

RACE, SEX, & SOCIAL EQUALITY ROADMAP



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ProGov21 is a shared resource for progressive local policy makers and advocates alike. Operated and maintained by COWS, a national think-and-do tank based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, ProGov21 offers a fully searchable digital library of progressive policies, practices, and other resources for 21st century local government.

The Problems & Progressive Local Solutions

The country's history of structural biases have entrenched inequality. White men continue to dominate political, economic and social conversations and positions of power, while women and people of color continue to face institutionalized hurdles. Every aspect of socioeconomic life is impacted by racial or gender-based bias, including job selection, promotion, housing, media attention to relevant issues, incarceration and policing, transportation access, environment quality, healthcare, voting rights, and more – there is no area of American life untouched by racial or sex-based inequity.

A number of broad policy solutions aim to mitigate or reverse some of the institutionalized harms against and impediments to women and people of color. One of the most noteworthy in recent political discussions has been reparations – payments or tax deductions provided with an apology to individuals impacted by slavery. An Equal Rights Amendment would codify protections against sex discrimination and send powerful social signals in national treatment of women. Working to guarantee jobs or housing at the state level through programs like social housing or carbon pricing would eliminate or reduce some of the structural inequities that cross race, gender and socioeconomic lines.



Available Local Levers & Targets for Reform

The predominant ongoing challenge to race, sex and social equality is inertia and the power of status quo. Years of political, legal and economic maneuvering have suctioned resources from women and communities of color. The glass ceiling, discrimination in the workplace and outright violence -

including state-sanctioned mass incarceration of disproportionately black and brown people – prevent progress and limit opportunities for transformational change while devastating communities day-to-day ability to live or produce economically. Targeted disruption of otherwise stable communities over generations has accelerated inequality to unprecedented levels, and labor unions historically responsible for combatting systematic economic oppression have been disempowered. Piecemeal opposition to major structural wealth theft has generally failed, and sustained equality-based movements have succeeded only rarely.

Current Reforms & Tools to Fight for Them

State and local elected officials can take a number of steps to insulate their jurisdictions from further race-and-gender-based harm, and can develop creative plans to address inequality. For details on many of these plans, please consult the relevant policy roadmap and specific toolkits or articles suggested.

Defensive measures that help prevent further harm include:

- Refusing collaboration with ICE or other federal enforcement agencies that demonstrate bias in their operation.
- Promoting sustainable business practices or innovative relationships with local actors to meet needs not provided by federal partnerships.
- Developing trauma-informed programs that provide access to healthcare and other services that facilitate socioeconomic stability.
- Decriminalizing communities of color and establishing freedom cities.
- Divesting from the prison-industrial complex.

Taking it to the Next Level

Electeds hoping to advance issues that would begin addressing the root inequalities should consider some combination of the following proposals:

- Use racial equity and gender equity frameworks when discussing policies and legislation, focusing on the impact on communities of color and women, while transparently providing data and partnering with communities to create solutions that prevent harm to those communities.
- Carbon pricing or other revenue-generating plans to create endowments that increase the spending power of low-and-middle income citizens – whether through a dividend or through subsidizing or guaranteeing jobs (see also our roadmap to revenue).
- Living wage ordinances and legislation.

- Good jobs, particularly sustainable businesses, with particular attention to women and applicants of color, including through investing in sustainable industry clusters.
- Focused policies that facilitate high-level jobs for women and people of color.
- Protecting families from work-based harms through strengthening labor standards.
- Investing in violence prevention programs, communities, neighborhood advocacy organizations, and where necessary community-based corrections programs aimed at rehabilitation rather than carceral structures such as jails.
- Creating housing and transitional spaces to eliminate homelessness and rent crises that precipitate crime or exacerbate inequality (see also our Housing Roadmap).
- Passing the Equal Rights Amendment or advocating for other states to do so.
- Working to support LGBTQIA+ rights, including sex worker rights – forcing sex work into the underground and criminal space has increased violence against all women by roughly 17%, and black trans sex workers are one of the single most vulnerable populations in the country.

In addition to equal pay for equal work, a number of key gender issues highlight progressive agendas. Workplace gender discrimination including sexual harassment, retaliation, career restrictions and access denial continue to limit opportunity for women. Paid family leave, including paid sick days, and equal access to equal healthcare are key issues – even for women who have healthcare, race-based bias generates disparate health outcomes in every area from pregnancy to elder care. Access to safe abortion services continues to be a flashpoint political issue – government has so far exclusively sought to determine bodily decisions in the realm of military drafts and women contemplating an abortion. Ensuring both genders have full and equal access to all healthcare needs including abortion services for women is a critical step to remedying gender inequality.

The fundamental challenge in future policy discussions is whether and how many resources will be invested toward equality. The prison-industrial complex currently costs the United States likely over \$1 trillion per year, though lack of data makes calculations difficult, and gender-based discrimination in the United States has been estimated to cost roughly \$2 trillion per year. Institutionalized discrimination does not just focus wealth gains on predominantly white men, it also limits the total value gained to the national economy.

Allies, Comrades, and Helpers

Color of Change

Color Of Change is the nation's largest online racial justice organization. Color of Change helps people respond effectively to injustice in the world around us. As a national online force driven by 7 million members, and moves decision-makers in corporations and government to create a more human and less hostile world for Black people in America.

#8ToAbolition

#8ToAbolition is a resource website that assembles abolitionist texts, policies, and guides, all created from the collective knowledge of abolitionist authors and experts.

EMILY's List

EMILY's List seeks to put women into office who can make significant contributions to education, health care, voting rights, and economic equality.

Freedom to Thrive

Freedom to Thrive works to build a world where safety means investment in people and planet and end the punishment-based criminal and immigration systems.

Community Connections for Youth

CCFY is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to equip grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations to develop effective community driven alternatives to incarceration.

Cure Violence

Cure Violence helps communities to implement violence prevention programs that are effective in significantly reducing violence.

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)

NCADV promotes legislation and policies that serve and protect victims and survivors of domestic violence, and we work to change the narrative surrounding domestic violence.

We continue the conversation around Race, Gender, and Social Equity on **ProGov21's Podcast**. Our Safety & Justice episode features DeRay Mckesson from [Campaign Zero](#) and our Gender Equity episode features the [Women's Fund of Rhode Island](#).

Listen to our podcast on, [our website](#), [Spotify](#), [Apple Music](#), or [Amazon Music](#).

