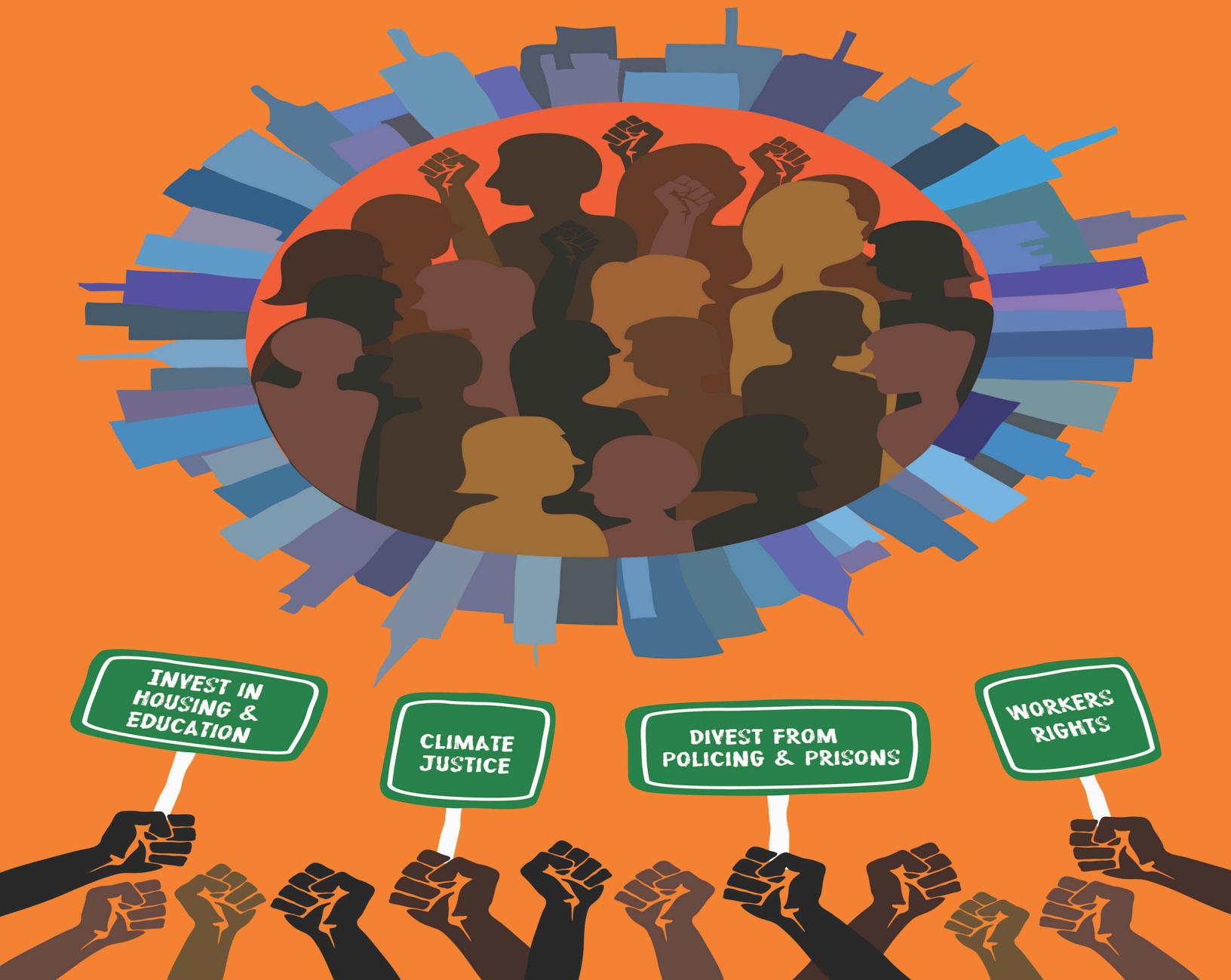


#FREEDOM CITIES



Organizing for Freedom Cities, Building for Liberation

SPRING 2018 TOOLKIT

By Freedom Cities Anchor Organizations: Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, & Enlace International



I. Introduction

Freedom Cities is an emerging movement that seeks to make cities, towns and communities safe for all oppressed people in the U.S. Freedom Cities was conceived by those directly affected by policies that lock up, displace and economically marginalize communities of color. **We believe that communities will only be safe when everyone lives with dignity and has the opportunity to thrive** without fear of physical violence, racial injustice, and economic oppression at the hands of greedy corporations, white supremacists, or the government.

Freedom Cities was born from workers' discussion on how to not only resist state and corporate violence, but to build a vision of the world we want. Low-wage and multi-racial immigrant workers participating in a training by the New York Worker Center Federation created the idea in 2016.

Freedom Cities is the movement for all of us fighting for radical democracy, resisting further violence from the state, and wishing for a world where our cities belong to those who live there. It is our movements coming together internationally to push back against a racist and corporate agenda that seeks profit over investment in people and the planet. We demand that our cities become sites of resistance and visionary advances.

This toolkit is a starting place for the Freedom Cities movement to collectively answer the question: As we demand an end to the municipal policies and practices that harm us, what vision are we offering in its place that unites and builds the leadership of all marginalized communities?

Many types of campaigns will be built from the Freedom Cities platform. Freedom Cities campaigns share a vision, are led by the most-impacted, and use narratives and organizing practices that leave no marginalized community behind. Freedom Cities are strategic and connected to a platform that builds. As we check off victories on the Freedom Cities menu and checklist in our own cities, towns and campuses, we are pushed to tackle other parts of the checklist and learn from the myriad campaign models in the Freedom Cities network.

II. Freedom Cities Platform

Vital Basic Needs for our Communities and a Stop to Funding Institutions that Harm us Starting with Police

We call for a divestment from policing and militarization and reallocating our tax dollars to programs that support our communities. Basic needs include: housing, jobs, quality and accessible public education, mental health and harm reduction services, and healthcare.

A Stop to Criminalization for All Oppressed People

#FreedomCities demands public protections for all vulnerable communities including and not limited to immigrants, Black people, Muslims, queer and trans communities, women and workers.

Political Power and Community Control

Our communities will feel and exercise real control of the institutions that people interact with daily, exploring alternatives to state policing and strengthening accountability of public agencies meant to serve us.

Economic Justice

We are committed to workers' rights and self-determination, including labor protections, worker cooperative and employment opportunities, efforts to combat discrimination, increased wages, and the right to organize.

Community Self Defense

As has been our tradition we will continue to help local communities, families and neighborhoods create systems of self-defense that engage businesses, religious groups and other local institutions.

Global Justice

Our struggles for liberation have always been linked with others across the world, and our identities and migration histories link us globally. We are part of an international movement of those who believe that everybody deserves safety and freedom. We work to hold the US and corporate interests accountable for their acts in other parts of the world that impact migration, environmental destruction, and global poverty.

III. Freedom Cities Menu & Checklist

FREEDOM CITIES MENU & CHECKLIST



We can all write a laundry list of the powers we're up against, and the systems and policies we want to dismantle. Freedom Cities gives us the power to also say what we are fighting for and building in our communities.

On the Freedom Cities Menu & Checklist, our current reality is on the left, and our future is on the right. To get to that future, we must connect all our campaigns against oppression with our visions for liberation. We must recognize that all our campaigns are resource fights—we want resources in our communities, under our control so we can thrive, and not used to destroy or harm us.

This is both a menu of campaign opportunities, and a checklist of basic requirements that a city needs to meet in order to be a true Freedom City. As we build new campaigns and carry out existing ones, this menu pushes us to articulate and demand what we're building for—not just what we're against. As we check off victories, it gives us options for what might be next for our organizations to take on. This menu begins to distill the Freedom Cities platform into policies and practices that our cities must end or transformatively begin.

IV. Freedom Cities Organizing Principles

Freedom Cities campaigns embody each of the following organizing principles.



FREEDOM CITIES campaigns are:

- LED BY DIRECTLY IMPACTED COMMUNITIES
- PRO-BLACK
- USE NARRATIVES & ORGANIZING PRACTICES THAT LEAVE NO MARGINALIZED COMMUNITY BEHIND
- SHIFT CONTROL OF RESOURCES & POLITICAL POWER TO IMPACTED COMMUNITIES
- DEEPEN RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES

IV. Freedom Cities Campaign Frames & Case Studies

Frame: Invest/Divest

What you pay attention to grows. We are shifting from paying our attention to the crisis, inadvertently growing it, to paying attention to alternatives and

opportunities for transformation. We believe we can evolve from a punitive society that overwhelmingly criminalizes poor, Black, trans, queer, migrant, and disabled communities, to a society that is rooted in transformative justice empowering marginalized communities to build their own solutions for a thriving, healthy and safe community. We can achieve this by reinvesting in models and interventions that support people, rather than criminalize them.

Campaign Case Study: Safety Beyond Policing

Framing:

We don't need more cops. We want strong communities. Communities of color are being systematically over-policed while also being displaced by rising rent and gentrification. We must repair the damage of mass criminalization and help people return to their communities instead of squandering resources. Resources that help our communities thrive, lift our social net and also lower core drivers of crime. We demand investments in education, health and safety for the people, determined by the people and divestment of municipal time and resources from exploitative forces; including prisons, fossil fuels, police, surveillance and exploitative corporations.

Framing Resources:

<http://www.safetybeyondpolicing.com/>
<https://policy.m4bl.org/invest-divest/>

Campaign Goal:

We demand the City Council invest the \$97 million annual dollars proposed for 1,000 new cops towards resources that build strong communities. Our taxpayer dollars should be invested in some of the following examples:

MENTAL HEALTH

- Rikers Island Prison holds as many people with mental health needs as all the psychiatric hospitals in New York State.
- 20-25% of homeless single adults have severe or persistent mental health needs.
- Mental health supports successfully address violence, drug use, and depression.
- NYPD funds could hire over 2000 social workers or over 2000 special education teachers.

TRANSPORTATION

- 100,000 New Yorkers are arrested for not paying fares annually.
- 24,000 misdemeanor fare-evasion arrests in the subway in 2013 cost \$42 million.

- Funds could provide 62,500 low-income New Yorkers with free train and bus access.
- Public transportation helps working class communities maintain distant jobs.

YOUTH JOBS PROGRAMMING

- New York's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) only employs 22% of its 132,593 applicants.
- A Chicago jobs program employed students at a cost of only \$3,000 per student.
- Chicago program resulted in a 51% drop in violent crime arrests.
- Social benefits of reduced crime were estimated at \$1,700 per student.
- A similar NYC program using police funding could potentially employ 310,000 youth.

NYCHA

- Funds could increase resident associations by \$281,437 in all 334 NYCHA buildings.
- Educational programming and workforce development for adults and youth.
- Support resident watch programs with appropriate cameras and lighting.

Tools for Campaign Development: Strategic Goals & Tactics

- **Primary Goal:** City Council invest the \$97 million annual dollars proposed for 1,000 new cops towards resources that build strong communities.
- **Secondary Goal:** End broken windows policing in NYC.
- **Primary Target:** NYC City Council
- **Tactics:**
 - Pass resolutions at heavily policed community boards calling for the end of broken windows policing and a divestment from policing and an investment in the needs of our community.
 - Host community public education events about the budget and broken windows policing.
 - Engage in direct action targeting key budget hearings and elected officials.
 - Give workshops in organizations and community groups about Broken Windows Policing.
 - Recruit education, housing and other non-policing advocates to make a demand for the funds scheduled to expand the NYPD.

Campaign Loss:

City Council and Mayor decided to invest in 1300 new police officers.

Early in the campaign we attempted to pit City Council, the Mayor and NYC Police Commissioner against each other since they had publicly voiced differing opinions on the issue. Their decision to hire new police gave us clarity that there is unified, bipartisan support for policing and no opposing political opinions as was previously thought early on in our campaign.

Political education in directly impacted community is needed. We identified the need to do actions in directly impacted communities, for example protesting local precincts, picketing council member offices, and presenting testimonials and evidence at community board

meetings. We also identified the need to distribute divestment literature in directly impacted communities.

Campaign Victory:

In a related **Swipe It Forward** campaign to expose NYPD's abusive and discriminatory tactics on our subways and the outrageous price of public transportation being used to incarcerate the poorest among us, we won a victory connected to our secondary goal of ending broken windows policing. The Manhattan District Attorney's office announced that they will no longer prosecute turnstile jumping. This is a shallow victory, as police can still arrest on the basis of trespassing and unpaid summonses may lead to arrests.

Campaign Case Study: Jobs Not Jails

Using the Freedom Cities framework of investing in opportunities and alternatives for transformation, Jobs not Jails empowers the community. The success of this campaign embodies the theme of Freedom Cities.

Framing:

We must directly address the public health and economic concerns that manifest in the forms of mental illness, substance use disorders, homelessness, the commercialized sex trade, and the school-to-prison pipeline by reinvesting in models and interventions that support people—especially those in crisis—rather than criminalize them. A model that can have an impact in many of these areas is one that incorporates restorative practices into important aspects of how the city addresses violence and dispenses justice.

From 2011 to 2015 Alameda County received about 30 million dollars in realignment funding from the state of California. In the past, the Board of Supervisors allocated more than half toward incarceration and correctional purposes. In 2014, The Ella Baker Center (building off of and continuing the work of the Alameda County Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform) along with community members, faith leaders and coalition partners kicked off the Jobs Not Jails campaign. The primary goal was to compel the Board of Supervisors to set aside half of public safety funding for community programs and services. The campaign was successful and resulted in roughly 10 million dollars per year being removed from the sheriff's budget and redirected toward community programs and services.

Framing Resources:

[Public Safety Begins With Public Health: Making Oakland Safer Together](#)

Campaign Goal:

Ella Baker Center stands with faith leaders, community members, and grassroots leaders to demand that the Board of Supervisors set aside half of their public safety funding for community programs and services that prioritize job training, education, housing, and healthcare for people coming out of jail.

In the past, the vast majority of public safety funds have been allocated to the sheriff, which is unwarranted given that the jail population in Alameda County is declining and jail beds are largely occupied by people who have not been convicted of a crime.

What the county should be funding instead the of the sheriff:

- Employment training and placement assistance
- Housing support including transitional housing, supportive housing, and housing vouchers
- Education programs, substance abuse treatment, mental health and health services, transportation assistance, and help obtaining IDs

Tools for Campaign Development: Strategic Goals & Tactics

- **Primary Goal:** Alameda County set aside half of their public safety funding for community programs and services that prioritize job training, education, housing and healthcare for people coming out of jail.
- **Primary Target:** Alameda County Board of Supervisors
- **Secondary Target:** Alameda County Administrator
- **Tactics:**
 - Occupy county Board of Supervisors waiting rooms
 - Public comment at Board of Supervisors meetings
 - Pressured the Board to pass a resolution
 - Direct action to shut down Board of Supervisors meeting
 - We presented the Board of Supervisors with an alternate budget that allocates more funding towards programs and services that are cost effective, and reduce recidivism:
 - Jail beds cost nearly \$50,000 per year, while providing on the job training costs \$4,000
 - Studies show that fewer people leaving jail will recidivate if they are employed
 - Without stable housing, people are 7 times more likely to recidivate
- **Strong Coalition** came together in monthly meetings to discuss overall campaign strategy: Justice Reinvestment Coalition, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, Urban Strategies Council, Oakland Community Organizations, Alameda County Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform, constituents from the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, Forward Together, Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus, and the Alameda Labor Council.

Campaign Victory:

The Jobs Not Jails campaign secured millions for reentry programs in Alameda in an important step forward in tearing down the web of criminalization and incarceration that entraps too many Alameda County residents, especially low income people and people of color. In March 2015, the Board of Supervisors voted to pass Supervisor Keith Carson's proposal to allocate 50% of the public safety realignment funds towards community-based re-entry programs and services in 2015-16.

Frame: Reimagine Investment into Our Communities – No City Funds in Criminalization, Militarization & Wall Street

We demand an end to all city fund investments in criminalization, militarization, and imperialism, and the Wall Street companies that prop up and profit from these industries.

Our city funds—made up of our taxes and fees we pay—should not go towards companies doing business within the prison industrial complex. Local governments need to take a stand against state and corporate control over people of color and immigrants. Most of the criminal and immigration enforcement systems are now privatized, providing a perverse incentive to police, lock up and monitor people of color. Every person in our community has the right to be free from the terror, harassment and isolation of policing and prisons.

Our city funds should not go towards companies profiting from war and imperialism. Local governments must do their part to dismantle the war economy and divest from companies that derive their profits by supplying and profiting from U.S. military interventions, expansions, the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the militarization of our streets. Every human being, both at home and abroad, has the right to live in freedom and dignity, safe and free from poverty, danger and despair.

Investing in Wall Street strips our communities of resources, directly investing in big banks that profit from harm to our communities and lobby against our needs. Prison companies, weapons manufacturers, military technology companies and oil companies all have financial backers. Many/most/all of those financial backers have also engaged in racially discriminatory practices that rob our communities of access to housing and resources, and lobbied to erode their own taxes limiting funds for our social safety net. Our cities must divest from big banks that harm our communities on every front, starting with Wells Fargo, JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America.

As we stop city fund investing in the destruction of communities of color locally, nationally and internationally, we will reimagine investment as a way to serve the thriving of our own communities. We can create a municipal bank, increasing community control over resources and saving our city money by ending extractive big banking fees. We can create a model where our cities invest in local small businesses and community centers, providing access to services and spaces that contribute to our community's wellness and health. We can transition city funds to build cooperative economies and guarantee basic rights of housing, livable wages, healthcare and a clean environment. Our cities can invest in local, small businesses owned by Black, indigenous, people of color and immigrant entrepreneurs.

Campaign Case Study: Portland Prison Divestment

The Portland Prison Divestment Campaign, convened by Enlace in 2013, embodies the theme of Freedom Cities because its organizing methodology united multiple strategic campaigns, and the organizers of those campaigns refused to let their city council targets divide their issues. The Portland Prison Divestment Coalition, led by people impacted by criminalization and immigration enforcement, united with solidarity groups for divestment from Israel, the Dakota Access Pipeline and fossil fuels. The success of this campaign led to a reimagining of city investment.

Framing:

We must divest from destruction. Private prison corporations not only run prisons and detention camps like the one in Tacoma where our loved ones and neighbors are sent to, they also lobby heavily to expand the laws that land people in these facilities.

When Enlace analyzed who has the power to stop this cycle of prison expansion, we identified a list of financial backers that give loans, lines of credit, and who hold shares in prison corporations as having that power. This access to capital is what is fueling our for-profit prison industry. Without this financial support, the prison corporations will starve.

The City of Portland held \$82 million worth of corporate bonds in two of the major investors and financial backers in the for-profit prison industry: Wells Fargo and Bank of New York Mellon.

It is time for this city to take a stand, stand with the people of Portland, and make Portland a city we can be proud of, a city that sets a national standard by not buying new bonds in major financial backers of prisons.

Framing Resources:

[Enlace City Prison Divestment Toolkit](#)

Campaign Goal:

Portland City Council vote to divest from private prison lenders and investors.

Tools for Campaign Development: Strategic Practices

- **Strategic Practices:**

- We built a powerful diverse coalition representing 10,000 Portlanders from the immigrant, Black, labor, faith, civil rights, LGBTQ communities.
- We developed leadership of the people most impacted by corporate and state violence and built a movement for human rights that targeted all corporate backers of human rights abuses.

- We demanded that city council act at every step in the interest of a safe, inclusive community, and understand how its investments in Wells Fargo lead to increased incarceration of immigrants at GEO Group's Tacoma facility, the nearest immigrant detention center to Portland.
- We committed to a proactive campaign that built the analysis of our communities around the shared roots of corporate and state violence against our communities.
- In a majority white city, we ensured that our core strategy group was only made up of groups led by or representing Black people, people of color, Muslims and immigrants.
- We aligned with the Boycott Divest Sanctions movement, the DefundDAPL movement and fossil fuel divestment movement to develop a Divest from Destruction frame, that united our narratives and demands.

Campaign Victory:

In April 2017, Portland city council unanimously voted to permanently end all investments in corporate securities due to Enlace's powerful community organizing. Other organizations are building on this victory, demanding the city stop banking with Wells Fargo, stop contracting with G4S, and create a municipal bank. Enlace's transformative campaign built a broad local movement for human rights and racial justice, linking prison divestment with #NoDAPL and the movement to End the Israeli Occupation of Palestine.

Achievements on the road to victory:

- We pushed city council to adopt a socially responsible investments policy with a "human rights impact" criteria, setting the ground for divestment from prisons and all other human rights abusers. This language, the first of its kind in the country, is now a national model for human rights organizers.
- City council created a diverse Socially Responsible Investments Committee.
- Our strong coalition pushed Senator Ron Wyden to introduce the Ending Tax Breaks for Private Prisons Act of 2016 (S. 3247, Wyden) in July 2016, which he reintroduced in November 2017.
- Our coalition supported Oregon Educators Association in passing a resolution to divest their pension from private prisons, later introduced as a bill by a state legislator.

Campaign Case Study: CSLA Prison Divestment

This campaign is connected to Freedom Cities because its organizers clearly articulated in their demands their vision for what they wanted in place of investments in prisons. Black students and faculty demanded and won investments in the resources and environment that will allow them to thrive and feel safe and comfortable on campus.

Framing:

Black students at Cal State LA have been, and still are, consistently made the targets of racist attacks by fellow students, faculty, and administration. These attacks come in many forms. Some are more overt and some subtle. Racially insensitive remarks and micro-aggressions by professors and students create a learning environment that is not conducive to the overall learning atmosphere. This presents unnecessary barriers to the success of Black students here on campus. As the percentage of Black students at Cal State L.A. decreases, the intensity and frequency of these racially driven occurrences has increased. It is your duty as president of this university to address the concerns of ALL of your students, as well as, create and implement programs that will attract and increase the Black student population at Cal State L.A. (i.e., programs such as GO East LA but for Black students). CSLA continues to fail Black students, by not responding, or taking any steps towards the improvement of the campus atmosphere as it relates to its Black students. This university has a history of a poor racial climate, and we, as the Black Student Union and Black student body, will not take it anymore. You must do all that you can to make sure that Black students, currently only 4% of the student body, feel welcomed, safe, and at home at the university that was built on our backs. CSLA must follow in the steps of UC Santa Barbara and UC Berkeley, to support Black students during such a critical time in our history. However, since nothing has been done in recent years, the Black Student Union, along with the entire black student body of CSLA, is DEMANDING that CSLA administrators work with the Black student Union towards the development of a more positive campus climate by complying with our demands.

The Black Student Union demanded institutional change in November of 2015, and the Cal State Los Angeles president and administration responded. Both parties collaborated, and continue to collaborate, to create a better learning environment for Black students at Cal State L.A. Following two meetings, President Covino responded to BSU's demands in writing on December 7, 2015.

Framing Resources:

[Full Demand Letter by CSLA Black Student Union](#)

[Student demands for end to campus racism compiled by the Black Liberation Collective](#)

Campaign Goal:

Black students feel welcomed, safe, and at home at the university that was built on our backs.

Campaign Victory:

- CSLA **DIVESTED from all Private Prison corporations!** This is a historic and significant victory for Black communities and makes CSLA the third university to divest from private prisons and the second public institution to do so following the UC's recent decision to divest at the urging of the Afrikan Black Coalition.
- The Director of Housing worked with administration and the BSU in creating and developing Halisi Scholars Black Living-Learning community. Culturally relevant programming and spaces are essential to the overall academic success of Black students.
- The president agreed to allocate \$100,000 to the Cross Cultural Centers to be divided between the four student centers effective January 1, 2016.
- Beginning in fall 2016, all students are now required to complete one diversity course and one race and ethnicity course.
- The President agreed to allocate \$100,000 for staffing and other costs to increase the yield of Black students who get accepted into Cal State L.A. for Fall 2016, and an additional \$100,000 for the recruitment of Black students for Fall 2017.
- The President committed to the hiring of new staff psychologists who have demonstrated experience in working with Black students.

Tools for Campaign Development

Strategic Goals & Tactics:

- **Primary Goal:** We demand that City Council divest from private prison corporations (CoreCivic, GEO Group); corporations that are involved in the production or upgrading of nuclear or conventional weapons systems; corporations that are involved in the Israeli occupation of Palestine; and the three Wall Street banks with significant ties to prisons, threats to indigenous sovereignty and climate change, racially predatory lending and the Puerto Rican debt crisis (JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Bank of America).
- **Secondary Goal:** We demand the City Council conduct a feasibility study to create a municipal bank.
- **Primary Target:** City Council
- **Secondary Target:** Socially Responsible Investments Committee, if any
- **Tactics:**
 - Postcard and petition delivery to City Council
 - Public comment at and solicited support from Human Rights Commission
 - Public comment at City Council meetings
 - Letters to the editor
 - Occupy City Council waiting rooms
 - Public forums on divestment and reimaging city investment processes
 - Coalition meetings with City Council officials