



A VISION FOR BLACK LIVES:

POLICY DEMANDS FOR BLACK POWER, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE

Participatory Budgeting at the Local, State, & Federal Level

What is the problem?

- Current public budget and revenue policy and processes are not designed to ensure racial and economic justice and human rights for Black communities.
- There is a lack of community control over budget and revenue decisions, and a lack of a values based framework for justice against which to make budget and revenue decisions.
- As a result, revenue measures are often inequitable, placing greater burdens on Black people, and public spending fails to meet the fundamental needs of Black communities.

What does this solution do?

- We put forward a new approach to public budgets and revenues in order to ensure that resources are raised equitably and follow the needs and fulfil the full human rights of Black communities.
- To achieve this, we need to integrate human rights into participatory budgeting models.
- This requires flipping the way budgets are developed by starting with assessing people's fundamental needs - prioritizing the needs of communities suffering from injustice - and then raising revenue in an equitable way to fund needs-based budgets. This process must be fully participatory, transparent and accountable.

Federal Action:

- The targets are the Executive branch (in particular agencies who can lead an assessment of needs) as well as Congress, which must adopt a needs-based budget.
- The process involves education, advocacy and organizing to shift existing federal policy toward participatory human rights budgeting processes.
- Funding measures may include a large-scale federal affordable housing program, with implementation devolved to local communities who should determine the goals for community and economic development in their neighborhoods. Similarly, public education and health care funding streams should be prioritized based on the needs of Black and other disadvantaged communities and enable community control over local spending decisions. Control over local resources should also be seen as a form of reparations.
- All federal budget and revenue decisions should be guided by and assessed within a human rights framework, with a particular emphasis on racial and other forms of equity, that prioritizes the needs of the most marginalized.



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State Action:

- State budgets should be directed at meeting fundamental needs and advancing equity. To meet these goals, the budget process has to start with a statewide participatory needs assessment, aided by a current services budget, followed by the development of needs-based spending initiatives and a participatory decision-making process about equitable taxes to fund the needs-based budget.
- To achieve that, states have to adopt rights-based budgeting principles, reverse their budget process to start with needs, not revenue estimates, and set up and support participatory processes and community controlled assemblies or similar bodies.
- This new budget framework should be passed into state law and define equity as a key goal and prioritize people with the greatest needs. This law should state that the purpose of budget and revenue policy is to meet the fundamental needs and rights of communities, with a particular focus on Black communities. It should create participatory processes modeled on successful participatory budgeting experiences around the globe, in particular in Brazil. These processes should be designed around meeting the agreed goals of equity and justice.

Local Action:

- Participatory human rights budgeting is easily implemented at the local level, by giving control over local resources to local communities based on the principle of racial and economic equity.
- Legislation for rights-based participatory budgeting processes should be passed by all localities, based on redefining racial and other forms of equity as a key goal and purposes of public budget and revenue policy.
- The legislation should define racial and other forms of equity as a key goal and prioritize those with the greatest needs. The legislation should identify meeting the full range of human rights for communities, with a particular focus on Black communities, as the purpose for public budgets and revenue decisions. It should also create processes modeled on successful participatory budgeting experiences around the globe and in the United States, in particular in Brazil.
- These processes should be designed around meeting the previously named goals. There will be different challenges and needs depending on the locality, but the basic framework should remain the same.

How does this solution address the specific needs of some of the most marginalized Black people?



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- Revenue and budget decisions impact everyone and are a key driver of racial oppression as well as a range of intersectional oppressions. To ensure an intersectional approach, representation from specific populations of people differently situated such as youth, elderly, queer, gender nonconforming, formerly and currently incarcerated, and others should be required by statute, and equity metrics should include all these specific populations.

Model Legislation

- There are many models of participatory budgeting at the local level, but these do not include decisions on entire public budgets, nor decisions on revenue. There is no practice yet of integrating human rights and participatory budgeting. Human rights budgeting at state level has received some attention in Vermont. NESRI and the Participatory Budgeting Project could, among other groups, help create an integrated model of participatory and human rights budgeting.

Resources:

- [Organizing for Participatory Budgeting Toolkit](#)
- [Participatory Budgeting In Schools](#)
- [Human rights budgeting resources](#)
- [Human rights budgeting animated video](#)

Organizations Currently Working on Policy:

- Participatory Budgeting Project
- Democracy Collaborative
- NESRI

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