



# Step Up Louisiana Strategic Vision

JANUARY 2021-2023

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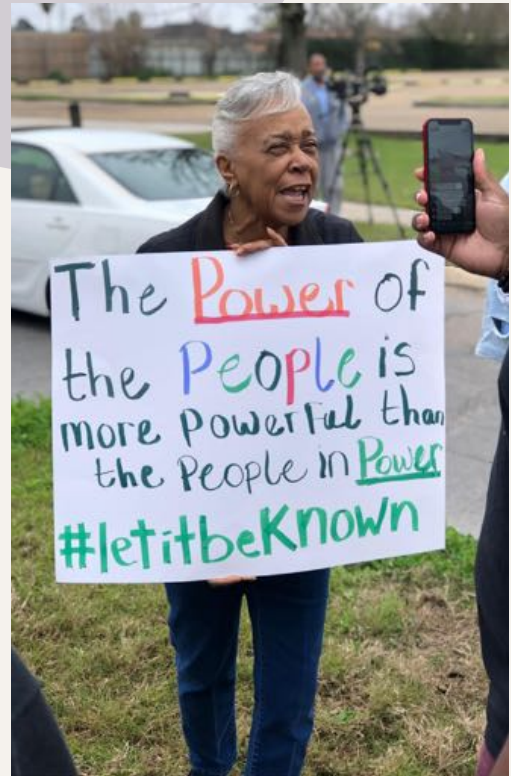
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## PROCESS

In January 2020 after three years of community organizing, Step Up Louisiana launched a process to determine our strategic direction for the next three years.



We wanted to engage our base and stakeholders about the fundamental questions of our organization and how to most effectively build an effective anti-racist, progressive education and economic justice organization. We want to have impact. We want to grow. After a few months of exciting work on this visioning process the compounding crises of the economic and health impacts of COVID-19, the upsurge in the Movement for Black Lives in the wake of the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, and hurricanes battering the gulf coast caused us to reflect and adjust. This document reflects the work of a series

of meetings with the member-elected board, the New Orleans chapter, the Baton Rouge chapter, and the staff. We looked deeply at Step Up's accomplishments, wrestled with what makes Step Up special, our approach to leadership development, and a shared analysis about our political context. Step Up's co-founders and co-directors Maria Harmon and Ben Zucker took that feedback and knowledge from notes onto the page and co-wrote this document. COVID-19 hit while we were putting together this document and we created a framework about how we respond to disasters.

# Political Conditions

The American South has a long history of inequality in its economic and education systems. Much of that inequality is built upon structural racism and white supremacy that has pitted poor and disenfranchised people of all communities against one another to support a morally and politically corrupt hierarchy.

Step Up Louisiana is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our work is strictly nonpartisan, and influencing legislation is not a substantial part of our activities. The following analysis is provided solely for the purposes of sharing the context and conditions under which we undertake our work.



## New Orleans

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- New Orleans is a rich city with 7 hospitals, 9 colleges and universities, huge hospitality industry, and a major port.
- Child poverty in New Orleans is at 33%.
- New Orleans is America's only 100% all-charter public school district and 49% of the taxpayer funded schools received a D or F grade for the 2019 school year.
- The majority of children at those D and F schools are African American.
- The median income in New Orleans for African American families is \$26,819 and the median income for White families is \$62,074.
- Housing is increasingly unaffordable with the cost of housing going up over 50% since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This has greatly contributed to gentrification and displacement.
- Since Hurricane Katrina, privatization and neo-liberal disaster capitalism reconstruction policies has led to the 2nd highest rate of income inequality in the US according to Bloomberg. The closing and privatization of the public housing projects, closing Charity Hospital, the full proliferation of charter schools impacting the public school system, and many other corporate tax break schemes have changed the fundamentals of our public infrastructure landscape, disproportionately having a negative impact on African Americans and Women.

# Baton Rouge

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- Louisiana's state capitol has 4 major hospitals, multiple petro-chemical plant companies, 2 major universities and 1 community college.
- The child poverty rate is 35%.
- The biggest employers in Baton Rouge are the plant/gas & oil refinery companies and the healthcare system.
- Baton Rouge has a very diverse public school system composed of traditional public schools, magnet schools and charter schools. There are at least 20 type 2 charter schools, which means they are governed by the state and not the local school board - Baton Rouge has about 32 charter schools total.
- Baton Rouge's public school system is upwards of 75-80% African American - many of the failing schools in Baton Rouge are predominantly African American.
- The median income for African American households is \$37,508 and the median income for White households is \$71,152.
- Gentrification is currently taking place in Baton Rouge and is concentrated in the Mid-City area. These efforts have been occurring since 2016. There is aggressive buying of property by developers/gentrifiers and some pushout of residents who can no longer afford to live in the area.
- There is an extreme level of inequity with access to resources between North Baton Rouge, which is predominantly African American, and Southeast Baton Rouge, which is mostly white and affluent. All of the major hospitals, businesses, whole food grocery stores and restaurants are located in the Southeast Baton Rouge area. The only healthcare entities in North Baton Rouge are urgent care centers and clinics, there are significant amounts of food deserts throughout North Baton Rouge as well.





## Jefferson Parish

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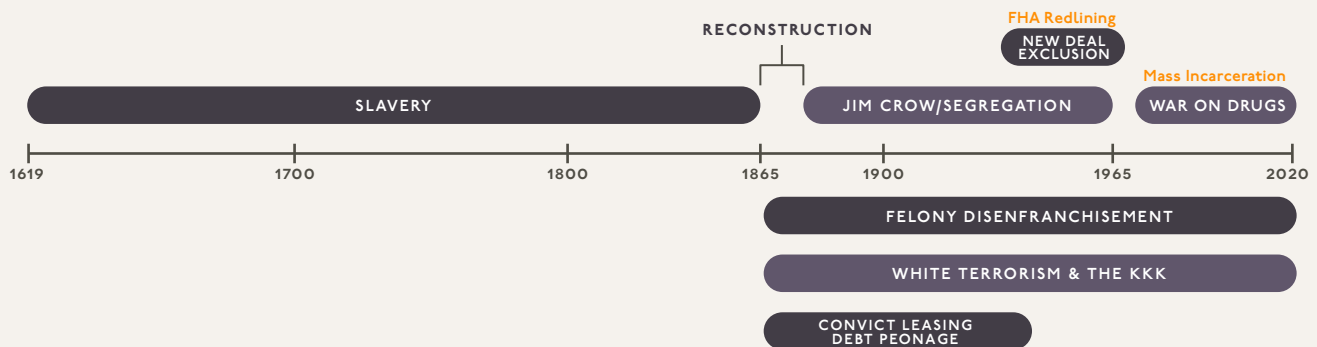
- The largest parish in the state by population is located adjacent to the West of New Orleans.
- Straddling both the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast, Jefferson Parish is on the front lines of climate change.
- Jefferson Parish is segregated in a similar degree to New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

## Statewide

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- Louisiana is doing well with over **\$188 billion in new industrial announcements** since 2012 and will add over 50,000 jobs in 2020-2021 to surpass the 2 million mark for the first time in the state's history.
- **Child poverty statewide is over 26%.**
- Louisiana ranks last for the third straight year as the **worst state in the US News & World Report "Best States" list.**
- Louisiana ranks as **one of the least educated states.**

# Timeline Of White Supremacy



Josh Tucker <https://medium.com/the-new-standard/black-history-a-history-of-permanent-white-oppression-from-1619-to-2016-8bcfa38dfce>





# Electoral Conditions

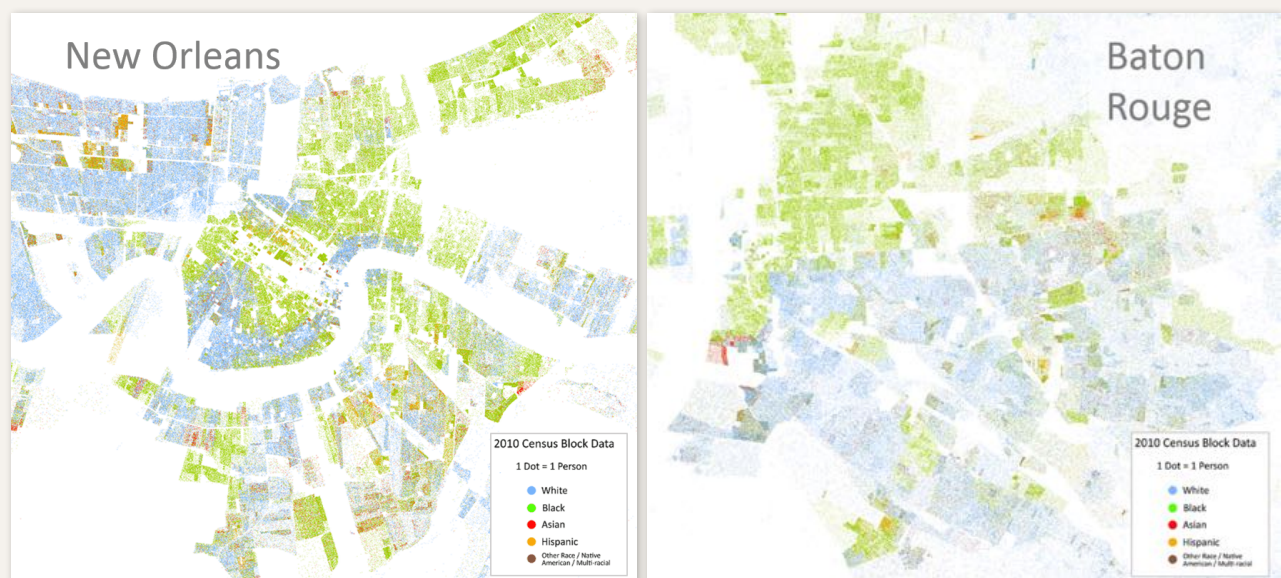


- The state legislature is significantly Republican with a supermajority Republican Senate and just a couple votes away in the House. We have a conservative Democrat governor with John Bel Edwards. The last state elections were in 2019 and the next elections are in 2023. Step Up educated legislators about sustainable community schools who passed resolution through the senate in 2018 (SRI33) and we educated legislators about our Unleash Local minimum wage preemption repeal campaign which led to a bill that died in the House Labor committee in 2019.
- Step Up has organized on the New Orleans City Council, East Baton Rouge Metro Council, Orleans Parish School Board, EBR School Board, and state legislative levels. The New Orleans 7-member city council and 7-member school board are all Democrats. The New Orleans council supports Step Up's economic justice 3-point platform of \$15 minimum wage, equal pay for equal work for women, and fair chance hiring. We educated legislators about our platform and the council passed several economic justice initiatives. The New Orleans City Council has been hesitant to regulate the private sector outside of public contracting due to their conservative interpretation of the state's preemption laws. The Orleans Parish School Board has somewhat supported Step Up's education initiatives like changing the time for first pick up and changing the OneApp algorithm for more geographic preference but has largely been in opposition to our education agenda for sustainable community schools and all-charter system critique. The Baton Rouge Metro Council has 7 Republicans and 5 Democrats and voted against the Unleash Local resolution on a party line vote. The East Baton Rouge Parish School Board has 5 Republicans and 4 Democrats, our members are have engaged them with hopes to pass a sustainable community schools resolution, we had input for the new School System Superintendent search, and have goals of partnering on forming a parent task force to develop a formal grievance process for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System

# Louisiana Voter Registration

DATE	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	OTHER	DEM	REP	IND
1/1/2018	2,976,945	1,900,205	927,842	148,898	1,303,300	898,183	775,462
1/1/2017	2,976,695	1,904,333	925,012	147,350	1,3215,49	892,723	762,423
1/1/2016	2,910,086	1,864,338	910,562	135,186	1,331,636	821,886	756,564
1/1/2015	2,879,068	1,844,975	901,492	132,601	1,342,640	804,686	731,742
1/1/2014	2,917,833	1,877,388	905,624	134,821	1,383,437	809,753	724,643
1/1/2013	2,920,374	1,883,622	902,823	133,929	1,40,5131	809,311	705,932
1/1/2012	2,860,953	1,864,517	868,957	127,479	1,407,885	773,150	679,918
1/1/2011	2,819,730	1,844,188	851,960	123,582	1,420,585	750,215	648,930
1/1/2010	2,914,443	1,894,106	891,897	128,440	1,506,736	748,558	659,149
1/1/2009	2,900,441	1,886,699	888,610	125,132	1,523,428	737,363	639,650
1/1/2008	2,837,985	1,873,424	848,104	116,457	1,498,015	701,811	638,159
1/1/2007	2,810,558	1,861,600	836,307	112,651	1,512,630	691,774	606,154

- All of the rest of the statewide offices like Treasurer and Lieutenant Governor are either held by Republicans or conservatives with no party affiliation. The Supreme Court is also seen as conservative and is majority white and Republican.
- When talking Louisiana politics it's important to talk about Race and Geography. Over 90% of African Americans vote Democrat and the majority of Democrats are from south of I-10. 4 major cities in Louisiana (NO, BR, Shreveport and Lafayette) are some of the most politically and racially segregated metro areas in the U.S. <sup>1</sup>



- The three largest parishes in the state by population are Orleans, Jefferson, and East Baton Rouge. A pathway to statewide power has to include deep and wide organizing in those geographies.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facingsouth.org/2015/05/the-most-racially-segregated-cities-in-the-south.html>

# Our Proudest Victories



# Economic Justice

- New Orleans Ban the Box Ordinance Passed
- State House passed a resolution to address unemployment phone line wait times
- 10% across the board raise for New Orleans City Workers
- \$15 Minimum Wage for Orleans Parish School Board food service workers
- Equal Pay Disparity Study in New Orleans City Government
- Enforcement of the Living Wage and Ban the Box ordinances by reconstituting the of the New Orleans City Government Internal Audit Division
- Unleash Local resolutions passed in 4 cities across the state including New Orleans

# Education Justice

- State Senate Resolution SRI33 passed for Sustainable Community Schools
- We won yellow school bus transportation services for children at Einstein Charter in New Orleans East
- We responded quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic by setting up unemployment clinics, connecting parents to resources, campaigning hard to save the \$600, and distributing masks and PPE
- 6:05am, 1-hour later, mandated start time for earliest school bus pickup and more neighborhood geographic priority in algorithm of the OneApp open enrollment system for Orleans Parish Schools
- Sustainable Community School model established at Capitol Elementary in Baton Rouge

# Organization-Wide Victories

- We have over 200 members and 2 chapters in New Orleans and Baton Rouge
- Amendment 2 for Unanimous Juries in Louisiana Passed in 2018
- We knocked on over 46,000 doors during the 2019 state elections as part of our nonpartisan get out the vote work
- 96,500+ texts , 40,000+ phone Calls, and 25+ members engaged in relational voter program during the 2020 state elections as part of our nonpartisan get out the vote work



# COVID-19 & The Path Ahead

The conditions in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools were deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When we analyze and process the research we did collectively around our conditions in January 2020 and how that connects to our vision and three-year goals we are confronted with the grim realities of the pandemic. Job losses are immense and the unemployment rate had tripled in April with over 400,000 people across the state losing their jobs at one point or another over the pandemic. Parents, teachers, and students were also profoundly impacted with questions about safety, sports, access to technology, schools reopening, and equity. Essential workers have been left to struggle on the front lines and our democracy is continuously under attack. While surviving police violence and

Clearly we have a steep hill to climb as we take on the state legislature. Building state power is essential in a nonpartisan context to shifting the paradigm in efforts to achieve good jobs and good schools for all

Louisianans. We must position ourselves to have a strong mobilization of grassroots community leaders to be able to advocate for themselves and their communities. We have to strategize effectively in order to have a meaningful impact in our targeted geographies.

As we look forward with these conditions in mind we hold many complexities. We bring urgency to the work and don't want to leave our people behind. We care deeply about the impacts of our campaigns and want to build a membership and organization that is sustainable for the long haul. We want to be patient with our team and we want to build ambitious programs and coalitions that have the power to win. Our anti-racist approach, political and economic analyses, flexibility, and focus will be strengths as we build into our next phase.



# Three-Year Plan

Structural racism and inequality were central to Louisiana's communities before COVID and with over 500,000 unemployed people in the state and over 700,000 public school children out of school since the start of the pandemic the scale and depth of the pain of the COVID-19 crisis is staggering. The impacts of this will be felt through the next three years and our goals and tactics are all built with this context.



“

Step up makes you feel important, no matter how big or small your contribution, and it lets people have a voice

**KIM ROBINSON**

“

We are going to be wanting people to do more outreach in their own communities.

**NAIMA SAVAGE**

# Nonpartisan Political Power

What does accountability and nonpartisan political power really look like? We landed on elections, relationships with elected officials, and member engagement as core components of political power.

Over the next three years in order to improve education and economic justice public policy through the levers of democracy Step Up will:

- **Hold elected officials accountable** through a process that includes public commitments to adopting our platforms, collaborative and consistent working relationship and approach to crafting public policies that directly affects our core issues, and a mutual understanding that there are no perfect politicians but having a rigorous accountability structure that reflects our values is the priority. Also we are committed to passing public policy as a component of that accountability.
- **Develop thorough nonpartisan election strategies** including ambitious nonpartisan get out the vote door-knocking goals of over 75,000 attempted contacts on doors annually by our third year, impactful candidate forums with hundreds of attendees in all of our geographies, and creating our own authentic, sustainable, liberation-oriented canvass model.
- **Mobilize our base** during election season to play an active role in platform development, nonpartisan election field organizing, and using elections as an opportunity to build our membership by recruiting at least 5% of the people we speak with on our nonpartisan get out the vote canvasses, and staying engaged in our organization for the long term after three years.
- **Focus on Local School Board Elections** democratically elected school boards play a critical role in creating equity in public education and school board elections provide an opportunity to engage on our issues and push the conversation in what educational equity looks like.

“

I think that Step Up has made a tremendous impact in local and state government in getting our issues out.

**REV WILLIE L. CALHOUN, JR.**

“

Establish a working relationship that is constant with elected officials—not once a year.

**KIRK GREEN**

# Campaigns

There were many calls during the strategic visioning sessions about unity. How do we balance our focus between local and state activity? How can we harness the power of the full breadth of the organization in our campaigns? The idea of a shared campaign as a point of unity in addition to our nonpartisan civic engagement work, communications, and shared values was informed by the strategic visioning sessions. Also, there was a realization that with a very conservative state legislature we have to be strategic about what a “win” looks like on the state level and be specific about how we campaign there.

**Over the next three years in order to win improvements in the material conditions of people’s lives Step Up will:**

- **Campaign on a common target** that opposes both our education and economic justice agenda through political education in our base as well as externally exposing that target, and co-creating actions that move our education and economic justice priorities forward. By target we mean an individual, for example a corporate CEO, elected official, or charter school board chair, who has the power to make the change we want to see in our community.
- **Campaign on the local level** and win public policy that enhances rights, access and voice of workers, parents, people of color, and women. Organizers will be responsible for coordinating municipal and parish level campaigns.
- **Campaign on the state level** through impactful testimony, disruption, media attention, low-risk direct action that complements our nonpartisan civic engagement program and changes the narrative and paradigm for our issues.
- **Coalition work** is a critical part of how we run our campaigns. We must continue to balance our own internal base building and building out our set of external relationships both with our consistent partners in the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice, Education Justice community, the Labor Movement, and with new partners on specific campaigns.
- **Statement win** on a campaign that will have reverberations throughout our communities in Louisiana and the country. Something that cements our organization as an undeniable part of communal society here.

“

The organization has a tight focus. We know that we are fighting for good jobs and good schools. That is well-known by people inside and outside of the organization. We know what we do, and those issues are broad enough to bring a lot of people in.

**JULIEN BURNS**

# How To Get There

This strategic vision can be realized if we bring people and resources together, develop our internal capacity through various forms of training, fundraising efforts, hiring staff, supporting one another, having courage, and shining on one another. These goals will not be easy but building Step Up Louisiana and supporting our community is critical.





## Year 1: Hit The Ground Running

- Organization wide membership assembly, member-organizer trainings, membership drive
- Monthly nonpartisan political education training
- Hire capacity building development, communications, and administrative staff
- Quarterly new member orientation
- Expand New Orleans office
- Open Baton Rouge office
- Continue door to door nonpartisan election GOTV program with 50,000 attempts
- Test phone & text follow-up plan post-election
- Engaging our issues and pushing the conversation in 2021 local elections with a focus on New Orleans Mayor and Council
- State level campaigns during April session for Fair Chance Hiring, Minimum Wage, Expanded Unemployment
- New Orleans local campaigns for local democracy for education, holding charter schools accountable, and demanding a universal academic calendar
- Lay the coalition and relationship building ground work to launch in Jefferson Parish in year 2 and hire Jefferson Parish Organizer
- Hospitality worker organizing, Dollar Store worker, customer organizing, and mobilization campaign
- 1000 new members, 100 new dues-paying members, 100 new member-leaders, 15 self-identifying and trained member-organizers goal



## Year 2: Scale and Depth

- Launch member-organizer leadership development training program
- open Jefferson Parish office, and launch Jefferson Parish chapter
- Design common target campaign
- Focus on Jefferson Parish and Baton Rouge School Board elections (2022)
- 60,000 canvass attempts including prioritizing Jefferson Parish and East Baton Rouge Parish elections for our nonpartisan get out the vote work
- Continue state policy and local policy campaigning
- Host statewide policy/organizing conference
- Goal is to have 1500 new members, 150 new dues-paying members, 100 new member-leaders, 25 new self-identifying and trained member-organizers



## Year 3: Kick In The Door

- Launch year-round organization-wide sustainability canvass
- Major escalation in the Dollar Store worker organizing campaign
- Host Southern Regional organizing conference and workshop for advanced organizing skills and political education
- 75,000 election canvass attempts for our nonpartisan get out the vote work
- Robust communications campaign to sufficiently spread awareness about our issues that have statewide relevance
- Focus on raising out issues and getting out the vote in state legislative elections and Parish President and Council in Jefferson Parish
- Goal is to have 2500 new members, 350 new dues-paying members, 100 new member-leaders, 25 new self-identifying and trained member-organizers
- Major compression points on common target campaign

# Training

Quarterly Orientations for new members will give the ideological backing and organizing skills and organizational historical perspective to help new members hit the ground running on our programs and campaigns. In addition to the quarterly orientations rolling training within chapters and committee meeting structures, at training we put on ourselves, and at training put together by other organizations separate from those meetings our staff and members will deepen their capacity.

## ISSUE AREA POLITICAL EDUCATION

- White anti-racist organizing series (for white members)
- Parent Union Workshops and Teach-ins
- Historical periods and movements
- Post slavery through reconstruction
- Civil rights movement
- Progression of public education
- Labor rights movement (Looking at trajectory of labor organizing and where it first started in Louisiana)
- Political education about specific issues like universal basic income and workplace discrimination
- Poverty in general and in relation to power structure and race and education

## ORGANIZING TRAINING

- Economic Justice 3-point-platform
- Storytelling / Public Speaking
- Power Analysis
- Organizing 101
- Issue-based campaign strategy development
- Organizing from a racial justice perspective - power mapping and power analysis along the context of race and class
- Facilitation
- Outreach and one-on-one
- Power mapping

## ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

- General Orientation for new-comers that includes a primer on the Parent Union and Economic Justice Committee
- What district are you in
- Voter registration
- Who are your representatives and what are the things that representatives control
- Know Your Right regarding health and safety, worker's rights, know your rights for parents, voting rights

# Systems Of Support, Power, And Structure

Our collective resources of the organization are squarely focused on building nonpartisan people power to win systemic change for economic and education justice. In order to build that power and make that impact we need to support, develop, and build our base. The focus areas below are ongoing capacities that Step Up will strive for so we can achieve our aims.

## SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

- Healing circles for BIPOC members
- Anti-racist circles for white members
- Holistic self-care sessions
- Hot, delicious, nutritious meals at membership meetings

## SPACE

- Office space in New Orleans
- Office space in Baton Rouge
- Office space in Jefferson Parish
- Meeting space in Lafayette, Lake Charles, and Shreveport

## RESEARCH

- Parent Union Research committee
- EJC Research committee (as needed)
- Organization wide research capacity for report writing and platform drafting
- Good jobs good schools report

## ORGANIZING

- Onramps for new members
- Models
- Membership meeting consistency
- Structure
- Flexibility
- Leadership Development Cookbook

## COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLICITY

- Communications systems like newsletters, text, email, and phone programs
- Press and storytelling narrative strategies
- Digital social media structure
- Membership materials

# Conclusion & Gratitude

By putting out this ambitious vision we hope that our members, supporters, partner organizations, staff, and allies will have a clearer understanding of where we want to go and how to get there. We wanted to express our deep thanks to our partners, elders, members, and local advisory committee who helped shape this vision and goals. Specifically Oona Chatterjee, Ashley Shelton, Jitu Brown, Naima Savage, Rev Willie Calhoun, Julien Burns, Harold John, Corhanda Corley, Beth Jones, Gisele Harleson, Sheena Brown and many many others. We believe that we will win!



# Budgets

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## 2019

445,128 C3

## 2020

542,344.87 C3

- Add accountant and lawyer on retainer, end fiscal sponsorship
- Add COVID-response hospitality worker organizer

## 2021

750,000 C3

- Add development staff
- Add part-time BR sustainable community schools organizer
- Add administrative staff
- Add communications staff
- Add Dollar Store Worker organizer
- Open Baton Rouge office
- Add Jefferson Parish organizer

## 2022

850,000 C3

- Open Jefferson Parish office
- Add year round 4-person sustainability canvasser including I as lead canvasser shared by New Orleans and Jefferson Parish
- Bump BR sustainable community schools organizer to full time

## 2023

900,000

- Add 2nd year round 4 person canvasser in Baton Rouge
-