South Carolina Black Agenda: Food, Clothing & Shelter

Definition of Basic Human Needs

Basic human needs refer to the essential elements required for human survival and stability: **food**, **clothing**, and **shelter**. These needs form the foundation for physical well-being, economic security, and long-term community development.

Problem Statement: Limited Black Control Over Food, Clothing & Shelter Systems

African Americans possess enormous consumer spending power across the United States, yet remain significantly underrepresented in the ownership, production, and control of the systems that provide the most fundamental human needs—**food, clothing, and shelter**.

Food Production & Land Ownership

- Black farmers once owned **16 million acres of farmland in 1910**, but by 2017 this had fallen to **just 2.9 million acres**, representing **a loss of more than 80%** of Black-owned farmland. FoodPrint
- Black farmers today operate **5.3 million acres**, but this is still far below historical levels and reflects a long-term pattern of dispossession. National Agricultural Statistics Service
- The number of Black producers **declined 4%** between 2017 and 2022, and Black-operated farms declined **8%** in the same period. National Agricultural Statistics Service
- Black-owned businesses make up only **3% of all U.S. firms**, meaning Black-owned food manufacturing facilities represent only a tiny fraction of the national food production system. Pew Research Center
- The century-long loss of Black farmland represents an estimated **$326 billion in lost wealth**. FoodPrint

Clothing Manufacturing

- South Carolina has an active textile and apparel manufacturing sector, but Black-owned clothing manufacturers represent only a very small share of the industry.
- While the state hosts numerous manufacturers—such as Hemingway Apparel, Vapor Apparel, Palmetto Shirt Co., and others—none of the major listings identify significant Black ownership, indicating extremely low Black participation in this sector. MadeFind.com Fashion Manufacturing
- Nationally, Black-owned firms represent only **3%** of all U.S. businesses, which includes clothing manufacturing. Pew Research Center

Shelter & Housing Construction

- African Americans remain underrepresented in the construction industry. For example, Black workers make up only **5.6% of construction managers** nationwide. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- The National Black Contractors Association exists because Black contractors have historically received **far less than their fair share** of public and private contracting opportunities. nationalbca.org
- This underrepresentation contributes to lower rates of Black homeownership and limited participation in homebuilding and construction-related wealth creation.

Solutions to Strengthen Black Ownership & Control

Food Sovereignty & Agriculture

- **Urban gardens** — Establish neighborhood-based growing spaces to increase access to fresh produce.
- **Home-grown gardens** — Encourage families to grow food on their own property.
- **Community gardens** — Shared spaces that build skills, reduce food costs, and strengthen community ties.
- **Food co-ops** — Cooperative buying and distribution systems that keep food dollars circulating locally.
- **Indoor & greenhouse growing** — Year-round production using controlled environments.



- **Support Black farmers** — Build consistent markets by intentionally purchasing from Black growers.

Clothing & Textile Empowerment

- **Small clothing manufacturing co-ops** — Community-owned production spaces for apparel and home textiles.
- **Sewing classes** — Teach residents to produce clothing, draperies, and household items, reducing dependency on external manufacturers.

Shelter & Construction Equity

- **Support Black housing contractors** — Direct contracting and partnerships to expand Black participation in construction.
- **Cooperative home construction projects** — Community-led building initiatives that reduce costs and build skills.
- **Sweat equity programs** — Residents contribute labor toward building or renovating homes, lowering expenses and increasing ownership.
- **Faith-based and organizational partnerships** — Mobilize churches and nonprofits to support construction, training, and financing.

Economics

Definition

Economics is a social science that studies how individuals, businesses, and governments allocate scarce resources. It examines how goods and services are produced, distributed, and consumed, and how these decisions affect society and policy. It is divided into microeconomics, which focuses on individual behavior, and macroeconomics, which examines the economy as a whole.

Problem Statement

In South Carolina, African Americans experience significant economic disparities compared to other racial groups. These disparities limit wealth creation, economic mobility, business development, and long-term financial security.

Key Challenges

- **Income and Wealth Disparities**
  - The median household income for African Americans in South Carolina remains substantially lower than that of White households.
  - Black families possess significantly less household wealth, limiting their ability to invest, save for retirement, purchase homes, or pass assets to future generations.
  - African Americans are more likely to live in economically distressed communities with fewer employment and investment opportunities.
- **Limited Savings and Financial Security**
  - African American households generally report lower savings rates and emergency fund reserves than White households.
  - A higher percentage of Black families are financially vulnerable to unexpected medical expenses, job loss, housing instability, or economic downturns.
  - Limited access to financial education and wealth-building opportunities contributes to persistent financial insecurity.
- **Homeownership Gap**
  - Approximately 56% of African Americans in South Carolina own their homes compared to approximately 79% of White residents.
  - Homeownership remains one of the primary methods of wealth creation in America, making this gap a major contributor to racial wealth disparities.
  - Black families often face challenges related to down payments, credit access, property appraisals, and mortgage lending.
- **Business Ownership and Access to Capital**
  - African Americans own a smaller percentage of businesses relative to their share of the state's population.
  - Black-owned businesses are more likely to face barriers accessing startup capital, commercial loans, venture capital, and government contracts.
  - Limited access to capital often restricts business growth, hiring, and long-term sustainability.
- **Employment and Workforce Barriers**
  - African Americans consistently experience higher unemployment rates than White residents.
  - Black workers are disproportionately represented in lower-wage occupations and are underrepresented in high-growth, high-wage industries.

    - Barriers such as transportation, childcare, workforce training, discrimination, and criminal justice involvement continue to impact employment opportunities.
- **Generational Wealth Gap**
    - Historical discrimination in housing, education, employment, and lending practices has contributed to a significant racial wealth gap.
    - Many African American families have had fewer opportunities to accumulate and transfer wealth across generations.
    - The lack of inherited assets creates ongoing disadvantages for future generations.

South Carolina Impact

Economic disparities affect nearly every aspect of life in African American communities across South Carolina. Lower incomes, reduced wealth accumulation, limited business ownership, and employment barriers contribute to higher poverty rates, reduced economic mobility, housing instability, health disparities, and educational inequities. These challenges weaken community resilience and limit opportunities for future generations.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) provide lending and technical assistance to underserved communities.
- Small Business Development Centers offer training, counseling, and support for entrepreneurs.
- Workforce development programs provide job training and certification opportunities.
- Affordable housing and first-time homebuyer programs help expand homeownership opportunities.
- Minority business assistance programs support access to government contracting opportunities.

Proposed Solutions

- **Increase Black Homeownership to 65% by 2035**
    - Expand down-payment assistance programs.
    - Increase access to affordable mortgage products.
    - Support housing counseling and financial literacy programs.



- **Close the Racial Wealth Gap**
  - Expand financial literacy education in schools and communities.
  - Increase access to retirement savings programs and investment opportunities.
  - Promote policies that support asset-building and wealth creation.
- **Strengthen Black Business Development**
  - Increase access to startup capital, microloans, and business grants.
  - Expand procurement opportunities for minority-owned businesses.
  - Establish statewide Black business incubators and accelerator programs.
- **Expand Workforce Opportunities**
  - Increase investment in apprenticeship programs, skilled trades, technology training, and workforce certifications.
  - Strengthen partnerships between employers, schools, technical colleges, HBCUs, and community organizations.
  - Reduce barriers to employment for formerly incarcerated individuals.
- **Increase Financial Security**
  - Expand access to banking services in underserved communities.
  - Promote emergency savings initiatives and financial coaching programs.
  - Support consumer protections against predatory lending practices.
- **Build Community Wealth**
  - Encourage cooperative business models, community investment funds, employee-owned businesses, and community land trusts.
  - Increase investments in historically underserved neighborhoods and rural communities.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where African Americans have equitable access to economic opportunity, quality employment, business ownership, homeownership, financial services, and wealth-building resources. The goal is to eliminate racial economic disparities, strengthen family financial stability, increase community investment, and create pathways to long-term prosperity and generational wealth.

Suggested Additional Metrics for Future Research

To strengthen this section further, consider adding:

- Black poverty rate vs. White poverty rate in South Carolina.
- Median household income by race.



- Median net worth by race.
- Black business ownership percentage and revenue statistics.
- Black unemployment rate vs. White unemployment rate.
- Percentage of Black households that are unbanked or underbanked.
- Percentage of state procurement dollars awarded to minority-owned businesses.

These metrics would provide the same level of statistical support used in the strongest sections of the South Carolina Black Agenda.

Education

Definition

Education is the process of facilitating learning and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. It occurs through teaching, training, discussion, mentorship, and direct experience. Education empowers individuals to reach their full potential, participate fully in society, and contribute to the economic, cultural, and civic life of their communities.

In South Carolina, African Americans continue to face systemic barriers to equitable education, creating an urgent need for educational opportunities that center African history on the continent and throughout the diaspora while preparing students for success in the modern world.

Problem Statement

Despite decades of educational reform, African American students in South Carolina continue to experience significant disparities in academic achievement, educational attainment, school resources, disciplinary actions, and college readiness. These disparities contribute to long-term economic, social, and health inequities.

Key Challenges

- **Academic Achievement Gaps**
    - African American students consistently score below state averages in reading, mathematics, and science assessments.

    - South Carolina report card data continues to show significant achievement gaps between Black and White students across grade levels.
    - These disparities often begin in early childhood and widen over time.
- **Educational Attainment Disparities**
    - African Americans are less likely to complete postsecondary degrees than some other demographic groups.
    - Although graduation rates have improved, college completion rates remain lower than desired for many Black students.
    - Educational attainment directly impacts income, employment opportunities, and wealth accumulation.
- **School Funding and Resource Inequities**
    - Schools serving predominantly African American and low-income communities often face greater challenges related to staffing, infrastructure, technology access, and educational resources.
    - Rural school districts frequently experience teacher shortages and difficulties attracting highly qualified educators.
    - Unequal access to advanced coursework and enrichment opportunities contributes to achievement gaps.
- **Disciplinary Disparities**
    - African American students are disproportionately represented in school suspensions, expulsions, and disciplinary referrals.
    - Exclusionary discipline practices can contribute to lost instructional time and increase the likelihood of negative academic outcomes.
    - These disparities contribute to what many researchers refer to as the "school-to-prison pipeline."
- **Limited African and African American Historical Education**
    - Many students receive limited instruction regarding African civilizations, the African diaspora, Reconstruction, Black economic development, and African American contributions to society.
    - The absence of culturally relevant curriculum can affect student engagement, identity development, and academic achievement.
    - Students benefit from learning a more complete and accurate history that reflects diverse experiences and contributions.
- **Digital and Technology Gaps**
    - Students in underserved communities continue to face challenges related to broadband access, technology devices, and digital literacy.
    - Technology disparities limit educational opportunities and workforce readiness in an increasingly digital economy.
- **Early Childhood Education Gaps**

- Access to high-quality early childhood education remains uneven across South Carolina.
- Research consistently shows that early learning opportunities significantly influence long-term academic success and graduation rates.

South Carolina Impact

Educational disparities affect the economic, social, and civic well-being of African American communities throughout South Carolina. Lower educational attainment contributes to income inequality, reduced workforce competitiveness, lower homeownership rates, poorer health outcomes, and diminished economic mobility. Strengthening educational equity is essential for building stronger families, communities, and future generations.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Public school improvement initiatives focused on literacy, mathematics, and workforce readiness.
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), including South Carolina State University, Claflin University, and Benedict College, provide educational and leadership opportunities for African American students.
- Head Start and early childhood education programs support school readiness.
- After-school, mentoring, and tutoring programs operate in many communities.
- Scholarship and college access programs help increase postsecondary enrollment.

Proposed Solutions

- **Close Academic Achievement Gaps by 50% by 2035**
  - Expand literacy interventions and evidence-based academic support programs.
  - Increase access to advanced coursework, STEM education, and gifted programs.
- **Expand African and African American Studies**
  - Develop curriculum that includes African civilizations, the African diaspora, Reconstruction, Civil Rights history, Black entrepreneurship, environmental justice, and contemporary African American contributions.
  - Support teacher training in culturally responsive instruction.
- **Strengthen Early Childhood Education**
  - Increase access to affordable, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs.

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    - Expand parent engagement and early literacy initiatives.
- **Promote Lifelong Learning**
    - Encourage continuing education opportunities for adults through community colleges, workforce development programs, libraries, and community organizations.
    - Support financial literacy, technology literacy, civic education, and entrepreneurship education for all ages.
- **Increase Family and Community Involvement**
    - Establish community learning centers that provide tutoring, mentoring, and educational enrichment.
    - Strengthen partnerships among schools, families, businesses, and community organizations.
- **Partner with Faith-Based Organizations**
    - Utilize churches and faith-based institutions as hubs for tutoring, mentoring, leadership development, literacy programs, and workforce readiness initiatives.
    - Support educational programs that reinforce academic achievement and community engagement.
- **Create New African and African American Institutions of Learning**
    - Establish independent educational institutions, cultural centers, leadership academies, and research centers focused on African and African American history, culture, economics, science, and civic engagement.
    - Support community-based educational models that operate beyond traditional school systems.
- **Expand Technology Access**
    - Ensure universal broadband access and device availability for students.
    - Increase technology training, coding programs, cybersecurity education, and artificial intelligence literacy.
- **Strengthen the Educator Pipeline**
    - Recruit and retain more African American teachers, administrators, counselors, and educational leaders.
    - Create mentorship and scholarship programs to support future educators.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where African Americans have equitable access to high-quality education from early childhood through adulthood; where African and African American history, culture, and contributions are fully integrated into learning; where families, communities, and faith-based organizations actively support educational achievement; and where lifelong learning creates

pathways to economic prosperity, civic engagement, leadership development, and generational success.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Entertainment and Communications

Definition

Entertainment refers to activities, performances, media, and creative content that inform, inspire, engage, or amuse audiences, including music, film, television, theater, sports, literature, digital media, and cultural events. Communications refers to the systems, platforms, institutions, and technologies through which information, news, ideas, and cultural narratives are created, distributed, and exchanged.

Entertainment and communications play a critical role in shaping public opinion, cultural identity, economic opportunity, political influence, and community development. Ownership and control of these industries determine whose stories are told, how communities are portrayed, and who benefits economically from the creation and distribution of content.

Problem Statement

African Americans have made enormous contributions to the entertainment and communications industries, yet continue to face significant disparities in ownership, control, representation, and economic participation. Limited ownership of media outlets, production companies, publishing platforms, and communications infrastructure restricts the ability of Black communities to control their own narratives and benefit from the economic opportunities generated by these industries.

Key Challenges

- **Limited Ownership of Media Outlets**

    - Although African Americans represent approximately 13% of the U.S. population, Black ownership accounts for less than 2% of commercial television stations and fewer than 2% of commercial radio stations nationwide.
    - Black-owned newspapers, television stations, radio stations, and digital media platforms represent only a small fraction of the overall media landscape.
    - Limited ownership reduces the ability of Black communities to control news coverage, cultural narratives, and information dissemination.
- **Underrepresentation in Media Leadership**
    - African Americans remain underrepresented among media executives, studio owners, network decision-makers, publishers, and major investors.
    - Key decisions regarding content creation, distribution, advertising, and programming are often made without substantial Black representation.
    - This lack of leadership influences which stories are funded, produced, and promoted.
- **Stereotypical and Incomplete Portrayals**
    - Black communities are frequently portrayed through limited narratives that focus disproportionately on crime, poverty, conflict, or entertainment while overlooking achievements in business, education, science, environmental leadership, and civic engagement.
    - Misrepresentation contributes to public misconceptions and reinforces harmful stereotypes.
- **Limited Economic Participation**
    - African American artists, creators, journalists, filmmakers, musicians, and content producers often face barriers to financing, distribution, ownership rights, and long-term wealth creation.
    - While Black culture generates billions of dollars annually within the entertainment industry, a disproportionate share of profits often flows to companies that are not Black-owned.
- **Decline of Local Black Media**
    - Historically, Black-owned newspapers and radio stations served as trusted sources of information, civic engagement, and community organizing.
    - Many local Black media organizations face financial challenges due to declining advertising revenue and competition from large digital platforms.
    - The loss of these institutions weakens community communication infrastructure.
- **Digital Platform Inequities**
    - Social media and streaming platforms have created new opportunities for content creation but remain dominated by large corporations.
    - Black-owned streaming services, digital networks, and technology platforms represent a small percentage of the overall marketplace.

- Limited access to investment capital restricts the growth of Black-owned digital media enterprises.

South Carolina Impact

South Carolina's African American communities have historically relied on churches, community newspapers, radio programs, and grassroots communications networks to share information and advocate for social change. However, ownership of major media outlets remains limited, reducing opportunities for communities to control local narratives, promote economic development, and amplify issues affecting African Americans throughout the state.

The lack of Black-owned communications infrastructure also limits opportunities to support Black-owned businesses, promote civic engagement, preserve cultural history, and develop future generations of journalists, filmmakers, broadcasters, and media entrepreneurs.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Black-owned newspapers, radio stations, podcasts, and digital media outlets continue to provide community-focused news and information.
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) offer journalism, communications, media, and broadcasting programs.
- Community organizations support cultural festivals, arts programming, and independent media projects.
- Digital platforms have lowered barriers to entry for content creators, journalists, and entrepreneurs.

Proposed Solutions

- **Increase Black-Owned Media Ownership**
  - Expand the number of Black-owned newspapers, magazines, television stations, radio stations, podcasts, and digital media platforms.
  - Increase access to capital, grants, and investment opportunities for media entrepreneurs.
- **Build Black-Owned Communications Networks**
  - Develop statewide and regional Black-owned television, radio, streaming, and online media networks.

    - Support independent content creators and community journalists.
- **Generate Advertising Revenue for Black Businesses**
    - Create advertising cooperatives that connect Black-owned businesses with Black-owned media outlets.
    - Encourage public and private institutions to increase advertising investments in Black-owned communications platforms.
- **Create More Cultural and Entertainment Venues**
    - Establish theaters, performing arts centers, film studios, museums, cultural centers, and community stages where African American artists can create and present their work.
    - Increase funding for arts education and cultural preservation initiatives.
- **Strengthen Journalism and Media Education**
    - Expand journalism, communications, broadcasting, and digital media programs in schools, colleges, and community organizations.
    - Create mentorship opportunities for aspiring journalists, filmmakers, broadcasters, and content creators.
- **Expand Digital Media and Technology Ownership**
    - Support Black-owned streaming platforms, technology startups, social media networks, and content distribution systems.
    - Increase investments in emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, digital publishing, and multimedia production.
- **Preserve and Promote African American History and Culture**
    - Invest in documentaries, archives, oral history projects, and cultural storytelling initiatives that accurately document the experiences and contributions of African Americans in South Carolina and throughout the African diaspora.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where African Americans have equitable ownership, representation, and influence within the entertainment and communications industries; where Black communities control and distribute their own narratives; where Black-owned media organizations thrive economically; and where accurate, diverse, and empowering stories strengthen cultural identity, civic participation, economic development, and community self-determination.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Environment and Environmental Justice

Definition

The environment refers to the natural, built, and social surroundings in which people live, work, learn, worship, and play. This includes air quality, water quality, land use, housing conditions, transportation systems, green spaces, energy infrastructure, and the location of industrial facilities. Environmental justice is the principle that all people, regardless of race, income, or geographic location, deserve equal protection from environmental hazards and equal access to environmental benefits.

Problem Statement

African American communities in South Carolina have historically borne a disproportionate share of environmental burdens due to discriminatory land-use practices, unequal enforcement of environmental regulations, and limited political power in environmental decision-making. These disparities have resulted in higher exposure to pollution, flooding, climate-related disasters, and associated health risks.

Key Challenges

- **Disproportionate Exposure to Pollution**
    - African American communities are more likely to be located near industrial facilities, highways, landfills, and other sources of environmental pollution.
    - Studies have found that Black Americans are exposed to significantly higher levels of fine particulate air pollution than White Americans.
    - Increased exposure to air pollutants contributes to higher rates of asthma, respiratory illness, heart disease, and other chronic health conditions.
- **Flooding and Climate Vulnerability**
    - Many historically Black communities in South Carolina are located in flood-prone areas due to decades of discriminatory zoning, land-use planning, and development practices.
    - Research indicates that African Americans are substantially more likely to live in areas vulnerable to flooding than White residents.

    - Repeated flooding damages homes, businesses, infrastructure, and community assets while increasing economic hardship.
- **Environmental Health Disparities**
    - Communities located near industrial facilities often face greater exposure to toxic chemicals, contaminated water sources, and hazardous waste.
    - African Americans experience disproportionately high rates of health conditions linked to environmental exposure, including asthma, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers.
    - Limited access to healthcare can worsen the long-term impacts of environmental hazards.
- **Limited Access to Environmental Benefits**
    - Many underserved communities have fewer parks, green spaces, recreational facilities, and tree canopies than wealthier communities.
    - Reduced access to green infrastructure contributes to higher temperatures, poorer air quality, and lower quality of life.
    - Lack of investment in community environmental improvements can negatively affect public health and economic development.
- **Energy Burden and Utility Costs**
    - African American households are more likely to spend a larger percentage of their income on energy costs than higher-income households.
    - Older housing stock and limited access to energy-efficiency improvements increase utility expenses and financial strain.
    - Rising energy costs disproportionately affect low-income families and seniors.
- **Limited Community Influence in Environmental Decision-Making**
    - Communities most affected by environmental hazards are often underrepresented in permitting, zoning, and regulatory decisions.
    - Residents frequently lack the resources necessary to challenge industrial developments or advocate for environmental protections.
    - This can result in continued concentration of environmental risks in historically underserved communities.

South Carolina Impact

Environmental inequities contribute to significant health, economic, and quality-of-life disparities across South Carolina. Flooding, industrial pollution, contaminated water, poor air quality, and climate-related disasters disproportionately affect African American communities. These conditions increase healthcare costs, reduce property values, hinder economic development, and threaten community stability.

The impacts are particularly severe in rural communities, coastal regions, and historically marginalized neighborhoods that already face economic and social challenges.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Environmental justice advocacy organizations are working to address pollution, flooding, and climate resilience challenges throughout South Carolina.
- State and federal agencies have invested in flood mitigation, water infrastructure improvements, and environmental monitoring programs.
- Community-based organizations continue to advocate for stronger environmental protections and public participation.
- Renewable energy programs and energy-efficiency initiatives have expanded in some communities.

Proposed Solutions

- **Strengthen Environmental Protection Policies**
  - Implement more restrictive zoning ordinances to prevent the concentration of polluting facilities near residential communities.
  - Establish moratoriums on new pollution sources in communities already experiencing disproportionate environmental burdens.
  - Strengthen enforcement of environmental regulations and permit reviews.
- **Expand Environmental Monitoring and Cleanup**
  - Increase air quality monitoring and public reporting in vulnerable communities.
  - Expand water testing and remediation programs.
  - Accelerate cleanup of contaminated sites and abandoned industrial properties.
- **Invest in Climate Resilience and Flood Protection**
  - Expand flood mitigation infrastructure, stormwater management systems, and community resilience planning.
  - Prioritize investments in historically underserved communities facing repeated flooding events.
  - Support relocation assistance where environmental conditions pose ongoing risks.
- **Promote Renewable Energy and Green Infrastructure**
  - Expand access to solar energy, energy-efficiency programs, and weatherization assistance.
  - Increase tree planting, urban forestry initiatives, community gardens, and green spaces.

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    - Utilize phytoremediation and other nature-based solutions to restore contaminated land.
- **Strengthen Corporate Accountability**
    - Use economic influence, public engagement, and consumer advocacy to encourage responsible corporate environmental practices.
    - Increase transparency regarding pollution emissions and environmental impacts.
    - Ensure that corporations contribute to environmental restoration efforts when harm has occurred.
- **Negotiate Community Benefit Agreements**
    - Require meaningful community engagement before major industrial projects are approved.
    - Establish legally enforceable community benefit agreements that provide investments in healthcare, infrastructure, workforce development, environmental restoration, and community services.
    - Ensure that affected communities receive direct benefits from development projects.
- **Increase Civic Participation and Advocacy**
    - Encourage voter engagement around environmental justice issues.
    - Support leadership development and environmental education programs.
    - Hold elected officials accountable for addressing environmental disparities and protecting vulnerable communities.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where all communities have access to clean air, safe drinking water, healthy housing, resilient infrastructure, affordable energy, and a healthy environment. The goal is to eliminate environmental disparities, reduce pollution-related health risks, strengthen climate resilience, increase community participation in environmental decision-making, and ensure that African American communities are no longer disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Globalization and International Economic Development

Definition

Globalization is the increasing interconnectedness of the world's economies, cultures, markets, institutions, and people through trade, investment, technology, communication, transportation, and the movement of goods and services across national borders. Globalization creates opportunities for economic growth, entrepreneurship, cultural exchange, and international partnerships, while also influencing local economies and communities.

For African Americans, globalization presents both opportunities and challenges. While Black consumers contribute significantly to the global economy through purchasing power, investment, labor, and entrepreneurship, much of the wealth generated by this economic activity does not remain within Black communities or contribute to long-term wealth creation.

Problem Statement

African Americans possess substantial economic influence within the United States and globally. Nationally, Black consumer spending power is projected to exceed $2.1 trillion by 2026. In South Carolina, African Americans represent a significant portion of consumer spending and economic activity. However, despite this considerable purchasing power, relatively little of the wealth generated through Black consumer spending is retained within Black communities or invested in long-term wealth-building assets.

As a result, many African American communities continue to experience wealth gaps, lower savings rates, limited ownership of productive assets, and reduced participation in international trade and investment opportunities.

Key Challenges

- **High Consumer Spending but Limited Wealth Retention**
    - African American consumer spending is projected to exceed $2.1 trillion nationally by 2026.

    - While Black consumers contribute significantly to corporate revenues, much of the resulting wealth flows to businesses and institutions that are not Black-owned.
    - Limited recirculation of dollars within Black communities contributes to slower wealth accumulation and reduced economic development.
- **Racial Wealth and Savings Gaps**
    - African American households generally possess significantly lower median wealth than White households.
    - Lower savings rates and limited ownership of appreciating assets reduce opportunities for generational wealth transfer.
    - Many families remain financially vulnerable to economic downturns, inflation, and unexpected emergencies.
- **Limited Participation in Global Trade**
    - African American-owned businesses remain underrepresented among companies engaged in international trade and exporting.
    - Many entrepreneurs lack access to global markets, trade networks, investment capital, and international business development resources.
    - Limited participation in global commerce reduces opportunities for business growth and wealth creation.
- **Underinvestment in African and Diaspora Markets**
    - Opportunities for economic partnerships with Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America remain underutilized.
    - Limited awareness of international investment opportunities restricts economic collaboration across the African Diaspora.
    - Stronger economic relationships could create new markets, investment opportunities, and business partnerships.
- **Limited Ownership of Productive Assets**
    - A significant portion of consumer spending is directed toward consumption rather than ownership of businesses, real estate, financial assets, intellectual property, or investment vehicles.
    - Without increased asset ownership, communities struggle to convert spending power into long-term wealth.
- **Barriers to Entrepreneurship and Capital Access**
    - African American entrepreneurs often face challenges obtaining business loans, venture capital, export financing, and growth capital.
    - Limited access to financial resources restricts the ability to scale businesses domestically and internationally.

South Carolina Impact



African Americans contribute billions of dollars annually to South Carolina's economy through labor, entrepreneurship, consumption, tourism, and investment. Yet significant disparities remain in wealth accumulation, business ownership, international trade participation, and financial security.

Without intentional strategies to convert consumer spending into ownership, investment, and wealth-building opportunities, many African American communities will continue to generate economic value without receiving proportional economic benefits.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Minority business development programs provide training and technical assistance for entrepreneurs.
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) support lending in underserved communities.
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) offer business, entrepreneurship, and international studies programs.
- International trade assistance programs help businesses explore export opportunities.
- Chambers of commerce and economic development organizations support small business growth.

Proposed Solutions

- **Strengthen Community Banking and Financial Investment**
    - Increase deposits and investments in financial institutions that serve African American communities.
    - Expand partnerships with banks, credit unions, and investment organizations throughout Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.
    - Promote financial literacy, savings, investing, and wealth-building education.
- **Increase Real Estate Ownership and International Investment**
    - Expand investment in residential, commercial, agricultural, and community development real estate.
    - Explore strategic international real estate and development opportunities.
    - Encourage partnerships with nonprofit organizations and community development initiatives throughout the African Diaspora.
- **Expand Global Entrepreneurship and E-Commerce**

    - Support African American entrepreneurs in utilizing global business platforms such as Amazon, Alibaba, eBay, Etsy, Shopify, and other international marketplaces.
    - Provide training in export development, global logistics, digital marketing, and international trade.
    - Increase participation in emerging global markets and technology-driven industries.
- **Promote Tourism and Cultural Entrepreneurship**
    - Leverage tourism spending to support Black-owned businesses, cultural institutions, and heritage destinations.
    - Expand cultural exchange programs and economic partnerships throughout the African Diaspora.
    - Encourage entrepreneurship within travel, hospitality, entertainment, and cultural industries.
- **Increase Business Ownership and Asset Development**
    - Encourage ownership of businesses, intellectual property, stocks, bonds, real estate, and other wealth-generating assets.
    - Create investment clubs, cooperative ownership models, and community wealth-building initiatives.
    - Support succession planning and generational wealth transfer strategies.
- **Develop International Economic Partnerships**
    - Establish trade missions and economic partnerships with African, Caribbean, Central American, and South American nations.
    - Create business incubators and accelerators focused on international commerce.
    - Expand educational opportunities related to international business, trade, and economic diplomacy.
- **Build Community Wealth Through Collective Economics**
    - Encourage strategic spending within Black-owned businesses and institutions.
    - Increase support for local businesses that reinvest in their communities.
    - Promote cooperative economic models that strengthen community ownership and economic self-determination.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where African Americans fully leverage their economic influence to build wealth, create businesses, expand international partnerships, increase asset ownership, and strengthen economic self-determination. The goal is to transform consumer spending power into long-term prosperity, generational wealth, global investment opportunities, and sustainable



economic development for African American communities throughout South Carolina and the broader African Diaspora.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Health and Healthcare Equity

Definition

Health is the physical, mental, emotional, social, and environmental well-being of individuals and communities. True health extends beyond the absence of disease and includes access to quality healthcare, nutritious food, safe housing, reliable transportation, clean environments, preventive care, mental health services, and opportunities to live healthy and productive lives.

Health equity exists when every person has a fair and just opportunity to achieve their highest level of health regardless of race, income, geography, or social circumstances.

Problem Statement

African Americans in South Carolina continue to experience significant health disparities that contribute to shorter life expectancy, higher rates of chronic disease, delayed diagnoses, and poorer health outcomes. Historical inequities, systemic barriers, environmental exposures, economic challenges, and unequal access to healthcare services have created conditions that disproportionately impact Black communities throughout the state.

Key Challenges

- **Limited Access to Healthcare Services**
    - Many African American communities, particularly in rural areas, experience shortages of primary care physicians, specialists, mental health providers, and healthcare facilities.
    - South Carolina's rural regions continue to face healthcare workforce shortages that limit access to preventive and ongoing care.

    - Lack of healthcare access often leads to delayed treatment and worsening health conditions.
- **Overreliance on Emergency Rooms**
    - African Americans are more likely to use emergency departments for healthcare needs that could be addressed through primary care services.
    - Emergency room utilization is often driven by lack of access to regular healthcare providers, transportation barriers, insurance limitations, and provider shortages.
    - Reliance on emergency care increases healthcare costs and reduces opportunities for preventive treatment.
- **Delayed Diagnosis and Preventive Care**
    - African Americans are more likely to be diagnosed with chronic diseases at later stages when treatment becomes more difficult and costly.
    - Lower rates of preventive screenings contribute to delayed detection of cancer, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and other serious health conditions.
    - Early intervention opportunities are often missed due to barriers in access and affordability.
- **Chronic Disease Disparities**
    - African Americans experience higher rates of hypertension, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and certain cancers than many other populations.
    - Black adults in South Carolina are disproportionately affected by chronic illnesses that contribute to higher mortality rates and reduced quality of life.
    - These conditions often result in increased healthcare costs and lost economic productivity.
- **Maternal and Infant Health Inequities**
    - Black women in South Carolina experience significantly higher rates of maternal mortality and pregnancy-related complications than White women.
    - Black infants experience higher rates of infant mortality and low birth weight.
    - These disparities reflect broader inequities in healthcare access, quality of care, and social determinants of health.
- **Food Insecurity and Nutrition Challenges**
    - Many African American communities live in areas with limited access to affordable, healthy food options.
    - Food deserts contribute to poor nutrition, obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related illnesses.
    - Families often face economic barriers that make healthy food less accessible than processed and unhealthy alternatives.
- **Transportation Barriers**

    - Lack of reliable transportation prevents many residents from accessing medical appointments, pharmacies, specialty care, and preventive services.
    - Transportation challenges are particularly severe in rural communities and among seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income households.
    - Missed appointments often result in delayed care and worsening health outcomes.
- **Mental Health and Behavioral Health Challenges**
    - Mental health conditions frequently go untreated due to stigma, provider shortages, affordability concerns, and limited culturally competent services.
    - Exposure to poverty, violence, discrimination, and environmental stressors contributes to increased mental health challenges.
    - Untreated mental health conditions negatively affect physical health, employment, education, and family stability.
- **Environmental Health Disparities**
    - African American communities are more likely to be exposed to pollution, flooding, poor housing conditions, and environmental hazards.
    - These exposures contribute to asthma, respiratory disease, cardiovascular illness, and other chronic health conditions.
    - Environmental health risks compound existing healthcare disparities.

South Carolina Impact

Health disparities affect nearly every aspect of life for African Americans in South Carolina. Poor health outcomes contribute to higher healthcare costs, reduced educational achievement, lower workforce participation, decreased economic mobility, and shortened life expectancy. These inequities place significant burdens on families, communities, healthcare systems, and the state's economy.

The impacts are particularly severe in rural communities, the Pee Dee region, and other underserved areas where healthcare resources remain limited.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Community health centers and federally qualified health clinics provide healthcare services in underserved areas.

- Faith-based organizations conduct health fairs, screenings, wellness programs, and community outreach initiatives.
- State and local health departments provide preventive services, vaccinations, and public health education.
- Hospitals and healthcare systems operate mobile clinics and outreach programs in some communities.
- Medicaid and other public health programs help improve healthcare access for eligible residents.

Proposed Solutions

- **Expand Community-Based Healthcare Access**
  - Establish mobile health clinics throughout rural and underserved communities.
  - Increase neighborhood-based health outreach programs using trusted community leaders.
  - Expand telehealth services and broadband access to improve healthcare delivery.
- **Develop Faith-Based Health Networks**
  - Create health ministries within churches and faith-based organizations.
  - Train community health ambassadors to provide education, referrals, and support services.
  - Conduct annual health fairs and wellness events focused on prevention and early detection.
- **Improve Preventive Care and Early Diagnosis**
  - Expand free and low-cost screenings for diabetes, hypertension, cancer, obesity, and respiratory illnesses.
  - Increase public education regarding preventive care and regular physician visits.
  - Promote early intervention programs that reduce emergency room dependence.
- **Address Food Access and Nutrition**
  - Expand community gardens, urban agriculture projects, and healthy food cooperatives.
  - Support farmers markets and healthy food purchasing initiatives in underserved communities.
  - Provide culturally relevant nutrition education and healthy cooking programs.
- **Reduce Transportation Barriers**
  - Develop transportation assistance programs for healthcare appointments.
  - Expand public transportation routes connecting underserved communities to healthcare facilities.
  - Partner with nonprofit organizations and ride-share services to provide medical transportation support.

- **Improve Healthcare Affordability**
    - Expand enrollment assistance for Medicaid, prescription assistance programs, and healthcare coverage options.
    - Promote cooperative healthcare models and community health partnerships.
    - Advocate for policies that reduce healthcare costs for underserved populations.
- **Strengthen the Healthcare Workforce**
    - Recruit and retain more healthcare professionals from underserved communities.
    - Increase culturally competent healthcare training.
    - Expand community health worker and patient navigator programs.
- **Advance Mental Health Equity**
    - Increase access to affordable mental health services and counseling.
    - Reduce stigma through public education campaigns.
    - Expand trauma-informed care and behavioral health services.
- **Establish Health Accountability Systems**
    - Create county-level health equity scorecards.
    - Track healthcare access, diagnosis rates, chronic disease outcomes, emergency room utilization, and mortality rates by race and geography.
    - Ensure community participation in healthcare planning and policy decisions.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where race, income, geography, transportation, or social circumstances no longer determine health outcomes; where all African Americans have equitable access to quality healthcare, nutritious food, preventive services, safe environments, and healthy living opportunities; and where communities experience longer life expectancy, reduced chronic disease, improved quality of life, and greater overall well-being.

The Labor framework is strong, but to match the format used in the other South Carolina Black Agenda sections (Religion, Education, Environment, Health, Technology, etc.), it should be streamlined into the same structure of **Definition → Problem Statement → Key Challenges → South Carolina Impact → Existing and Proposed Solutions → Desired Outcome**.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Labor, Employment, and Economic Opportunity

Definition

Labor is the physical, mental, technical, creative, and professional work performed by individuals to produce goods, provide services, support communities, and contribute to economic growth. Labor includes wage employment, self-employment, entrepreneurship, skilled trades, agriculture, caregiving, public service, and professional occupations.

A fair labor system provides workers with equitable access to employment opportunities, living wages, safe working conditions, healthcare benefits, workforce training, career advancement, and workplace protections regardless of race, gender, age, or socioeconomic status.

Problem Statement

African Americans have played a central role in building South Carolina's economy through agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, education, public service, construction, entrepreneurship, and countless other industries. Despite these contributions, Black workers continue to experience significant disparities in employment, wages, wealth accumulation, business ownership, and career advancement.

Although African Americans have similar aspirations for economic security and professional success, structural barriers continue to limit access to quality jobs, higher wages, professional networks, investment capital, workforce development opportunities, and leadership positions.

These disparities contribute to lower household wealth, reduced economic mobility, higher poverty rates, and greater financial instability throughout many Black communities in South Carolina.

Key Challenges

- **Employment Disparities**
    - Black unemployment rates are consistently higher than White unemployment rates and are often nearly double during economic downturns.

    - African Americans are disproportionately represented in lower-wage occupations and underrepresented in executive, managerial, and high-growth industries.
    - Rural communities face additional challenges including transportation limitations, fewer employers, and workforce shortages.
- **Wage and Income Inequality**
    - Nationally, Black workers earn approximately 75–80 cents for every dollar earned by White workers.
    - African American households have significantly lower median household incomes than White households.
    - Lower earnings reduce opportunities for savings, investment, homeownership, and wealth creation.
- **Occupational Segregation**
    - African Americans remain underrepresented in technology, engineering, finance, executive leadership, and other high-paying professions.
    - Barriers include unequal educational opportunities, limited professional networks, discrimination, and lack of mentorship.
    - Representation declines significantly at senior leadership and executive levels.
- **Job Quality and Economic Security**
    - Many Black workers are employed in positions with lower wages, irregular schedules, limited benefits, and fewer advancement opportunities.
    - Lack of paid leave, retirement benefits, and healthcare coverage contributes to long-term financial vulnerability.
    - Workers often struggle to achieve economic stability despite full-time employment.
- **Entrepreneurship and Business Ownership**
    - African Americans start businesses at high rates but face disproportionate barriers in accessing capital, loans, investors, and government contracts.
    - Black-owned businesses often receive smaller loans and experience higher loan denial rates than similarly qualified White-owned businesses.
    - Limited access to capital restricts business growth and job creation.
- **Workforce Development Challenges**
    - Many employers report labor shortages while many African Americans report barriers to employment.
    - Contributing factors include skills gaps, transportation barriers, childcare costs, criminal justice involvement, limited broadband access, and geographic isolation.
    - These barriers contribute to underemployment and economic inequality.

South Carolina Impact



Labor and employment disparities affect nearly every aspect of life for African Americans in South Carolina. Lower wages, limited career advancement opportunities, reduced business ownership, and higher unemployment rates contribute to wealth gaps, housing instability, food insecurity, health disparities, and reduced economic mobility.

These challenges are particularly acute in rural communities and historically underserved regions where access to jobs, transportation, workforce training, and capital remains limited.

Without targeted interventions, these disparities will continue to limit economic growth and community prosperity throughout South Carolina.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Workforce development boards provide employment training and career services.
- Technical colleges offer workforce certifications and skilled trades programs.
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) support underserved entrepreneurs.
- Small Business Development Centers provide technical assistance to business owners.
- Apprenticeship South Carolina helps connect workers to skilled trades and career pathways.
- Minority business assistance programs support procurement and contracting opportunities.

Proposed Solutions

- **Expand Workforce Development and Career Training**
    - Increase apprenticeship opportunities in skilled trades, healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and clean energy industries.
    - Align workforce training programs with labor market demands.
    - Expand workforce development services in underserved communities.
- **Improve Transportation and Employment Access**
    - Expand public transportation routes connecting workers to employment centers.
    - Develop employer-sponsored transportation partnerships.
    - Support transportation assistance programs for workers and job seekers.
- **Promote Living Wages and Job Quality**
    - Encourage wage growth and equitable compensation practices.

NEW ALPHA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORP
Environmental justice, community economic development, & climate change



    - Expand access to healthcare benefits, paid leave, retirement plans, and career advancement opportunities.
    - Promote workplace policies that improve job stability and worker well-being.
- **Strengthen Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development**
    - Increase access to startup capital, business loans, grants, and technical assistance.
    - Expand business incubators, accelerators, and mentorship programs.
    - Increase procurement opportunities for minority-owned businesses.
- **Enhance Education and Career Readiness**
    - Strengthen partnerships among schools, colleges, employers, and workforce organizations.
    - Expand career and technical education programs.
    - Increase financial literacy, entrepreneurship education, and internship opportunities.
- **Support Reentry and Second-Chance Employment**
    - Promote fair-chance hiring practices.
    - Expand record expungement and workforce reintegration programs.
    - Support employer incentives for hiring formerly incarcerated individuals.
- **Develop Leadership Pipelines**
    - Increase mentorship, sponsorship, and leadership development programs.
    - Expand pathways into executive leadership, public service, and corporate governance.
    - Promote diversity in management, executive positions, and board membership.
- **Build Community Wealth**
    - Expand homeownership opportunities and financial literacy programs.
    - Support worker-owned cooperatives and employee ownership models.
    - Increase investments in CDFIs and community-based economic development initiatives.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where every African American has equitable access to meaningful employment, fair wages, safe working conditions, quality benefits, entrepreneurship opportunities, career advancement, and wealth-building resources. The goal is to eliminate labor market disparities, strengthen economic mobility, expand business ownership, and create a workforce where all individuals can fully participate in and benefit from economic prosperity.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Law, Justice, and Equal Protection

Definition

Law is the system of rules, institutions, policies, and legal processes that govern society, protect rights, resolve disputes, maintain public order, and ensure justice. The legal system includes law enforcement agencies, courts, correctional institutions, attorneys, judges, legislators, regulatory bodies, and the constitutional protections afforded to all citizens.

A just legal system guarantees equal protection under the law, fair treatment regardless of race, income, gender, or social status, meaningful access to legal representation, transparent decision-making, accountability, and the protection of civil and human rights.

Problem Statement

African Americans in South Carolina continue to experience significant disparities throughout the legal and criminal justice systems. These disparities are evident in policing, arrests, sentencing, incarceration, legal representation, voting rights, civil enforcement, juvenile justice, and access to legal resources.

Although African Americans comprise approximately 26–27% of South Carolina's population, they are disproportionately represented in arrests, incarceration, and other criminal justice outcomes. Historical discrimination, unequal enforcement practices, economic barriers, and structural inequities have contributed to a legal system that often produces unequal outcomes for Black communities.

These disparities undermine public trust, contribute to economic instability, weaken families, and limit opportunities for civic participation and community development.

Key Challenges

- **Disproportionate Incarceration**
    - African Americans comprise approximately 27% of South Carolina's population but account for approximately 58% of the state's prison population.

    - Black South Carolinians are incarcerated at approximately 3.8 times the rate of White residents.
    - These disparities contribute to family separation, reduced economic mobility, and intergenerational poverty.
- **Racial Disparities in Arrests and Sentencing**
    - National and state data consistently show that African Americans are more likely to be arrested, charged, and incarcerated than White individuals for similar offenses.
    - Black defendants often face harsher sentencing outcomes and longer periods of incarceration.
    - Criminal records create long-term barriers to employment, housing, education, and financial stability.
- **Juvenile Justice Inequities**
    - African American youth are disproportionately represented in school discipline referrals, juvenile arrests, detention facilities, and court involvement.
    - These disparities contribute to what is commonly referred to as the "school-to-prison pipeline."
    - Early justice-system involvement often has lifelong consequences.
- **Limited Access to Legal Representation**
    - Low-income individuals frequently struggle to obtain adequate legal representation in civil and criminal matters.
    - Public defender systems often face heavy caseloads and limited resources.
    - Unequal access to legal counsel can result in unequal legal outcomes.
- **Economic and Civil Legal Barriers**
    - Many residents face legal challenges involving housing, employment, consumer protection, family law, debt collection, and property ownership without access to affordable legal assistance.
    - Legal problems often escalate because individuals lack representation or knowledge of their rights.
- **Voting Rights and Civic Participation**
    - Criminal justice involvement can create barriers to civic engagement and voter participation.
    - Individuals with prior convictions may face confusion regarding voting eligibility and restoration rights.
    - Reduced civic participation weakens community representation and political influence.
- **Law Enforcement and Community Trust**
    - Historical tensions between law enforcement agencies and African American communities continue to affect trust and cooperation.

    - Community concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and equitable policing remain significant issues.
    - Effective public safety requires strong relationships between communities and law enforcement agencies.
- **Underrepresentation Within the Legal Profession**
    - African Americans remain underrepresented among attorneys, judges, prosecutors, law enforcement executives, and other legal decision-makers.
    - Limited representation can affect perspectives within legal institutions and reduce public confidence in the justice system.

South Carolina Impact

Legal and justice disparities affect every aspect of life in African American communities throughout South Carolina. High incarceration rates, unequal legal outcomes, barriers to legal services, and reduced civic participation contribute to economic hardship, family instability, housing insecurity, educational challenges, and diminished trust in public institutions.

The economic costs of incarceration, legal inequity, and reduced workforce participation affect not only impacted individuals and families but also communities and the broader South Carolina economy.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Public defender services provide legal representation to eligible individuals.
- Legal aid organizations assist low-income residents with civil legal matters.
- Reentry programs help formerly incarcerated individuals access employment, housing, and support services.
- Community policing initiatives seek to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and residents.
- Expungement and record-clearing programs provide opportunities for eligible individuals to remove certain criminal records.

Proposed Solutions

- **Reduce Incarceration Disparities**

    - Expand diversion programs, treatment alternatives, and restorative justice initiatives.
    - Increase investments in prevention, education, workforce development, and community-based interventions.
    - Reduce reliance on incarceration for nonviolent offenses.
- **Expand Access to Legal Representation**
    - Increase funding for public defenders and civil legal aid services.
    - Establish community legal clinics in underserved communities.
    - Provide greater access to legal education and know-your-rights programs.
- **Reform Juvenile Justice Systems**
    - Reduce school-based arrests and exclusionary disciplinary practices.
    - Expand mentoring, counseling, and youth development programs.
    - Increase investments in early intervention and family support services.
- **Strengthen Reentry and Second-Chance Opportunities**
    - Expand expungement eligibility and record-clearing programs.
    - Increase access to employment, housing, education, and entrepreneurship opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals.
    - Promote fair-chance hiring policies.
- **Increase Accountability and Transparency**
    - Expand public reporting of criminal justice data by race, geography, and offense type.
    - Strengthen independent oversight mechanisms and community engagement processes.
    - Promote evidence-based policing practices.
- **Expand Civic Engagement**
    - Increase public education regarding voting rights restoration and civic participation.
    - Support voter registration and civic leadership programs.
    - Encourage broader community participation in legal and policy decision-making.
- **Increase Diversity in the Legal Profession**
    - Expand scholarships, mentorship programs, and career pipelines for future attorneys, judges, and legal professionals.
    - Increase recruitment of African Americans into law enforcement leadership, judicial positions, and prosecutorial offices.
- **Address Civil Justice Needs**
    - Expand affordable legal assistance for housing, employment, family law, consumer protection, and property rights issues.
    - Support community-based legal resource centers throughout South Carolina.



Desired Outcome

In South Carolina, where every individual receives equal protection under the law; where race does not determine legal outcomes, incarceration rates, or access to justice; where communities trust legal institutions; and where the legal system promotes fairness, accountability, rehabilitation, public safety, and equal opportunity for all residents.

The goal is to create a justice system that protects rights, strengthens communities, promotes civic participation, reduces disparities, and ensures that all South Carolinians are treated fairly and equitably under the law.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Politics, Civic Engagement, and Political Power

Definition

Politics is the process through which power is distributed, decisions are made, public resources are allocated, and laws and policies are established within a society. Political systems influence access to education, healthcare, economic opportunity, public safety, housing, environmental protection, and civil rights.

Political participation includes voting, civic education, public advocacy, community organizing, leadership development, policy engagement, and holding elected officials accountable. A healthy democracy depends on equitable access to political participation and representation for all citizens.

Problem Statement

African Americans have played a central role in shaping the political, economic, and social development of South Carolina and the United States. Despite significant progress since the

Civil Rights Movement, many African Americans continue to face barriers to full political participation, representation, and influence.

Political inequities are compounded by economic disparities that limit the ability of communities to organize, advocate, influence public policy, and support candidates who represent their interests. As a result, political power and economic power often remain concentrated outside many African American communities.

Key Challenges

- **Voting Access and Electoral Participation**
  - African Americans continue to face barriers related to voter access, polling locations, voter education, transportation, and electoral participation.
  - Changes in election laws and voting procedures can disproportionately affect historically marginalized communities.
  - Lower voter participation reduces community influence over public policy decisions and resource allocation.
- **Redistricting and Representation**
  - Redistricting and electoral district boundaries can significantly affect the voting strength of African American communities.
  - When communities are divided among multiple districts, their collective political influence may be reduced.
  - Representation remains a major concern in legislative bodies, local governments, and decision-making institutions.
- **Economic Inequality and Political Influence**
  - African Americans represent approximately 13–14% of the U.S. population but possess significantly less wealth than many other demographic groups.
  - Lower median household incomes and wealth levels reduce the ability to fund advocacy efforts, political campaigns, policy organizations, and community initiatives.
  - Economic disparities often translate into disparities in political influence.
- **Limited Civic Education**
  - Many citizens receive limited instruction regarding government, public policy, voting rights, and civic engagement.
  - Lack of civic knowledge can reduce participation in elections, public meetings, and policy advocacy efforts.
  - Communities with stronger civic education programs often demonstrate higher levels of political engagement.
- **Underrepresentation in Leadership**
  - African Americans remain underrepresented in some elected offices, government leadership positions, political organizations, and policy-making institutions.

    - Representation gaps can affect policy priorities and responsiveness to community concerns.
    - Leadership development opportunities are often unevenly distributed.
- **Limited Political Accountability**
    - Communities frequently lack effective mechanisms for tracking legislative actions, voting records, campaign promises, and policy outcomes.
    - Without accountability systems, elected officials may be less responsive to community priorities.
    - Public trust in government institutions can decline when accountability is perceived as weak.
- **Global Political and Economic Relationships**
    - Many ethnic and cultural communities maintain strong international networks that enhance economic and political influence.
    - African American communities have historically had fewer institutional mechanisms for leveraging global economic and political partnerships.
    - Greater engagement with Africa and the African Diaspora could expand economic opportunities and strengthen collective influence.

South Carolina Impact

Political participation directly affects education funding, healthcare access, workforce development, environmental protections, criminal justice policies, infrastructure investments, and economic opportunities. When African American communities are underrepresented or politically disengaged, their ability to influence decisions affecting their quality of life is diminished.

Strengthening civic participation, political literacy, leadership development, and economic empowerment is essential to ensuring that African Americans fully participate in shaping South Carolina's future.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Voter registration and voter education initiatives operate throughout South Carolina.
- Civic organizations, churches, nonprofits, and advocacy groups provide leadership development and community organizing programs.

- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) support civic engagement and public service education.
- Community organizations monitor legislation and advocate for policy reforms affecting African American communities.

Proposed Solutions

- **Expand Civic Education**
  - Implement comprehensive civic education programs in schools, colleges, churches, and community organizations.
  - Increase public understanding of government structures, public policy, voting rights, and civic responsibility.
  - Promote lifelong civic learning opportunities.
- **Increase Voter Participation**
  - Expand voter registration efforts.
  - Provide transportation assistance to polling locations.
  - Develop year-round voter engagement and education campaigns.
  - Increase participation in local, state, and national elections.
- **Strengthen Political Accountability**
  - Create community scorecards that track elected officials' voting records and policy positions.
  - Hold regular public forums and town hall meetings.
  - Utilize digital tools to increase transparency and public engagement.
- **Develop Leadership Pipelines**
  - Establish leadership academies focused on public service, governance, policy advocacy, and community organizing.
  - Create mentorship programs for future elected officials and civic leaders.
  - Increase representation in government, boards, commissions, and public institutions.
- **Build Economic Power to Support Political Influence**
  - Strengthen Black-owned businesses and economic institutions.
  - Increase support for community development initiatives.
  - Expand access to capital and wealth-building opportunities that enhance civic capacity.
- **Strengthen Global Partnerships**
  - Develop relationships with African nations and communities throughout the African Diaspora.
  - Promote trade, investment, educational exchanges, and cultural partnerships.
  - Leverage international relationships to strengthen economic and political opportunities.



- **Support Community-Based Advocacy**
    - Expand grassroots organizing and policy education efforts.
    - Increase community participation in local government meetings, planning processes, and public hearings.
    - Build coalitions around issues affecting African American communities.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where African Americans possess the knowledge, resources, representation, and political influence necessary to fully participate in democratic processes; where communities can effectively advocate for their interests; where elected officials are accountable to the people they serve; and where political engagement, economic empowerment, and civic leadership work together to create a more equitable and prosperous future for all citizens.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Religion

Definition

Religion is a system of beliefs, values, practices, and institutions centered on humanity's relationship with God or a higher power. Within African American communities, religion—particularly the Black Church—has historically served as a source of spiritual guidance, education, leadership development, community organizing, civil rights advocacy, and economic support.

Problem Statement

The Black Church has been one of the most influential institutions in African American history. However, significant shifts in religious participation, demographics, leadership, and community

engagement are challenging its ability to address the needs of African Americans in South Carolina.

Key Challenges

- **Declining Religious Affiliation**
  - The percentage of Black Americans identifying as Christian declined from approximately 85% in 2007 to 73% in 2025.
  - Approximately 21% of Black Americans now identify as religiously unaffiliated, with higher rates among younger generations.
  - Many younger African Americans describe themselves as "spiritual" rather than traditionally religious.
- **Declining Church Membership and Attendance**
  - Black church membership has declined by nearly 20 percentage points over the past two decades.
  - Black Protestant church attendance declined by approximately 15% between 2019 and 2023.
  - Younger adults increasingly report leaving organized religious institutions due to perceived irrelevance, church hurt, and generational differences.
- **Leadership and Succession Challenges**
  - Many congregations are led by aging clergy, while fewer younger leaders are entering ministry.
  - Research indicates increased burnout among clergy, with Black pastors reporting higher levels of financial and organizational stress than many of their peers.
- **Shift Away from Community-Based Ministry**
  - Historically, Black churches played central roles in voter engagement, education, economic development, and civil rights advocacy.
  - Some congregations have shifted toward individual prosperity-focused messages rather than addressing systemic challenges such as poverty, environmental injustice, healthcare disparities, and economic inequality.
- **Reduced Relevance to Emerging Issues**
  - Many churches struggle to effectively engage younger generations on issues such as mental health, technology, climate change, environmental justice, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and workforce development.
  - This disconnect contributes to declining participation among younger adults.

South Carolina Impact

South Carolina remains one of the most religious states in the nation, and Black churches continue to serve as important community institutions. However, African Americans in South



Carolina continue to experience significant disparities in income, wealth, health outcomes, educational attainment, environmental exposure, and political representation. These persistent disparities suggest that faith institutions must adapt and expand their role to meet contemporary challenges.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Faith-based voter education and civic engagement programs.
- Church-led food assistance, health screenings, and community wellness initiatives.
- Youth mentoring and after-school programs.
- Partnerships between churches and nonprofit organizations.
- Online worship services and digital outreach platforms.
- Financial literacy and homeownership education programs.

Proposed Solutions

- Develop statewide Black Church leadership succession programs.
- Create youth advisory councils within congregations.
- Expand church involvement in environmental justice and climate resilience efforts.
- Increase mental health education and counseling partnerships.
- Strengthen economic empowerment initiatives focused on entrepreneurship, workforce development, and cooperative economics.
- Create interfaith and community coalitions to address housing, healthcare, and educational disparities.
- Invest in technology training and digital ministry strategies to engage younger generations.
- Encourage a renewed emphasis on social justice, community organizing, and public policy advocacy.

Desired Outcome

A revitalized faith community that preserves the historical strengths of the Black Church while adapting to modern realities. The goal is to strengthen spiritual well-being, civic engagement,

economic opportunity, youth leadership, environmental justice, and community resilience for African Americans throughout South Carolina.

Supporting Research Notes

The statistics incorporated above are based on recent research showing that the share of Black Americans identifying as Christian declined from 85% in 2007 to 73% in 2025, while approximately 21% identify as religiously unaffiliated. Research also documents declines in Black church membership and a 15% drop in Black Protestant church attendance between 2019 and 2023. (Pew Research Center)

Here is a South Carolina Black Agenda framework for **Sex and Gender** that follows the same structure, tone, and policy-oriented format as the Religion section.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Sex and Gender

Definition

Sex refers to the biological characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive anatomy, that are typically used to classify individuals as male or female. Gender refers to the social, cultural, behavioral, and personal identities associated with being male, female, both, neither, or another gender identity. Sex and gender influence health outcomes, educational opportunities, economic mobility, family structures, safety, and access to public resources.

Problem Statement

Sex and gender continue to shape the life experiences of African Americans in South Carolina. While progress has been made in expanding opportunities and legal protections, significant disparities remain in health outcomes, economic security, educational attainment,

representation, personal safety, and access to services. These disparities disproportionately affect Black women, Black men, and gender-diverse individuals.

Key Challenges

- **Gender Wage and Wealth Gaps**
    - Black women working full-time continue to earn significantly less than White men and less than many other demographic groups.
    - Black women are more likely to serve as primary breadwinners while facing barriers to wealth accumulation and homeownership.
    - Persistent income disparities contribute to higher rates of financial insecurity and poverty among Black families.
- **Maternal and Reproductive Health Disparities**
    - Black women experience substantially higher rates of maternal mortality and pregnancy-related complications than White women.
    - Limited access to quality healthcare, preventive services, and maternal care contributes to poor health outcomes.
    - Rural communities often face shortages of healthcare providers and reproductive health resources.
- **Educational and Workforce Challenges**
    - Black men face lower college enrollment and completion rates than Black women.
    - Occupational segregation continues to limit opportunities in higher-paying industries for many African Americans.
    - Gender stereotypes can influence educational achievement, career advancement, and leadership opportunities.
- **Violence and Personal Safety**
    - Black women experience disproportionately high rates of domestic violence and intimate partner violence.
    - Black men are disproportionately impacted by homicide, incarceration, and violent crime.
    - Many victims face barriers to reporting abuse or accessing support services.
- **Underrepresentation in Leadership and Decision-Making**
    - African Americans remain underrepresented in executive leadership, corporate boardrooms, and certain elected offices.
    - Black women often face both racial and gender barriers when seeking leadership positions.
    - Limited representation can reduce community influence on public policy and institutional decision-making.
- **Challenges Facing Gender-Diverse Individuals**

- LGBTQ+ African Americans may experience discrimination in employment, housing, healthcare, and public accommodations.
- Higher rates of homelessness, mental health challenges, and victimization have been documented among some LGBTQ+ populations.
- Access to culturally competent healthcare and support services remains limited in many communities.

South Carolina Impact

South Carolina continues to experience significant disparities related to sex and gender. Black women face some of the nation's highest risks for maternal health complications, while Black men experience disproportionate rates of incarceration and violent victimization. Economic inequality, healthcare disparities, and unequal access to opportunity contribute to persistent challenges that affect families and communities across the state.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Maternal health initiatives aimed at reducing pregnancy-related deaths and complications.
- Domestic violence prevention and victim support programs.
- Workforce development and career training programs.
- Educational mentoring programs for young men and women.
- Equal employment and anti-discrimination protections.
- Community health outreach and preventive care programs.

Proposed Solutions

- Expand maternal health services and culturally competent healthcare providers.
- Increase investments in Black maternal health research and intervention programs.
- Strengthen equal pay enforcement and economic opportunity initiatives.
- Expand mentorship and leadership development programs for youth and young adults.
- Increase access to affordable childcare and family support services.
- Strengthen domestic violence prevention, intervention, and survivor assistance programs.
- Expand mental health resources tailored to the needs of African American communities.



- Promote inclusive policies that protect all individuals from discrimination while fostering respect and dignity for diverse perspectives.
- Increase representation of African Americans in leadership positions across government, education, healthcare, and business sectors.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where all African Americans—regardless of sex or gender—have equitable access to healthcare, economic opportunity, education, leadership development, personal safety, and community support. The goal is to eliminate disparities, strengthen families, expand opportunity, and ensure that every individual can contribute fully to the social, economic, and civic life of the state.

South Carolina Black Agenda

Technology

Definition

Technology refers to the tools, systems, digital infrastructure, internet access, software, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, telecommunications, and technical skills that enable individuals, businesses, and communities to participate in the modern economy and society. Technology increasingly influences education, employment, healthcare, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and access to information.

Problem Statement

Technology is rapidly transforming every aspect of life in South Carolina. However, significant disparities in broadband access, digital literacy, STEM participation, workforce development,

and technology ownership continue to disproportionately impact African American communities, particularly in rural areas.

Key Challenges

- **Digital Divide and Broadband Access**
  - Approximately 193,000 South Carolina households lacked internet access during the height of the state's digital divide assessment efforts.
  - Rural South Carolina households report significantly higher rates of no home internet access than urban households.
  - In the Black Rural South, more than 25% of residents lacked access to high-speed broadband infrastructure.
- **Digital Skills and Workforce Gaps**
  - South Carolina has identified shortages of trained information technology and cybersecurity professionals.
  - State workforce studies report that the supply of qualified technology workers does not meet projected industry demand.
  - African Americans remain underrepresented in many technology occupations and cybersecurity careers.
- **Educational Inequities**
  - Many students in underserved communities lack consistent access to devices, broadband, and computer science education.
  - Black students continue to face barriers to STEM participation and technology career pathways.
- **Artificial Intelligence and Economic Displacement**
  - AI and automation are expected to transform administrative, manufacturing, transportation, and service-sector jobs.
  - African American workers may face increased economic vulnerability if workforce retraining and digital upskilling efforts do not keep pace with technological change.
- **Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities**
  - Cyberattacks against businesses, governments, healthcare systems, and individuals continue to increase.
  - Many small businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations lack cybersecurity training and resources.

South Carolina Impact

Technology is becoming a primary driver of economic growth in South Carolina. While the state has made substantial progress toward universal broadband coverage, technology access alone

does not eliminate disparities in digital literacy, workforce readiness, entrepreneurship, and economic opportunity. Communities that lack access to technology skills and infrastructure risk being left behind in an increasingly digital economy.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- South Carolina's broadband expansion initiative has reduced the number of unserved and underserved locations to fewer than 30,000 statewide.
- STEM programs at South Carolina HBCUs are expanding technology career pathways for students.
- Statewide cybersecurity initiatives are strengthening workforce development and cyber readiness.

Proposed Solutions

- Achieve universal affordable broadband access in every South Carolina community.
- Expand technology education beginning in elementary school.
- Increase funding for HBCU technology, AI, and cybersecurity programs.
- Create community-based digital literacy centers in underserved neighborhoods.
- Support Black-owned technology startups and entrepreneurs.
- Develop AI workforce transition programs to help workers adapt to emerging technologies.
- Expand cybersecurity training for nonprofits, churches, schools, and small businesses.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where every African American has affordable internet access, digital literacy skills, technology training, cybersecurity awareness, and equal opportunities to participate in the digital economy, regardless of income or geographic location.

South Carolina Black Agenda

War and Violence

Definition

War and violence include organized conflict between nations, domestic violence, gang activity, gun violence, interpersonal violence, gender-based violence, community violence, hate crimes, and the systemic conditions that contribute to conflict and harm. Violence affects public health, economic development, family stability, mental health, education, and community well-being.

Problem Statement

African American communities in South Carolina experience disproportionate exposure to violence in multiple forms, including gun violence, gang activity, domestic violence, incarceration, and the impacts of military conflict. Violence reduces community stability, limits economic opportunity, contributes to trauma, and undermines public safety.

Key Challenges

- **Community Gun Violence**
    - South Carolina's violent crime rate remains more than 20% higher than the national average.
    - Black residents are victims of violent crime at approximately twice the rate expected based on their share of the state's population.
    - Many communities experience recurring cycles of retaliation, trauma, and loss due to gun violence.
- **Gang Activity**
    - South Carolina continues to document gang-related criminal activity in communities, correctional facilities, and among individuals under community supervision.
    - Gang recruitment often occurs in communities experiencing poverty, limited opportunity, family instability, and educational challenges.
- **Mass Incarceration and Criminal Justice Disparities**

    - Black South Carolinians are incarcerated at approximately 3.8 times the rate of White residents.
    - Although Black residents comprise approximately 27% of the state's population, they account for approximately 58% of the prison population.
    - High incarceration rates contribute to family disruption, economic hardship, and intergenerational trauma.
- **Gender-Based Conflict and Violence**
    - Domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence continue to affect thousands of South Carolinians each year.
    - Increasing polarization and hostility between men and women, amplified through social media and online platforms, contribute to unhealthy relationship dynamics, family instability, and community division.
    - Black women experience disproportionate rates of intimate partner violence and often face barriers to obtaining support services.
- **Youth Violence and Trauma**
    - Young adults ages 18–34 are approximately twice as likely to be victims of violent crime compared to their share of the state's population.
    - Exposure to violence is linked to adverse educational, mental health, and economic outcomes.
- **War and International Conflict**
    - Military conflicts abroad affect South Carolina families through military deployments, economic instability, refugee resettlement, and federal budget priorities.
    - African American veterans and military families may experience challenges related to healthcare, employment, PTSD, and reintegration after service.

South Carolina Impact

Violence imposes significant social and economic costs on South Carolina communities. It contributes to higher healthcare costs, lower educational attainment, workforce instability, reduced investment, and diminished quality of life. The cumulative effects of violence are particularly severe in communities already facing economic and social inequities.

Existing and Proposed Solutions

Existing Solutions

- Community violence intervention and youth mentoring programs.



- Domestic violence shelters and victim support services.
- Gang prevention initiatives operated by schools, nonprofits, and law enforcement agencies.
- Reentry and workforce development programs for formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Veteran support and mental health services.

Proposed Solutions

- Reduce violent crime victimization among African Americans by 50% by 2035.
- Expand violence interruption and community mediation programs.
- Increase investments in youth employment, mentorship, and after-school programs.
- Strengthen trauma-informed mental health services in high-violence communities.
- Expand restorative justice and diversion programs.
- Increase support for domestic violence prevention and healthy relationship education.
- Create statewide initiatives addressing online extremism, gender hostility, and social media-driven conflict.
- Strengthen reentry services to reduce recidivism and improve employment outcomes.
- Expand services for veterans and military families affected by combat-related trauma.

Desired Outcome

A South Carolina where African American communities are free from the disproportionate burden of violence, where families are safe and stable, where conflicts are resolved without harm, where youth have pathways to success, and where communities can thrive without fear of crime, abuse, gang involvement, or the long-term impacts of war.