



New York City Map by Borough, NYC Map 360¹

STRUCTURAL RACISM IN NEW YORK CITY FACTS, FIGURES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

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Introduction

Racial inequities in New York City including police violence, gentrification, income inequality, and disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Black and Latinx residents reflect the consistent, patterned effects of structural racism. Beyond pointing out the history and impacts of structural racism in NYC, this city profile highlights the efforts of community activists, grassroots organizations and city government to disrupt the legacy of unjust urban policies and decision-making. In this brief we also offer working principles for Black-centered urban racial equity. Though not intended to be a comprehensive source of information, this brief highlights key facts, figures and opportunities to advance racial equity in NYC.

CURE developed this brief as part of a series of city profiles on structural racism in major cities. The briefs were originally created as part of an internal process intended to ground ourselves in local history and current efforts to achieve racial justice in cities where our client partners are located. With heightened interest in these issues, CURE is releasing these briefs as resources for organizers, nonprofit organizations, city government officials and others who are coordinating efforts to reckon with the history of racism and anti-Blackness that continues to shape city planning, economic development, housing and policing strategies. Residents most impacted by these systems are already leading the change and leading the process of reimagining NYC as a place where Black Lives Matter. We hope this brief serves as a useful source of information for building understanding and supporting the deep and sustained work needed to build healthy, just, and sustainable cities and communities.

The Changing Color of New York City

The New York metropolitan area has seen considerable economic growth, but in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods many residents struggle to afford the region's cost of living.

New York City has seen its Black population fall from almost 29% in 1990 to 22.8% in 2018.²³ This shift is happening against a backdrop of climate gentrification, rising costs of living, and deep racial divides in employment, housing, education, criminal justice and health.

Twelve percent of low-income NYC neighborhoods are experiencing ongoing or advanced gentrification, while an additional 9 percent are experiencing displacement without gentrification, according to a study from the Urban Displacement Project.

The study also found that there were 314 super-gentrified or exclusive neighborhoods in the metro region, forming a set of high-income suburban communities around New York City. This rapid rise of incomes in the suburbs suggests that gentrification is no longer just a problem in the city's urban core.

NYC is made up of five boroughs: Manhattan, The Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Queens. Brooklyn had the largest influx of white residents, and the greatest departure of communities of color, especially in the neighborhoods of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Williamsburg, Clinton Hill, Park Slope and Gowanus, and Crown Heights North.

Between 2000 and 2010, Brooklyn saw between 5,000 and 10,000 Black residents leave the borough, while between 6,700 and 15,600 whites moved in.⁴ With rents rising in NYC and its suburbs, lower income residents of color are being displaced. Those who can afford to may relocate to southern cities such as Atlanta and Houston in a "reverse migration" pattern from

Structural racism refers to a system in which public policies and societal and institutional practices and norms work together to consistently produce disadvantages and inequities experienced among Black people and racially oppressed groups.

Gentrification is a profit-driven racial and class reconfiguration of urban, working-class and communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment...Gentrification is driven by private developers, landlords, businesses, and corporations, and supported by the government through policies that facilitate the process of displacement.

These policies often take the form of rezoning, subsidies, and other strategies that make development of expensive housing easier. This new housing is often designed to court new, wealthier and mostly white people moving into neighborhoods. Displacing a group of people in favor of newcomers dilutes the political power of working-class communities and communities of color by breaking up families, communities, and voting blocs. (Adapted from Development Without Displacement by Causa Justa: Just Cause)

decades earlier when Blacks left the South for Chicago, New York and other northern cities.⁵⁶ But many Black people who get displaced in NYC also end up homeless.⁷

Poverty and Economic Inequality

Although New York City's poverty rate of 17.3% in 2018⁸ was the lowest for the city since the 1970s, it was still well above that year's national average of 11.8%.⁹ A 2016 analysis found that there were about 1.7 million New Yorkers living below the poverty line between 2011-2015. That is larger than the population of Philadelphia or Phoenix.¹⁰ The analysis also found significant geographic and racial inequities in the distribution of poverty in NYC. For instance, more than half of Bronx neighborhoods ranked as being extremely poor, compared to less than 7% of Staten Island or 4% of Queens from 2011-2015. Twenty-two percent (22%) of Black and 29% of Latinx New Yorkers were living below the poverty line in contrast to 12% of white New Yorkers.¹¹

Living conditions for women and girls in New York City are closely tied to race and geography. The *Economic Security and Well-Being Index for Women in New York City* found that with regard to nearly every measure, women of color were worse off than white women in all five boroughs.¹² Similarly, a report from the City Comptroller's Office showed that in 2016, Black women working full-time in New York City made 57 cents for every dollar paid to white men. This translates to roughly \$32,000 less on average per year or, over a 40-year career, more than \$1.2 million less in earnings. The report also found that in 2016, 23.4% of Black women and girls in New York City lived in poverty--more than twice the rate among white men and boys at 11.3%.¹³

In 2019, 85% of white high school students in New York City graduated on time compared to only 73.7% of Black students.¹⁴ On time graduation from high school is a good anti-poverty measure. Increasing graduation rates in New York City especially amongst the Black population must also be done with fair access to employment opportunities and livable wage jobs that offer paid sick leave.

Declining Housing Affordability, Rising Evictions

Nearly 45% of all New York households are rent-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of income toward rent, and more than half of those spend more than 50 percent of their income on rent, which qualifies as severely rent burdened.¹⁵ This particularly affects Latinx, Black, Asian families, with 50% of these households being rent burdened compared to 36% of white households.¹⁶

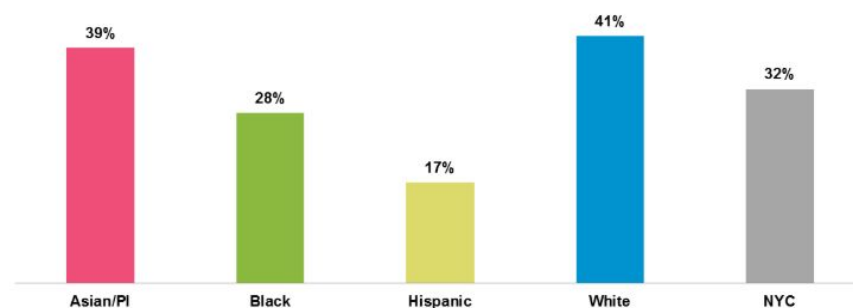
Adjusting for inflation, the median rent in the city as a whole increased by 20% between 2006 and 2016. From 2010 to 2019, median rents rose 30% in Queens, the largest jump of any New York City borough.¹⁷ Additionally, between 2019 and 2020 Queens saw a 7% average increase in rent, the second largest increase of any area in the country.¹⁸ The Bronx saw a median rent increase of 19% between 2010 and 2019. In Manhattan, rents rose by 18% between 2010 and 2019 and in Brooklyn also 18% during the same time period.¹⁹ Though smaller than other boroughs, Staten Island has seen rent increases as well, including a 2% increase from 2018 to 2019.²⁰ In addition to these rapidly rising costs, tenants have reported facing discrimination, and unethical evictions among many issues which have contributed to the rise of homelessness in the city.²¹

The Bronx saw an increase in the number of evictions between 2010 and 2016. The NYC neighborhoods with the three highest eviction-filing rates were in that borough, including the Highbridge/Concourse, Morrisania/Crotona, and Hunts Point/Longwood neighborhoods.²² In October 2016, residents brought a federal class-action lawsuit against the city's no-fault eviction ordinance, which declares properties public nuisances if a criminal offense has occurred there. In January 2019, the district court dismissed the case on jurisdictional grounds, noting that this type of claim can only be brought in state court. The case is being appealed.²³

The New York City based *Community Service Society* found that between 2017 and 2019, residents living in majority Black zip codes were more than three times as likely to be evicted as tenants living in majority white zip codes. The analysis also reaffirms that evictions perpetuate poverty, especially in female-led Black households.²⁴

People of color in New York City are also less likely to own their own homes. In 2017, 28% of Black and 17% of Latinx New Yorkers were homeowners, compared with 41% of white New Yorkers. Homeowner rates by race are depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure: 2017 Homeownership Rates by Race in New York City



(Where We Live NYC Draft Plan 2017)²⁵

The Mayor's *Housing New York* plan currently projects building or preserving 300,000 affordable housing units between now and 2026. That includes 120,000 units of new construction, and 180,000 units that will be preserved.²⁶ However a 2019 report by the Coalition for the Homeless argues that the city's housing plan exacerbates housing inequities by promoting strategies that will lead to more high-rent apartments in a housing market that needs significantly more low-rent apartments to meet current demand. For example in 2017, there were approximately 560,000 more households in need of low-rent apartments than there were affordable units available. Activists have called on the city to build at least 24,000 new apartments for homeless residents and for the city to preserve the affordability of at least 6,000 already-occupied units.²⁷

Historical Snapshot

The Indigenous people to the area of New York City were the Lenape. White settlers would kill and force the Lenape people to migrate from their homeland en masse beginning in about 1626.^{31,32} The colony of New Amsterdam, which later became New York City, enslaved African people beginning in 1626. In 1712, following an uprising of enslaved Africans, there were a series of public executions and burnings of enslaved people who participated in the rebellion. During the American Revolution, more than 20,000 enslaved people lived within fifty miles of Manhattan island. It was one of the largest concentrations of enslaved people north of the Mason-Dixon Line. White New York City residents were often actively involved in the slave trade and auctions of enslaved Africans regularly took place at a market on Wall Street.³³

In the 1790s, the city's recorder, who presided over the main criminal court boasted that he could "arrest and send any black to the South" as part of the Fugitive Slave Act. In 1799, when New York state adopted a measure for *gradual abolition*, it was the second-to-last northern state to do so. In 1821, New York's constitutional convention imposed a tax on Black men for voting. This policy led to, by 1826, only 16 Black men in the city voting. In 1841, New York state made it illegal to bring enslaved people into the state. However, local law enforcement did very little to enforce this law. Several years after abolition, large numbers of enslaved Africans could still be found in New York City.³⁴

Discrimination against Black people continued into the next century. Tensions between Black residents and police officers sparked riots in 1900, 1935, and again in 1943. The infamous city planner, Robert Moses, whose tactics were later replicated across the country, often favored the construction of highways and bridges at the expense of communities of color. In Robert Caro's 1974 biography of Moses, he notes that the city planner was motivated by race in the design of many projects in the 1930s. For example, he designed Long Island Parkway overpasses to be as low as 7 feet 7 inches tall. Interstate highway bridge overpasses are normally 14 to 16 feet tall. The short Long Island overpasses ensured that buses would not be able to go under them.³⁵ Many people of color who most often relied on public transportation, lacked access to public parks on Long Island.³⁶

Race has historically had an impact on the quality of education received in New York. In February 1964, more than 450,000 students and teachers boycotted NYC schools to protest the lack of a comprehensive desegregation plan. Beyond efforts to desegregate the city's schools, the initiative sought to improve conditions for Black and Latinx students. The walk out was organized by Black parents, and the collective action involved more people than the March on Washington, which occurred six months earlier and was one of the largest demonstrations of the Civil Rights Movement.³⁷

The lead organizer for the boycott was Milton Galamison, a civil rights activist and pastor of Siloam Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. Bayard Rustin was another civil rights activist involved in the walkout. Days before the boycott, the school board released plans to rezone, improve, and/or relieve overcrowding in schools over a three year period.

Galamison and other activists felt that plan did not go far enough, yet many white parents organized counter protests, believing the plan went too far. By the late 60s, Galamison and other civil rights leaders shifted their focus towards local control of schools.³⁸ Education activists are still fighting some of the same battles today.



A flier advertising the 1964 boycott of schools.³⁹

In the 1970s, de-industrialization began to displace blue-collar workers in textiles, meatpacking, and shipping. Following the industrial decline, New York City lacked economic opportunities and was on the verge of bankruptcy. In response, the city laid off many city workers and cut services including sanitation and after-school programs. More than 820,000 middle class residents, many of them white, fled to the suburbs.³⁹ Real estate prices dropped and investors acquired land and buildings at bargain prices, turning it into an opportunity to transform their purchases into luxury hotels and apartments. A policy known as 421a, gave tax breaks to developers to reverse the surge in suburbanization.⁴⁰ While Wall Street and other finance-related industries soared in the 1980s, the revival of the city's economy in the 1980s never reached Harlem or other Black neighborhoods.⁴¹

During more recent construction, the graves of many Black New Yorkers who lived during the 17th and 18th century were discovered in 1991, as a new General Services Administration (GSA) office was being built. It turned out that the site was once the largest colonial-era cemeteries for free and enslaved Black people. Though 419 bodies were discovered, historians estimate that as many as 20,000 people would have likely been buried there. Some initially urged that

the graveyard simply be paved over so construction of the GSA building could stay on track, but Black activists staged successful protests, construction was halted in 1992, and in 1993 the African Burial Ground was designated a National Historic Landmark. In 2006 it was also declared a National monument.^{42,43}

While the African Burial Ground was preserved, city policies continued to undermine Black and Latinx neighborhoods in the 1990s and 2000s. Community activist groups, including the Coalition to Preserve Community, have protested Columbia University's expansion in recent years.⁴⁴ Manhattanville on the western edge of Harlem became a casualty to the school when New York State's economic development corporation declared eminent domain to seize land for construction by the Ivy League institution. The University tore down an entire city block of warehouses and residences to make room for two new Columbia Business School buildings, and ongoing construction will displace an estimated 5,000 people, including dozens of small businesses in what is a majority Latinx neighborhood.^{45, 46}



A bronze sculpture based upon the forensic facial reconstructions of three intact skeletons exhumed at the African Burial Ground⁴⁹

A New York appellate court in 2009 overturned the use of eminent domain, arguing that its use was not going to benefit the surrounding West Harlem community, but mostly Columbia, the private elite college.⁴⁷ But a Court of Appeals reversed the lower court's decision in 2010,⁴⁸ and the Supreme Court let that stand, allowing Columbia University to proceed with its \$6.3 billion Manhattanville Campus project.⁴⁹



The gas station pictured here in 2011, was one of the last holdouts in Manhattanville during the Columbia University expansion. Photograph by Nathan Kensinger.

The gas station pictured here in 2011, was one of the last holdouts in Manhattanville before Columbia University expansion. Photograph by Nathan Kensinger

Homelessness

June 2020 data compiled by the Coalition for the Homeless revealed that 57% of the homeless population is Black and 32 percent Latinx.⁵⁰ Approximately 60,000 homeless New Yorkers sleep in the city's municipal shelters each night. Women of color are disproportionately impacted by homelessness. Nearly two-thirds of women in single adult shelters who are Black and 26% Latinx. Seventy percent (70%) of women in families with children in shelters are Black and 36% are Latinx.⁵¹

Health Status and Health Care Access

The impact of structural racism is reflected in the health status and challenges accessing health care experienced by Black New Yorkers. As of 2017, the life expectancy in New York City was 81.3 years among white people but only 77.3 years among the Black population.⁵⁵ The difference in life expectancy by New York City neighborhoods is stark at 27.4 years. People in East Harlem live, on average, 66.3 years, while people in Chinatown live, on average, 93.6 years.⁵⁶

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Black residents in New York City reported losing health insurance more than twice as often (14%) as white residents of New York City (6%).⁵²

A report by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found that even before COVID-19, Black and Latinx New Yorkers were disproportionately predisposed to illness and premature death. For example, among Black New Yorkers, there were six times as many cases of HIV than among white New Yorkers. Latinx residents were more than twice as likely to have diabetes than white residents. Black residents were nearly three times as likely to die from diabetes as were their white counterparts. Ninety four percent (94%) of cases of elevated blood lead levels in children were among children of color.

Academic medical centers are often able to provide better care or more highly specialized care for patients who have complex or rare illnesses than other hospitals, but a 2017 study found that Black patients were half as likely to get care at an academic medical center in New York City than were white patients. The report, *Hospital Payer and Racial/Ethnic Mix at Private Academic Medical Centers in Boston and New York City*, also found that between 2009 and 2014 nearly 33% of patients at non-academic medical center hospitals in the city were Black, compared with only 18% at the city's academic medical centers.^{53,54}

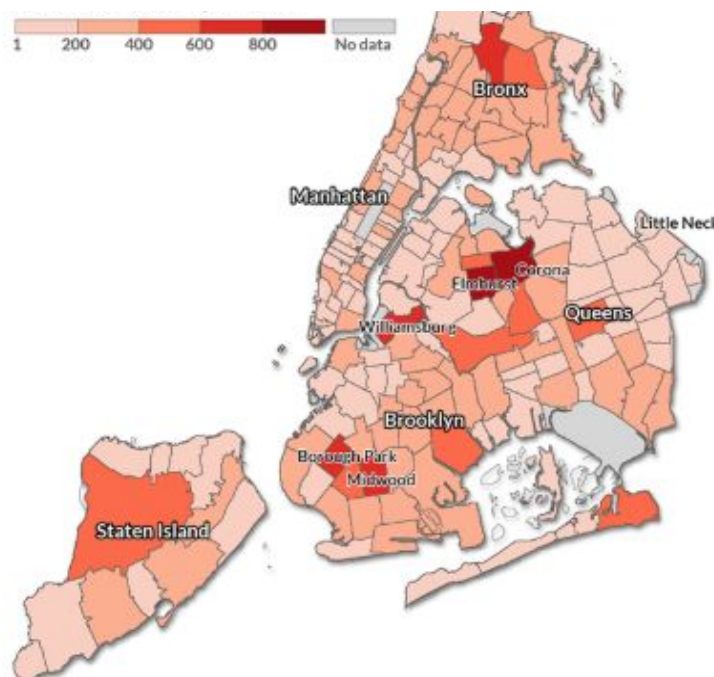
COVID-19 Pandemic

New York City was the first epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. Latinx and Black residents have been hardest hit. The Latinx population, which represents 29% of the city's overall population, accounted for nearly 34% of patients who died of COVID-19, while Black residents represent about 24% of the population and almost 28% of the city's known deaths, according to the New York City Health Department.⁵⁷

Many neighborhoods are still experiencing terrifyingly high infection rates. One example is the Bathgate neighborhood in the Bronx, which is 55% Latinx and 42% Black,⁵⁸ and has had one of the highest infection rates in the city at 51% as of June 8 2020.⁵⁹ The Bronx is home to the poorest congressional district in the country. It also has among New York state's worst rates for asthma, diabetes, hypertension and obesity. This has put residents of the Bronx at a disproportionately high risk of death should they contract COVID-19.⁶⁰

The geographic distribution of COVID-19 cases as of April 2020 is depicted in Figure 2 below. The map shows a high concentration of COVID-19 cases in many communities of color.

Figure 2: COVID-19 Cases by Zip Code in New York City, April 1, 2020



(NYC Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, 2020)⁶¹

There are also large disparities in mortality rates from COVID-19 across the boroughs, with the Bronx seeing the highest rate of deaths per capita.⁶² April 2020 data from the city’s health department confirmed that service workers, especially those in the food industry, are among the most vulnerable for contracting the virus. This trend has a disproportionate effect on residents of color, more than 70% of whose jobs are considered essential. In transit, more than 40% of transit workers are Black, and of frontline cleaning staff, 60% is Latinx.⁶³

Advocacy groups have called on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to reapportion service so that essential workers don’t contract COVID-19 in densely packed subways and buses.⁶⁴ A 2014 report by the NYU Furman Center found the Upper East Side to be the least dense neighborhood with, on average, 750 square feet per person. Conversely, the Elmhurst neighborhood in Queens was the most dense, with residents having, on average, only 287 square feet per person.⁶⁵ New York City’s mayor has called that borough’s Elmhurst Hospital “the epicenter within the epicenter.” The 11369 ZIP code in East Elmhurst is roughly 64% percent Latinx and nearly 11% of the households are multigenerational, with three or more generations living under the same roof.⁶⁶

Hunger and Food Insecurity

In New York City, food insecurity is a major problem, particularly among Latinx and Black residents. More than 27% of Latinx residents and 17% of Black residents had low to very low food security in 2015 compared to just 6% of white residents.⁶⁷ A 2018 study from the nonprofit Hunger Free America (HFA) noted that the Bronx is particularly vulnerable, with 26% of the borough’s residents experiencing food insecurity.⁶⁸ HFA estimates it would cost an additional \$569 million annually—on top of what is already spent on food-assistance programs—to eradicate hunger in New York City.⁶⁹

Lower-income communities of color were more likely to resort to more expensive, but less healthy food options, according to a report prepared by the New York Law School Racial Justice Project and the ACLU Racial Justice Program. The study looked at geographic distribution of food markets in the city, and found that in Brooklyn’s majority Black neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, only 6% of the 176 bodegas carried green leafy vegetables.⁷⁰ Bodegas citywide face barriers such as limited refrigeration space, which makes it challenging to offer neighborhood residents healthier options. New York has various programs to provide residents healthy food options including the Pharmacy to Farm program which provides monthly financial capital for people who are on medication for hypertension and who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to buy fresh produce.⁷¹

Criminal Justice and Police Violence

NYC’s long history of racism in policing is reflected in its stop-and-frisk program.⁷² That refers to an NYPD policy wherein officers can stop, pat down and interrogate residents if they have a “reasonable suspicion” that the resident is, has, or is about to commit a crime. The policy has been criticized for its disproportionate application to Black and Latinx communities, and evidence suggests it has had no effect on crime rates.⁷³ Since 2002, police have stopped and interrogated more than 5 million residents, and Black and Latinx residents have been the “overwhelming target of these tactics,” according to the ACLU of New York.⁷⁴

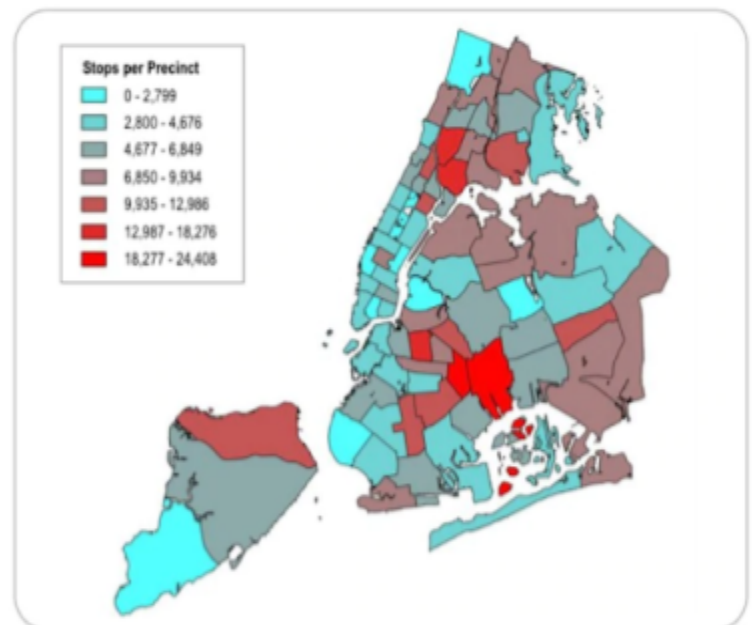
Stop-and-frisk searches appeared to have peaked in 2011 with more than 685,000 conducted. Data compiled by *Mother Jones* revealed that 85% of that year’s stop-and-frisk encounters involved Black and Latinx people. A 2013 article from the *Washington Post* noted significant geographic patterns in the precincts conducting the stops: The Bronx and neighborhoods in Brooklyn — particularly East New York, Starret City, Brownsville and Ocean Hill—had large numbers of stops, whereas whiter neighborhoods, especially in Manhattan did not. The precincts by number of spots are displayed in the map (Figure 3) below.⁷⁵

Despite a 2013 federal judge’s ruling that the policy is unconstitutional, it remains in effect. In 2019 the number of stops increased for the first time since 2011, and 88% of those stopped were Black and Latinx, up from 85% in 2013.⁷⁷

Black and Latinx residents are harassed in other ways as well: Of 374 summonses issued between March 16 and May 5, 2020 for violating COVID-19 social distancing orders, 52% were given to Black people and 30% to Latinx people.⁷⁸

This disparate treatment is not new. NYPD has a long history of violence within Black and Brown communities, including Abner Louimaw who was abused and assaulted by police in 1997; Amadou Diallo who was shot and

Figure 3: Concentration of Stops by Precinct



(Washington Post, 2013⁷⁶)

killed by police who mistook his wallet for a gun in 1999; and Eric Garner who was put into a chokehold by police for selling loose cigarettes and died moments later in 2014.

Community groups, including Communities United for Police Reform and Black Lives Matter, have called on the city to reform and later defund NYPD. Although these organizations have successfully applied pressure to the City Council, changes often fall short. For example, in 2017 the New York City Council passed the Right to Know Act, which consists of two police reform bills. After spending more than five years backing it, Communities United for Police Reform withdrew their support because the bill underwent significant changes in closed-door meetings.

Previously officers would have been required to identify themselves in any nonemergency encounter, whereas the version that passed only requires identification when a person is “suspected of criminal activity.”⁷⁹ This again happened in 2020 when the mayor announced criteria allowing for the release of more audio and bodycam video footage and the elimination of the city’s anti-crime unit—a group of plainclothes officers who’ve caused tensions in local communities.⁸⁰

The City Council also released a statement outlining their intent to cut \$1 billion in NYPD spending.⁸¹ A June 2020 post on their website by Communities United for Police Reform applauded the statement, but also noted that the NYPD had yet to meet the groups’ demands for a clear plan for: a hiring freeze and reduction in officers; complete removal of police from schools and social services including homeless outreach, mental health response, and youth programs; and additional police department cuts.⁸²

Many activist groups were outraged when the mayor’s proposed budget actually left NYPD virtually untouched, while cutting many of the city’s social and human services that are critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities United for Police Reform and other groups launched the #DefundNYPD for #NYCBudgetJustice campaign, demanding that at least \$1 billion be reinvested from the city’s Police Department budget into services, programs, and infrastructure that directly benefit Black, Latinx and other communities of color.⁸³

The Path Forward: Promising Policies and Strategies

In NYC, as in many cities across the country, a powerful movement is underway to dismantle structural racism and resist the forces of inequitable urban development. Racial justice advocates are building upon NYC’s long history of grassroots activism and demanding housing and tenants’ rights, community-led urban development, jobs that pay a livable wage, and reallocation of funds from police to services and programs that support health, safety and sustainability in Black communities and lower income communities of color.

Some New York City lawmakers are pressuring the state legislature to change state laws to close a loophole that offers tax breaks to homebuyers in gentrifying neighborhoods. The “gentrification tax” would have homebuyers pay market rate taxes, rather than the assessed value, as a way to make the system fairer.⁸⁴

Non-profit organizations and activist groups pressured the city to pass a law in 2017 to guarantee free legal representation to low-income residents facing eviction. The law was the first of its kind in the nation, and an attempt to help people navigate the often intricate nature of the housing courts.⁸⁵ In 2019, NYC passed the *Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019* which seeks to give the city’s renters more information so they can hold their landlords accountable.⁸⁶

Community based organizations such as UPROSE, Brooklyn’s oldest Latinx community-based organization, have pushed for a rezoning plan that centers around preserving the industrial character of a neighborhood, retaining and creating well-paid working class jobs, supporting green industrial innovation, and promoting climate resiliency as part of the borough’s Sunset Park development plan.⁸⁷

In 2017, Seattle-based Amazon announced it was searching for a location to build a second headquarters. Mayors and city leaders nationwide pitched the appeal of their cities. Roughly a year later, Amazon announced that it would build headquarters in two cities instead of one: Crystal City, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, DC, and Long Island City, a mixed-zone Queens neighborhood.

In New York, activists raised concerns that the new headquarters would likely displace low-income residents in an already heavily gentrified area. Rather than give tax and other incentives to a company owned by the richest man in the world, they urged the city and state to invest in subways, buses, public housing and other infrastructure. Advocate organizations, including Make the Road New York, New York Communities for Change, VOCAL New York, Democratic Socialists of America and the Real Estate, Wholesale and Department Store Union Activists, successfully joined forces with City Council Members and opposed the Amazon Queens location.⁸⁸

The city has also recently been pressured by advocates to invest in reducing and eliminating long standing racial health inequities. This includes spending \$12.8 million, over three years, between 2018 and 2021. The goal is to eliminate or reduce the Black-white racial inequity in complications and deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth within five years.⁸⁹ Also in 2019, NYC committed to spending \$100 million per year to increase enrollment in the city-owned health insurance plan, MetroPlus, and provide those without insurance access to care through the NYC Care program, particularly undocumented immigrants and the “young invincibles.”⁹⁰

More than 5,000 Bronx residents took part in the NYC Care pilot program, many booking their first appointments within the first two weeks of enrollment. They also availed themselves of lower-cost prescriptions, which could be filled during extended pharmacy hours. In its rollout to

the larger community throughout 2020, the city is engaging community-based organizations, such as BronxWorks, Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, and the Sauti Yetu Center for African Women.⁹¹ The mayor also recently created a task force to focus on racial inequities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹²

In 2019, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams introduced a bill that would require the city to study how rezoning impacts the racial makeup of neighborhoods. The legislation would mean that a racial impact analysis would be a part of any environmental review process to address potential inequity and displacement factors of any major development projects. The analysis would indicate whether the proposed changes affirmatively further fair housing as defined by the federal Fair Housing Act.⁹³ NYC also produces a Disparity Report on citywide trends in racial inequity. The report integrates data from multiple life stages and experiences into a tool that government agencies and community partners can use to address racial inequities.⁹⁴

Working Principles for Black-Centered Urban Racial Equity

There is still much work to be done to dismantle the legacy of structural racism in NYC. This includes confronting the legacy of anti-Black racism and the role it has played in shaping the city. It also requires sustained and targeted investment in Black residents, communities, organizations, businesses and institutions. Critical to fostering the condition for racial equity in the city is ending the over-policing and treatment of Black residents as criminals, while reimagining what's needed to achieve public safety and community wellness.

- **Confront anti-Black racism** and continually interrogate the role it plays in shaping every aspect of urban life including city and regional planning, neighborhood boundaries, exposure to environmental hazards and access to health care, jobs, transportation, healthy food options, parks and recreational facilities.
- **Prevent gentrification and displacement** by rejecting hypergrowth market-oriented “creative class” city planning strategies. Embrace resident-led community development practices, racial equity impact assessments and equitable development strategies that create and preserve affordable housing and promote community wealth-building and ownership.
- **Defund policing** by reimagining what is needed for public safety and ending the over policing and criminalizing of Black people. Participatory budgeting can be used to reallocate funds to support housing, health care, workforce development, jobs and social services that foster safety, economic security and community wellness.
- **Listen to and invest in local Black-led organizations, businesses and institutions** already engaged in efforts to foster racially equitable policies, systems, neighborhoods

and communities. Shift power by practicing equitable partnerships and grantmaking that center on trust, mutual accountability, transparency and respect for the wisdom, experience, and skills present in Black communities.

- **Think and plan intersectionally** by developing an analysis of how race intersects with class, gender, sexuality, immigration status and ability. Understanding the ways that various forms of exclusion work together to increase vulnerability contributes to a fuller analysis of racial inequities and better targeted strategies to address them.
- **Commit to sustained and targeted investment in community economic development** strategies that support well-paying jobs, quality, affordable housing and educational and entrepreneurship opportunities for Black residents.

Community organizers, city governments, philanthropic organizations and businesses can leverage this moment to amplify calls for policies, programs, and systemic changes that support racial equity. City governments must fully honor these demands by listening to and working in partnership with residents to develop, fund and implement policies and programs that build and support a vision for a racially equitable NYC.

Resources and Community-Based Organizations

- [Audre Lorde Project](#) is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color center for community organizing, focusing on mobilization, education and capacity-building for community wellness and progressive social and economic justice.
- [Black Lives Matter New York](#) works to directly impact policies focusing on: criminal justice reform, basic public safety, fair and equal access to education, jobs & infrastructure through grassroots organizing and direct action, serving as a resounding voice for the underserved and disenfranchised.
- [Bluestockings](#) is a volunteer-powered and collectively-owned radical bookstore, fair trade cafe, and activist center in the Lower East Side of Manhattan.
- [Bronx Defenders](#) is a public defender nonprofit that is radically transforming how low-income people in the Bronx are represented in the justice system and, in doing so, is transforming the system itself.
- [Brooklyn Movement Center](#) (BMC) is a Black-led, membership-based organization of primarily low-to-moderate income Central Brooklyn residents.
- [Communities United for Police Reform \(CPR\)](#) is an unprecedented campaign to end discriminatory policing practices in New York, bringing together a movement of community members, lawyers, researchers and activists to work for change.

- [Coalition to Preserve Community](#) members have joined forces with St. Mary's Congregations for Justice and Peace and Harlem community members against Columbia University's expansion plans and project of displacement.
- [Critical Resistance New York](#) works to build an international movement to end the Prison Industrial Complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe.
- [Decrim NY](#) advocates and organizes to shape New York City and State policy and public opinion around people in the sex trades.
- [Emergency Release Fund](#) works to ensure that no trans person at risk in New York City jails remains in detention before trial.
- [G.L.I.T.S.](#) Inc approaches the health and rights crises faced by transgender sex workers holistically using harm reduction, human rights principles, economic and social justice, along with a commitment to empowerment and pride in finding solutions from the community.
- [Mobilization for Justice](#) provides free legal assistance to low-income New Yorkers throughout New York City to resolve legal problems in the areas of housing; foreclosure; civil, disability and aging rights; bankruptcy, tax, consumer, employment, government benefits, immigration, and kinship care.
- [Queer Detainee Empowerment Project](#) assists folks coming out of immigration detention in securing structural, health/wellness, educational, legal, and emotional support and services.
- [Safe Horizon](#) works to provide support, prevent violence, and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families and communities.
- [Streetwork Project](#) operates Drop-In Centers where youth experiencing homelessness can socialize in a safe, non-judgmental place.
- [Make the Road New York](#) builds the power of immigrant and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice.
- [New York Communities for Change](#) has been building grassroots political power with low income communities of color since 2010.
- [Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition](#) is a member-led, grassroots organization fighting for racial and economic justice in the Bronx.
- [Sauti Yetu Center for African Women and Families](#) works to mobilize low income or "no income" African immigrant women to improve the quality of their lives, strengthen their families and develop their communities in the United States, starting in New York City.
- [UPROSE](#) promotes sustainability and resiliency in Brooklyn's Sunset Park neighborhood through community organizing, education, indigenous and youth leadership development, and cultural/artistic expression.
- [Urban Justice Center](#) provides a platform for dynamic advocates to fuel social change, leading the way for a just, fair, and decent society.

- [VOCAL-NY](#) is a statewide grassroots membership organization that builds power among low-income people affected by HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, the drug war, homelessness, and mass incarceration in order to create healthy and just communities.

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