained professionals other than police to address certain crises.
 - Reinvest dollars into community-based services that empower communities – like violence intervention programs, schools, hospitals, libraries and parks.
- **AG Supersession of Police Departments.** Pass legislation codifying the ability of the Attorney General, as Chief Law Enforcement Officer in New Jersey, to provide oversight of a police department for civil rights violations.
- **Barring Former ICE Agents from State and Local Law Enforcement.** Pass legislation barring former ICE agents from working in state and local law enforcement, as well as other places of employment which require public trust – to apply to those who were hired after the current raids on and kidnappings of Black and Brown community members – in order to ensure that New Jersey’s law enforcement is protecting and serving all members of New Jersey’s communities.

TO ENSURE DEMOCRACY FOR ALL

- **Freedom to Vote for People in Prison.** Pass legislation to restore the right to vote to incarcerated people.
- **Same-Day Voter Registration.** Pass and enact same-day voter registration, including during early voting and on Election Day (A1698/S2919).
- **Strong New Jersey Voting Rights Act.** Pass a strong John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey, a state voting rights act codifying federal voting protections and protecting New Jersey voters of color through state law (A1715/S282).
- **Lower Vote Age for Local Elections.** Make our democracy more inclusive, representative and dynamic by allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local and school board elections.
- **Universal Constitutional Remedies Act.** Pass legislation to allow individuals in New Jersey whose constitutional rights have been violated by law enforcement officials to sue in state court.

- **Good Governance and Accountability Reforms.** Hold elected officials and people in positions of power accountable to the people by advocating for good governance and pro-democracy reforms.
- **Fairness in Census 2030 and Redistricting.** Begin planning and advocating for the full funding of 2030 Census and Redistricting efforts to ensure a full Census count and racially just maps.

TO ADVANCE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- **Environmental Justice Reforms.** Advocate for New Jersey's communities of color that have faced disproportionate environmental harms due to the state's history of segregation, disinvestment and discrimination with an eye toward ending sacrifice zones, investing in infrastructure and protecting residents from the disproportionate impact of climate change.

TO CONFRONT NEW JERSEY'S HISTORY OF SLAVERY AND SYSTEMIC RACISM THROUGH REPARATIONS

- **Truth and Education Legislation.** Through the continued work of our Say the Word: Reparations campaign, pass legislation providing for i) an apology for slavery with a commitment to accountability without limiting clauses; and ii) the incorporation of the New Jersey Reparations Council's findings (see below) in the Amistad Commission's curriculum.
- **Other Reparative Justice Policies.** Pass legislation to enact the wealth-building and other policies listed in this agenda and, over time, advance additional proposed policies in *For Such a Time As This, The Nowness of Reparations for Black People in New Jersey*, a report from the New Jersey Reparations Council.



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