

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

## Democrats Abroad Global Black Caucus

### Introduction

People of visible African descent have been in what we now know as the United States of America since 1619, long before many ethnic groups who are now considered to be White. Black Americans were essential to building America. Without Black people, the greatness of America would not be possible. Today, Black Americans are in all walks of life and are 13.3% of the American population<sup>1</sup>. By 2060, the projected black population in the United States will be 74.5 million, with a predicted median black wealth as of 2053 of zero and a current median White wealth of \$116,000.

According to The Voter Participation Center, from 2012 to 2016, Black voter turnout dropped by 4.7% overall<sup>2</sup>. Black voter turnout is essential for Democratic election victories. Therefore, it is necessary for Democrats to identify and focus on those issues close to the hearts of African American and other minority voters. In general, voters do not turn out unless they feel included, listened to, and excited. It is important that Democrats Abroad (DA) have a caucus which directly addresses the issues of Black Americans. Thus, the Global Black Caucus (GBC) will produce and disseminate political content which bears witness to the ever-unfolding international history of the Black American reality. The Democrats Abroad Global Black Caucus will be made up of DA members of all ethnicities from around the world who are willing and able to advocate on issues important to Black Americans within the United States of America and those living abroad. All DA members are eligible to join the GBC. It is our intent to advocate for laws, policies and programs that improve the lives of Black Americans and educate all people on the humanity of Black people. Black Lives Matter!

### Purpose

The purpose of the Global Black Caucus is to provide a forum for all DA members to better understand the issues and concerns affecting Black Americans, to help eliminate unconscious bias within the DA membership and in America, to help engage with Black voters living abroad and ensure that their needs are met within the DA community, and, where needed, to advocate for reforms to political issues. We encourage and facilitate Black Americans abroad to engage, become informed, and exercise their voting franchise.

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<sup>1</sup> "QuickFacts." *U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts Selected: UNITED STATES*, United States Census Bureau, 1 July 2016, [www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216).

<sup>2</sup> Fraga, Bernard L., et al. "Analysis | Why Did Trump Win? More Whites - and Fewer Blacks - Actually Voted." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 8 May 2017, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/05/08/why-did-trump-win-more-whites-and-fewer-blacks-than-normal-actually-voted/?utm\\_term=.c54e479ea009&wpisrc=nl\\_politics&wpmm=1](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/05/08/why-did-trump-win-more-whites-and-fewer-blacks-than-normal-actually-voted/?utm_term=.c54e479ea009&wpisrc=nl_politics&wpmm=1).

## Mission Statement

- To support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic<sup>3</sup>
- To support the goals and ideals of the Democratic Party and Democrats Abroad
- To ensure that as many Black Americans abroad as we can reach vote
- To advocate on issues of concern to Black Americans
- To be a voice for U.S. citizens living abroad
- To support campaigns of Democratic candidates aligned with our interests running for elected office in the U.S.
- To work with other teams within DA to further our joint goals.

## Strategy

GBC shall:

- Encourage all members of Democrats Abroad, independents, and other left-leaning, progressive U.S. citizens, and other U.S. voters home and abroad to support Democratic interests and the well-being of Black Americans.
- Post on social media items relevant to the direct interests of GBC, including such items as promoting the Global Black Caucus, encouraging Americans abroad to join DA, reminding new U.S. citizens to register to vote, reminding all U.S. citizens to exercise their right to vote, opposing legislation harmful to Black American interests, and so forth.
- Find speakers for town halls to raise awareness.
- Create a periodic newsletter.
- Monitor other organizations' actions advocating in support of (or in opposition to) issues or legislation affecting Black Americans.
- Consider the impact and policy recommendations of scientifically/validated research as it relates to the Black Americans.
- Draft and submit resolutions that impact overseas Black Americans to be adopted by DPCA.
- Once the GBC is formed we will work together to develop a call to action on these issues.

## Goals

Long-term goals of GBC:

- Grow GBC and DA membership. Membership is open to all people who support the goals of the GBC.
- Recognize, celebrate, and educate others on significant contributions of Black Americans.

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<sup>3</sup> In these times where assaults on the constitutional rights are routinely taking place and there are many forces who are actively working to call a constitutional convention and change our rights, it is important that every American defend our constitution not just those who work for the government.

- Liaise through DA's DNC Members with the DNC Black Caucus.
- Become a trusted source for Democrats Abroad on issues impacting Black Americans.
- Become a global resource for U.S. expats having problems acclimating to life abroad due to misconceptions about people from other countries.
- Conduct a members' survey on living overseas as a minority.
- Foster a sense of community for American expats.
- Encourage the creation of fictionalized stories for children of DA members that describe the importance of voting for election outcomes in various points in time post-1965 with as much specifics as possible.
- Increase the diversity of DA.
- Review the Democrats Abroad platform and past DPCA Resolutions to promote relevant positions and to recommend areas for expansion and improvement.

#### Short-term goals of GBC:

- Identify advocates in the community who can help with messaging on joining and supporting Democrats Abroad, and voting from abroad.
- Work with the global team to identify speakers relevant to our caucus and help organize global webinars.
- Identify volunteers and recruit who can help GOTV efforts (phone banking and voter help desk support).
- Work with and support other DA Caucuses and groups to collectively further our goals.
- Increase GBC membership by 1000 members by December 2018.
- Assist Democrats Abroad with fundraising.
- Find new members for DA.
- Encourage DA members and other U.S. registered voters who are eligible to vote in every special election in 2017 to exercise their right to vote.
- Monitor the voting record of the members of Congress.
- Assist Americans living abroad, including dual-citizens, in registering to vote in preparation for the 2018 congressional midterm elections and the 2020 Elections and advising them of their right to vote.
- Tracking diversity of DA leaders in the country committees after elections and publish the results in order to improve diversity.
- Identify and focus on those issues that are important and motivating to African American voters abroad.
- Create content which highlights in print, audio, video, digital, online Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) spaces which tell the narratives of black American statesmen and politicians.

## Responsibilities

GBC shall:

- Meet openly and regularly.
- Organize work and delegate responsibilities.

- Report to the DA International Chairperson and/or the International Executive Committee at regular intervals.
- Coordinate actions with other DA caucuses and councils.
- Report on actions to Democratic Party Committee Abroad (DPCA) leaders at regular intervals.
- Create and keep up to date a dedicated webpage on the Democrats Abroad website.
- Utilize social media.
- Send out regular emails to members informing them on our activities or issues.
- Urge membership and all U.S. citizens both domestically and abroad to vote in all U.S.-based elections when eligible to do so.
- From time to time review and update GBC's Terms of Reference.
- Perform its work within the scope of Democrats Abroad.

## Structure

- Confirmed membership in GBC shall be restricted to members of Democrats Abroad.
- GBC chairperson and co-chair will be elected by GBC members every two years. We want to encourage Black leadership, at a minimum one of the chairs should be Black. The election procedures will be defined in another document.
- Country committees should have designated caucus leaders.
- GBC shall operate under the supervision of a chairperson (or vice-chair) who, in turn, shall:
  - Consult with the Democrats Abroad International Chair/ExCom as necessary.
  - Organize caucus meetings.
  - Ensure GBC membership records are regularly updated within a DA-held database, checked for accuracy, protected for privacy, and backed-up for safe-keeping.
  - From time to time survey GBC membership.
  - Send a GBC representative to Democrats Abroad Global Meetings.
  - An ongoing steering team will be in place with at least 6 members with representatives from all 3 DA regions and other DA caucuses or groups.

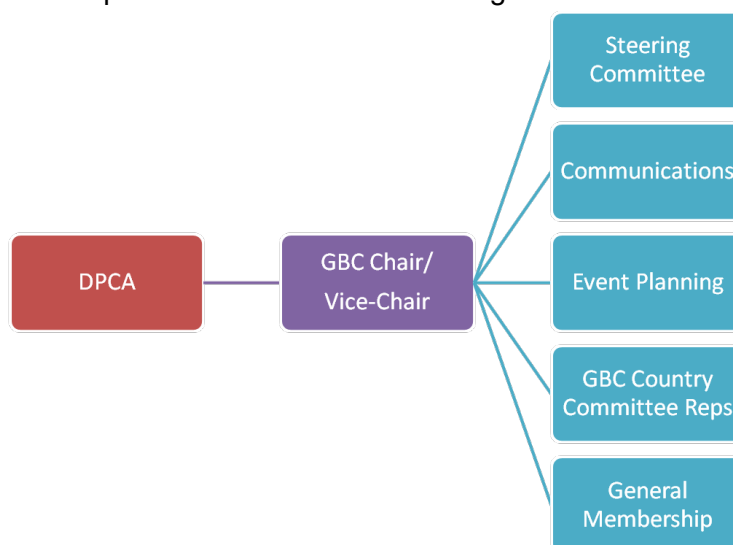


Figure 1 GBC Organization Structure

## Issues

The following are the current priority issues for the GBC:

- Voting Rights
- Criminal Justice
- Police Brutality
- Militarization of Police
- Courts
- Mass Incarceration
- Prisoner Rights
- Education
- Economic Inequality
- Government Participation
- Human rights/ Anti-Racism
- Stereotypes
- Unconscious and Conscious Bias
- Black Lives Matter
- Environmental Racism
- Gentrification
- Human trafficking
- Technology Industry Diversity & Inclusion
- Environmental Justice/Climate Change
- Healthcare

The below outlines the issues as they stand in 2017 along with proposed call to action for the DA GBC on the issues. This list along with the priorities will be reviewed and updated on a periodic basis.

### Voting Rights

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was seriously undermined by the Supreme Court ruling in 2013. Fifteen states have subsequently passed new voting restrictions which make it more difficult to vote. The federal government has lost an important tool in ensuring all Americans exercise their legal right to vote. This development is particularly harmful to African Americans. We demand the full restoration of the Voting Rights Act.

Gerrymandering is often used to disenfranchise minority voters and must be stopped. Voting districts should be determined by neutral, balanced committees and not by sitting state legislators who are biased in favor of their own party. A number of states are moving away from gerrymandering and this must be supported and made national<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> National Committee for an Effective Congress. "California May Have Solved Gerrymandering – National Committee for an – Medium." *Medium*, Medium, 1 July 2016, [medium.com/@ncec\\_1948/california-may-have-solved-gerrymandering-89b25f6cd6b4](https://medium.com/@ncec_1948/california-may-have-solved-gerrymandering-89b25f6cd6b4).

Automatic voter registration and same day registration should be enacted all across America. This already exists in many other countries and now some states, such as Illinois, Arizona, Oregon and California<sup>5</sup>. Automatic voter registration could be coordinated with other state, county, or federal data, such as driver's license, etc., to determine identity and address. We fully support the Compact with the American People for Election Reform and efforts of DA to streamline the voter registration process.

Voter ID laws in some states suppress minority voter participation. All eligible voters must have free and automatic access to receiving a government issued photo ID if they don't already have a driver's license or other government photo ID. The number of polling locations and the voting hours need to be extended and standardized. Voter purges should be halted and voters restored to the rolls.

The GBC represents and acts on behalf of African American constituents of Democrats Abroad. Voting rights underpin the democratic process. We work to educate DA members about voter suppression, to inform our constituents of their voting rights and to work with DA's International leadership and the DNC to combat systematic voter suppression abroad and gerrymandering in our home states. We advocate for legislation that strengthens and protects the African American vote and the votes of all Americans.

#### Criminal Justice

While outcomes differ among jurisdictions, those who cannot afford an adequate defense are more likely to receive severe penalties. This falls more heavily on Blacks, who have significantly lower income than Whites and are also more likely to be treated prejudicially because of skin color. In the US, race and socioeconomic status combine for an African-American share of incarceration upwards of 35% compared to a 13% population segment<sup>6</sup>.

Some policy makers and their media echo chambers attribute this disparity to a propensity toward crime. However, multiple studies show POC – and Blacks, in particular – are profiled, prosecuted, convicted and jailed at a higher rate than Whites. Certain laws have also had apparently unintended results.

The War on Drugs focused policing on African-American neighborhoods, perceived as hotbeds of sales and use. Crack cocaine, seen as a Black drug, was assigned stiffer penalties than powder cocaine, used more by Whites. Arrest quotas encouraged corruption and evidence planting, and, in turn, increased arrests and convictions. In 1980, about 40,000 drug offenders were in prison; by 2011, the number had ballooned to 500,000, mostly low-level and without prior drug records. Conversely, the opioid 'epidemic,' predominant among Whites, is treated as a medical rather than criminal problem.

Efforts to enact modest gun control laws have been hampered in part by racism. The narrative has shifted: from ubiquitous handguns (the Saturday Night Special) to encouragement of gun sales for 'self-protection' to gang-owned automatic weapons to open-

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<sup>5</sup> Author, Unknown. "Automatic Voter Registration." *Automatic Voter Registration*, The Brennan Center for Justice, 28 Aug. 2017, [www.brennancenter.org/analysis/automatic-voter-registration](http://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/automatic-voter-registration).

<sup>6</sup> Board, The Editorial. "Even College Doesn't Bridge the Racial Income Gap." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 20 Sept. 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/09/20/opinion/college-racial-income-gap.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/20/opinion/college-racial-income-gap.html?_r=0).

carry laws. What does not seem to have changed is the expectation that young Black males carry weapons. This expectation has led to the use of lethal force and justification for shootings of unarmed victims.

### Police Brutality

When charges of police brutality were raised – e.g. during periods of social strife in the late 1960's – efforts were made to identify causes and correct them, with standards set at the federal level. Some jurisdictions made real strides in police training, practices, and accountability. Others, lacking the goodwill of local officials and police supervisors, did not.

Recently, the highly publicized rash of police-involved deaths, especially shootings of young Black men, suggest something is still very wrong in some departments. A 2012 study of police shootings, 2010-2012 showed teenage Black males were 21 times more likely to be shot by a police officer than were their White counterparts<sup>7</sup>. Anger over unwarranted use of lethal force, lack of transparency and (mis)handling of disciplinary action has spurred public demonstrations and the rise of advocacy groups such as Black Lives Matter.

### Militarization of Police

While anger and organizing are justified, they are also used to paint Black communities as a danger to the White majority and to justify the further militarization of local police that began with the War on Drugs.

In 1997, the so-called '1033 program' allowed billions in Pentagon funding to be shifted to local law enforcement as surplus military equipment. In 2014, protests in Ferguson, MO, thrust militarization into national view. Still, an amendment to stop the program failed 62 to 355, with Democrats opposing it by a 3-to-1 margin. In 2015, President Obama placed limitations on the type of equipment that could be given to local LE units. A 2017 study showed significant correlation between militarized police and fatalities from officer-involved shootings. Nonetheless, in August 2017, the Trump administration announced its intention to restore provision of military surplus weapons to local law enforcement.

### Courts

Various studies in past decades pointed to elevated criminal activity (*up to 61%*) to explain disproportionate Black incarceration rates<sup>8</sup>. However, the American Bar Association responds that this means nearly 40% of convictions were not explained by the 'propensity' view. ABA suggests the court system itself lends to the disparity in processing, indigent defense funding, trying, and sentencing. If judges or prosecutors are personally biased, the outcome for African Americans is even worse.

### Mass Incarceration

Prior to 1994, most states allow judges discretion in meting out longer sentences for similar crimes to repeat offenders than first-time offenders. Following a DOJ Anti-Violence initiative, so-called three-strikes laws were passed in over half of the states, with mandatory life

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<sup>7</sup>Jones, Ryan Gabrielson, Eric Sagara, Ryann Grochowski. "Deadly Force, in Black and White." ProPublica, Pro Publica Inc., 14 Oct. 2014, [www.propublica.org/article/deadly-force-in-black-and-white](http://www.propublica.org/article/deadly-force-in-black-and-white).

<sup>8</sup> Tonry, Michael H. *Thinking about Crime: Sense and Sensibility in American Penal Culture*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

sentences prescribed in a few. Mandatory sentencing deprived judges of the ability to adapt sentences to fit the case. Non-violent repeat offenders were increasingly jailed and, if not able to afford bail, both guilty and innocent were held in jail awaiting trial. Crowded court dockets lengthened delays.

Although private prison corporations initially offered space 'to relieve over-crowded public jails and prisons,' corporate prisons and detention facilities are highly immoral. No one should profit from the incarceration of humans. Private facilities have grown exponentially, fueled by the profit motive to keep beds filled. Election contributions from private prison corporations incentivize politicians to maintain stiff penalties. Ownership of private prison stock by judges is considered unethical, but a few cases of conflict of interest have been exposed. Incarceration has direct effects on the impacted community. It destabilizes families, removes income earners, and may cause stigma. If it is seen as unjust, it adds to resentment toward society and its instruments of law enforcement. A review of mandatory sentencing laws and development of community-based alternatives to incarceration are more beneficial to communities and society as a whole. To remove the profit motive, prisons must be returned to the public domain, with strict standards for conditions and prisoner treatment.

### Prisoner Rights

While incarcerated, prisoners often face violence, rape and other abuses from other prisoners and guards, as well as lack of medical care, nutritious food, appropriate clothing and other basic needs. Additionally, prisoners in some states permanently lose their right to vote. Two states allow felons to vote from prison while other states may permanently ban felons from voting even after being released from prison, parole, and probation, and having paid all their fines. We support the United Nations' "Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners"<sup>9</sup>. The Democratic Party must ensure its platform bases criminal justice planks on best practices and does not pander to perceived – and often erroneous or whipped up -- public fears.

### Education

Education is NOT A PRIVILEGE reserved for the wealthy. Education is a RIGHT. We demand equal access to education for all students. The standard of quality education must be at the highest level for all students regardless of income, neighborhood, urban/rural, ethnicity or state from preschool to college. Equal access to education is the most important way to raise the living standard and build a positive future for America.

We need to ensure that native-born African American students are also attending the best universities in the country. A child's start in life with K-12 education has enormous importance for the rest of their life. All children must be given the best possible early childhood education with positive support and expectations, making sure that the fundamental 3 R's: reading, writing, and arithmetic, and learning the deep history of African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and other minorities, inspires all children to achieve their full potential.

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<sup>9</sup> "Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners." *OHCHR | Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners*, United Nations General Assembly, 14 Dec. 1990, [www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/BasicPrinciplesTreatmentOfPrisoners.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/BasicPrinciplesTreatmentOfPrisoners.aspx).



Public school education funding must be equal for all students based on the same amount allocated per student for state and federal public school funding. Skewed local funding decisions where rich neighborhood schools receive more funding than poor neighborhood schools must stop. School funding segregation must be finally ended. Additionally, increased funding and focus on trade schools where the quality of nonacademic education can meet infrastructure needs. There must be respect for working with your hands.

Booker T. Washington and his students built Tuskegee Institute with their own hands. They knew that education and literacy was the key to everything successful in society. This burning desire for education should inspire and ignite African American students today to reach for the stars.

College and university tuition fees have risen astronomically the last three decades. American higher education must not be exclusively for the wealthy from around the world. American higher education must be accessible for all American students that qualify to attend. Higher education must be publicly supported by state and federal governments and be made tuition free for US students. Students must not start their careers saddled with enormous debts they may never be able to pay off. We support the "College for All Act" introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). Students must be assisted in making the transition from college to the corporate world. Education must be utilized in order to benefit the student. Starting a business can be an uphill battle for the newly educated. One of the fundamental keys to the future is creating and supporting Black businesses.

#### Economic Inequality

It is ever more imperative that Americans reference and frame our vision of persistent "economic inequality" in the words of U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson in his June 4th 1965 commencement speech at Howard University: "*You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'you are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.*"<sup>10</sup> Continued systemic and structural economic racism and hence wealth and income inequality impacts both top/down as well as bottom-up outcomes -- outcomes that are both "inter-racial" as well as "intra-racial."<sup>11</sup>

As Americans abroad, it is in our collective best interest to incorporate and promote the lessons learned regarding "economic equality". To no greater or lesser degree than any other American race or ethnicity, the GBC commits itself to the complete and total replication of economic "parity" for Black Americans. Specifically, we are committed to ensuring that those economic performance outcomes for families and neighborhoods are commensurate with mainstream "Bell Curves". We will foster and support the enactment of those measures that assure financial outcomes of "parity" with all other races and ethnicities of our American countrymen, both inside and outside of America's geographic borders, especially within G-7 nations. We will deploy economic monitoring measures and analytics no greater than and no

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<sup>10</sup> Piketty, Thomas, and Arthur Goldhammer. *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Hampden-Turner, Charles, and Alfons Trompenaars. *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism: Value Systems for Creating Wealth in the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands*. New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1993. Print.

lesser than those deployed to track stock and commodities trades on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis. We will create, support and deploy instruments and measures of “big data”, both public and private, as well as domestic and global, toward the performance objective of complete and total economic parity of black Americans in regards to both income and wealth generation and maintenance by a time not later than 2030.

### Government Participation

Barack Obama’s election to the highest political office in the land in 2008 was a proud moment for many Americans. Throughout American history Black Americans have as served elected officials in local, state and federal government. The first person of African ancestry elected to a public office in 1640 in British North America was Matthias de Souza, Colonial Maryland Legislature<sup>12</sup>. After the United States of America was its own nation, Alexander Twilight was elected in 1836 to the Vermont Legislature became the first Black man elected to a state office in the United States<sup>13</sup>. After the civil war, the right of blacks to vote and to serve in the United States Congress was established by Constitutional amendments. During Reconstruction, some 2,000 Black Americans held public office, from the local level all the way up to the U.S. Senate, though Black Americans never achieved representation in government proportionate to their actual numbers. The problem of proportionate representation still exists. The GBC will promote Black Democratic candidates however the Democratic Party and other organizations must provide financial and logistical support for Black Democratic candidates at all levels. Without support for Black Democratic candidates, Black Americans will remain underrepresented and underserved by the government.

### Human rights/ Anti-Racism

The human rights legacy of the United States and race are intimately linked. The United States’ vibrant civil society and strong constitutional protections for many civil and political rights is eclipsed by laws and practices which violate internationally recognized human rights laws and often undermine the basic civil rights provisions fought for by Black Americans. Racial disparities permeate every part of the US criminal justice system<sup>14</sup>.

The practices and institutions that promote and maintain racism are counterproductive in the pursuit of the rights of all humans. We embrace collaborative efforts that promote environments and initiatives that encourage human rights as equal rights and non-racist ideologies.

In 2017, the United States government introduced policies that threaten our human rights obligations. Many of those policies directly affect the lives of African Americans at home and abroad. The repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) federal program severely diminishes American policy towards the most vulnerable people of color in the world. The GBC is dedicated to reversing this trend, supporting the continual development of human rights and reminding America of the core belief that all men and women are created equal.

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<sup>12</sup> Norris, Joseph. “Black History Month: Mathias De Sousa.” Thebaynet.com, TheBayNet.com, 10 Feb. 2017, [www.thebaynet.com/articles/0217/blackhistorymonthmathiasdesousa.html](http://www.thebaynet.com/articles/0217/blackhistorymonthmathiasdesousa.html).

<sup>13</sup> Editor's, Biography.com. “Alexander Lucius Twilight.” Biography.com, A&E Networks Television, 2 Apr. 2014, [www.biography.com/people/alexander-lucius-twilight-213035](http://www.biography.com/people/alexander-lucius-twilight-213035).

<sup>14</sup> *Human Rights Watch World Report 2017: Events of 2016*. Seven Stories Press, 2017.

## Stereotypes

Racism in our society in relation to African Americans, afro-descendants, and other minorities have been heavily influenced by stereotypes -- various oversimplified, preconceived beliefs that negatively influence day to day life<sup>15</sup>. More specifically pathological stereotypes which are used to explain and justify inequalities. These inequalities can be seen all across the board from healthcare to education to our criminal justice system.

## Unconscious and Conscious Bias

Bias is the implicit prejudice for or against individuals, groups or even ideologies especially in a way considered to be discriminatory. Biases can be formed by individuals outside of their own conscious awareness, known as unconscious bias. This form of prejudice is the more prevalent than conscious bias. Conscious bias is a more deliberate form of prejudice that also warrants our concern.

## Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter movement has become a global phenomenon, and has generated support from people of color globally. As a grassroots movement speaks to the deepest needs of young black people and the goals for the generation to come. We support the goals of the movement while committing ourselves to stronger action on the political level. #BlackLivesMatter is working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. We affirm our contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression. We have put our sweat equity and love for Black people into creating a political project--taking the hashtag off of social media and into the streets. The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation<sup>16</sup>.

## Environmental Racism

More than half of Americans who live near hazardous waste are people of color. Minority and low-income neighborhoods and communities in transition are disproportionately targeted by industries that produce and release pollution.<sup>17</sup> African American children are twice as likely to suffer from lead poisoning as White children. "Pollution and the risk of disaster are assigned to black and brown communities through generations of discrimination and political neglect".<sup>18</sup> Environmental issues are a matter of social justice, and current political perspectives which deny issues related to climate change can be seen as a decision to perpetuate if not exacerbate the current trend.

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<sup>15</sup> Stereotypes [Def. 1+2]. (n.d.). Oxford Dictionary Online. Retrieved September 5, 2017, from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/stereotype>.

<sup>16</sup> "About the Black Lives Matter Network." [Http://Blacklivesmatter.com](http://Blacklivesmatter.com), [blacklivesmatter.com/about/](http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/).

<sup>17</sup> Erickson, Jim. "Targeting Minority, Low-Income Neighborhoods for Hazardous Waste Sites." *Targeting Minority, Low-Income Neighborhoods for Hazardous Waste Sites | University of Michigan News*, University of Michigan Regents Michigan News, 19 Jan. 2016, [ns.umich.edu/new/releases/23414-targeting-minority-low-income-neighborhoods-for-hazardous-waste-sites](http://ns.umich.edu/new/releases/23414-targeting-minority-low-income-neighborhoods-for-hazardous-waste-sites).

<sup>18</sup> Newkirk, Vann R., and Lombroso, Daniel. "Environmental Racism Is the New Jim Crow." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 5 June 2017, [www.theatlantic.com/video/index/529137/environmental-racism-is-the-new-jim-crow/](http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/529137/environmental-racism-is-the-new-jim-crow/).

## Gentrification

Gentrification in the United States is more complicated than the naive idea that it revitalizes dilapidated communities. As it is currently practiced, gentrification accounts for economic racism for so many African Americans who are ultimately displaced from communities that have been historically Black. Low property rates are capitalized by high income people, shutting out Black businesses and public schools. It is not a quasi-collective good but a matter of social justice which devalues African American culture, history and economic determination.<sup>19</sup> It must be challenged by a more strategic model of revitalization.

## Human trafficking

There are more slaves in the 21st century than at any other time in history: The sex industry, the labor industry the trafficking of human organs exploitation of vulnerable people. Human consumption encourages the need for cheap labor in the “Black” market. According to the Global Slavery index, 45.8 million people in 167 countries are victims of human trafficking; in the USA there are 57,700 trafficked people reported in 2016 (Global Slavery Index 2016). Sex and labor trafficking often affect African American neighborhoods.

As the sons and daughters connected to that ongoing legacy of the trafficking of human bodies, GBC is committed to policies which encourage the awareness of human trafficking as an American problem and a global crisis.

## Technology Industry Diversity & Inclusion

“The movement for tech inclusion has become the most important driver for economic progress and opportunity in Black America,” - CNN Commentator Van Jones.

Technology is a major engine for economic growth for the US economy. The technology industry has the opportunity to close the income gap by including marginalized communities in their workforce. Currently, African Americans represent only 7% of the workforce in US technology companies. Over the next five years, about 1.4 million new tech industry jobs are expected to be created, according to estimates from the Level Playing Field Institute.

Technology companies' workforce today are not reflective of their audience or customers. These companies blame the recruitment pipeline for their lack of employing people of color. They believe that there aren't enough Blacks and Hispanics graduating with relevant degrees, and applying for tech jobs. However, according to a recent *USA Today* analysis, top universities turned out Black and Hispanic computer science and computer engineering graduates at twice the rate that leading technology companies are hiring them.

As institutions are increasing the number of Blacks with technology degrees, many undergraduates are pursuing lower-paying, lower-status careers despite being well qualified for high positions, according to a recent study conducted by Maya Beasley, Assistant Professor at the University of Connecticut<sup>20</sup>. This study examined, “Why do African

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<sup>19</sup> “What We Don't Understand about Gentrification.” Performance by Stacey Sutton, *TEDx Talks*, TEDxNewYork, 15 Jan. 2015, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqogaDX48nI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqogaDX48nI).

<sup>20</sup> Beasley, Maya A. *Opting Out Losing the Potential of America's Young Black Elite*. University of Chicago Press, 2012

Americans remain substantially underrepresented in the highest-paying professions, such as science, engineering, information technology, and finance?” Beasley found while there is a multitude of complexity as to why these students chose lower career paths, however the key reasons were: an anticipation of discrimination in particular fields, the racial composition of class, and the available opportunities to network.

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Silicon Valley and across the country are challenging the tech industry to focus its innovative energy on building a more diverse workforce. Many Silicon Valley companies have answered the call by investing in diversity recruitment initiatives at historically Black college and University campuses and through other minority programs like CBC Tech 2020 and Code2040. In McKinsey’s Diversity Matters Report they found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to see positive financial returns. Furthermore, these companies see higher returns in innovation, corporate culture, marketing as well as an increase in user base potential. “Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) employees help drive the actions in innovation and competitiveness by generating new ideas and new companies. Studies show that teams with a wide range of diverse perspectives to draw from increase a company’s performance ability when it comes to problem solving and finding innovative solutions”.

### Environmental Justice/Climate Change

The impact of environmental injustice in the United States has long been felt in Black and other communities of color. On the day of his assassination, Martin Luther King was in Memphis to assist striking garbage workers in their fight against environmental and economic injustice. Many of these communities have seen little or no significant change.

A 2012 Yale University study<sup>21</sup> showed, that exposure to pollutants can be tied to higher incidence of asthma, cardiovascular disease, lung disease and cancer. Landfills and industrial facilities tend to be located in close proximity to communities of color. A further risk is posed by the segregation of minority workers in hazardous jobs. The editors of *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*, cite unemployment, poverty and a lack of economic infrastructure as key factors that have historically placed Black communities at risk for exploitation by industries that pollute. Further examples of the effects of environmental injustice include the devastation experienced by low-income and communities of color by climate change. Hurricane Katrina, the 2017 hurricanes in Texas and Florida, as well as the ongoing Flint Michigan water crisis all serve as sad reminders of the economic, health and psychological impact that failing infrastructure, climate change, housing and environmental racism continue to have on our communities.

Environmental justice is defined by the EPA as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. The GBC, in collaboration with DA and the DNC, strives to ensure that this level of protection is continually afforded Black and disadvantaged communities.

We oppose attempts by the current or any other administration to hinder or undo legislation

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<sup>21</sup> Environmental Inequality in Exposures to Airborne Particulate Matter Components in the United States, Michelle L. Bell and Keita Ebisu, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, National Institutes of Health U.S. Department of Health and Human Services., 10 August 2012

that addresses environmental inequality in at-risk communities. The GBC supports Democrats at federal, state and local level who engage with and legislate for environmental justice in our communities.

Environmental justice represents an important point of intersection associate with further topics covered in this document. We seek to engage, educate and facilitate discussions that highlight the necessity for legislative policies that provide equal access to the decision-making process and ensure healthy and thriving communities for all Americans.

## Healthcare

The fact that the African American population is the least healthy ethnic group in the USA is not due to chance<sup>22</sup>. African American health care disparities are the culmination of many factors which the GBC have cited as issues for our caucus. African Americans still endure unacceptable health disparities and lack the power over policy and actions that could make the changes to eliminate such disparities. Current mortality disparities are evident in cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and infant mortality. These causes of death may be the most visible health problems for African Americans, but they do not tell the whole story. Mental illness is the second largest cause of morbidity in African Americans, and violence in the form of homicide is the greatest cause of preventable death. High levels of poverty, lack of education, and excess incarceration further compound the poor health status of African Americans.<sup>23</sup> We will seek to ameliorate these disparities through health education, promotion, and advocating for access to healthcare for all. Additionally, we need to streamline our health care system to provide the best health care to all patients, not just the richest.

As Democrats Abroad, many of us are participants in a universal healthcare system and enjoy the health benefits of having readily available, affordable health care. The GBC supports the continuation and improvement of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). We do not support the repeal of the ACA for a Republican "healthcare" plan. The GBC will work to make Medicare for all Americans a reality by influencing politicians to support universal, single-payer healthcare. We support H.R.676 - Expanded & Improved Medicare For All Act introduced by Rep. John Conyers Jr. D-Michigan 13th district and any similar legislation in the Senate.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Fustos, Kata. "Racial Differences in Health Status and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States." *Racial Differences in Health Status and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States*, Population Reference Bureau, Mar. 2011, [www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2011/us-health-insurance-racial-differences.aspx](http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2011/us-health-insurance-racial-differences.aspx).

<sup>23</sup> Noonan, Allan S., et al. "Improving the Health of African Americans in the USA: an Overdue Opportunity for Social Justice." *Public Health Reviews*, BioMed Central, 3 Oct. 2016, <https://publichealthreviews.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40985-016-0025-4>.

<sup>24</sup> Conyers, John. "H.R.676 - Expanded & Improved Medicare For All Act." *Congress.gov*, US House of Representatives, 10 Feb. 2017, [www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/676](http://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/676).

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