

THE 20-POINT BLACK MEN AND BOYS POLICY AGENDA

A Social Democratic Framework for Economic Justice, Civil Rights, Family Stability,
Education, Health, Cultural Preservation, and Reparative Justice

**PROPOSED FOR CONSIDERATION BY
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS OF AMERICA**

Discussion Draft | August 2026

**Respectfully Submitted by
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Proposal for Consideration

To the Leadership and Membership of Social Democrats of America, and to Elected Officials, Candidates, Public Agencies, and Community Leaders:

We propose the adoption and continued development of a 20-Point Black Men and Boys Policy Agenda, a comprehensive political program designed to directly confront the economic, educational, legal, health, family, cultural, and institutional challenges facing Black men and boys in the United States.

This proposal begins from a straightforward principle: a social democratic politics committed to equality must be willing to identify populations experiencing distinct disadvantages, measure those disadvantages accurately, and design public policy capable of addressing them. Black men and boys should not disappear inside broad racial, economic, or gender categories when the evidence demonstrates that their outcomes sometimes differ significantly from the averages of those larger groups.

The proposal is substantially informed by Dr. T. Hasan Johnson and the community surrounding The Onyx Report, whose current 19-Point Black Male Political Agenda describes itself as a living document developed to advance specific policies affecting Black males across class, age, geography, occupation, sexuality, and other differences. The first 19 subject areas below adapt and build upon that framework while translating the themes into a broader social democratic policy program. The language and recommendations here are our proposed formulation and are not a verbatim reproduction of Dr. Johnson's agenda.

The proposal is also informed by Dr. Wes Bellamy's July 2026 research brief, The Economic State of Black Men and Boys in the United States, published by the John Mercer Langston Institute for African American Political Leadership at Virginia State University in conjunction with the Virginia Alliance for Black Men and Boys. Bellamy's report argues for data disaggregation and an annual scorecard approach so that deteriorating outcomes among Black males are not obscured by broader averages.

Our objective should therefore be larger than a one-time platform. We propose that this agenda become a living, annually reviewed political program with measurable goals, public data, legislative priorities, and an annual assessment of progress.

The 20 Points at a Glance

- 1 Family Court Reform
- 2 Education and the Development of Black Boys
- 3 Affirmative Action and Targeted Opportunity for Black Men
- 4 Targeted Homelessness and Housing Programs
- 5 Targeted Employment and Economic Security Programs
- 6 Criminal Law Reform and Law-Enforcement Accountability
- 7 Intimate Partner Violence and Homicide Policy Reform
- 8 Black Male Health and Life Expectancy Initiative
- 9 Targeted Small-Business, Cooperative, and Wealth-Building Support

- 10 Social Security, Life Insurance, and Intergenerational Family Security
- 11 Paid Paternity and Family Leave
- 12 Reverse Voter Disenfranchisement and Expand Civic Participation
- 13 Reparations With Specific Recognition of Black Male Harms
- 14 International Human Rights Review of the Treatment of Black Men and Boys
- 15 Title VII and Intersectional Civil-Rights Reform
- 16 Mandatory Data Disaggregation for Black Men and Boys
- 17 Black Men's Equal Rights to Lawful Self-Defense and Personal Security
- 18 False Accusations, Wrongful Allegations, and Due-Process Reform
- 19 GI Bill Reparations for Black Veterans and Their Descendants
- 20 War on Drugs Reparations, Record Repair, and Equity in Legalized and Emerging Drug Markets

The 20-Point Agenda

1. Family Court Reform

Family policy should promote the meaningful participation of responsible fathers while protecting the safety and best interests of children. States should review presumptions of shared parenting where appropriate, ensure reliable paternity establishment and due process, reform child-support formulas so actual ability to pay is considered, and end counterproductive punishments for poverty that can make employment and parenting more difficult. Child-support enforcement should distinguish deliberate evasion from genuine economic hardship, and struggling parents should be connected to employment, apprenticeship, and income-support programs. Family courts should publish race-and-gender outcome data so policymakers can identify inequities affecting Black fathers and families.

2. Education and the Development of Black Boys

A national strategy for Black boys should begin with literacy, academic achievement, and educational belonging. Public investment should support early reading intervention, high-dosage tutoring, mentorship, recruitment of Black male teachers, STEM education, career and technical education, financial literacy, apprenticeships, and stronger pathways into HBCUs and other institutions of higher education. Schools should teach African American history with intellectual seriousness and preserve the distinctive history and culture of Foundational Black Americans, including the history created through slavery, Reconstruction, emancipation, Jim Crow, the Great Migration, Black labor, Black political movements, Black music, Black religious institutions, entrepreneurship, and the continuing freedom struggle.

3. Affirmative Action and Targeted Opportunity for Black Men

Government should recognize that Black men can experience disadvantage at the intersection of race and sex. Consistent with applicable constitutional and statutory requirements, public institutions should develop targeted outreach, recruitment, training, apprenticeship, contracting, and employment strategies designed to address documented Black male underrepresentation. Priority sectors should include government service, health care, teaching, infrastructure, skilled trades, technology, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and other fields capable of providing stable careers, benefits, and retirement security. Success should be measured through hiring, wages, promotion, retention, and leadership outcomes.

4. Targeted Homelessness and Housing Programs

Black male homelessness should be treated as a specific housing-policy concern, especially among young men aging out of systems, veterans, fathers separated from households, people returning from incarceration, and men experiencing long-term unemployment. Governments should expand supportive housing, rapid rehousing, rental assistance, transitional housing, and pathways into permanent housing while reducing unnecessary barriers associated with criminal records and prior instability. Housing agencies should measure outcomes by race and sex and identify where Black men are disproportionately denied assistance, lose vouchers, or fall out of existing systems.

5. Targeted Employment and Economic Security Programs

Persistent Black male unemployment and labor-force disconnection require direct intervention. A serious social democratic response should include subsidized employment, public-sector jobs, union apprenticeships, wage subsidies, vocational education, transportation assistance, credential programs, and targeted recruitment into sectors with strong demand. Particular attention should be given to Black men without four-year degrees and those experiencing long-term unemployment. Economic policy should evaluate success not simply by national unemployment rates but by whether Black men obtain stable employment, wage growth, benefits, pensions, and real economic mobility.

6. Criminal Law Reform and Law-Enforcement Accountability

The United States should confront the historic and continuing relationship between Black men and the criminal justice system through sentencing reform, policing reform, juvenile-justice reform, and stronger civil-rights enforcement. Priorities should include eliminating unjustified sentencing disparities, reviewing mandatory minimums, expanding alternatives to incarceration, strengthening wrongful-conviction review, improving police accountability, preventing discriminatory stop-and-search practices, ensuring representative juries, and creating effective reentry programs. Black boys should not be prematurely routed from schools into the justice system, and similarly situated defendants should receive equal treatment regardless of race, sex, income, or geography.

7. Intimate Partner Violence and Homicide Policy Reform

Domestic and intimate-partner violence policy must recognize victims regardless of sex. Male victims, including Black male victims, should have meaningful access to crisis services, mental-health resources, legal assistance, shelters or safe housing, and law-enforcement protection. Government data should separately measure male victimization, intimate-partner homicide, sexual violence, and help-seeking behavior. Recognizing male victims does not diminish violence against women. A credible public-health and public-safety framework should be capable of recognizing every victim accurately and designing services around demonstrated need.

8. Black Male Health and Life Expectancy Initiative

Federal, state, and local governments should establish a coordinated Black Men's Health Initiative addressing cardiovascular disease, cancer, HIV, suicide, mental health, substance-use disorders, preventable death, and barriers to routine preventive care. Services should include community-based screenings, mental-health access, suicide prevention, nutrition and exercise support, sexual-health services, and outreach through trusted community institutions. Health systems should publish race-by-sex outcome data and establish measurable goals for reducing preventable mortality and increasing healthy life expectancy among Black men.

9. Targeted Small-Business, Cooperative, and Wealth-Building Support

Black male entrepreneurs should have meaningful access to capital, public contracts, technical assistance, commercial space, and emerging industries. Policies should include low-interest public financing, loan guarantees, procurement opportunities, support for worker cooperatives, business incubators, technical training, and pathways from sole proprietorship to scalable enterprise. Particular attention should be given to entrepreneurs from communities historically excluded from credit and public contracting. Economic development should also preserve longstanding Black commercial corridors, cultural institutions, and neighborhood businesses that form part of the living heritage of Foundational Black American communities.

10. Social Security, Life Insurance, and Intergenerational Family Security

Social policy should strengthen Black men's ability to create and transfer economic security to their children, spouses, families, and chosen beneficiaries. Policymakers should review Social Security survivor protections, life-insurance accessibility, retirement savings, pension coverage, and estate planning through the lens of racial and gender wealth disparities. Public financial education should include life insurance, retirement accounts, wills, trusts, homeownership, beneficiary designation, and intergenerational wealth transfer so that Black men's economic contributions can continue benefiting their families after death.

11. Paid Paternity and Family Leave

The United States should guarantee meaningful paid family leave for fathers as well as mothers. Fathers should not be forced to choose between maintaining employment and being present during childbirth,

infancy, adoption, medical emergencies, or critical periods of family development. A national paid-leave program should explicitly encourage paternal participation rather than treating fathers as secondary caregivers. Strong father-child relationships are simultaneously a family policy, labor policy, child-development policy, and economic-stability policy.

12. Reverse Voter Disenfranchisement and Expand Civic Participation

Voting should be treated as a fundamental right of citizenship. The loss of political rights because of a criminal conviction has had particularly significant consequences for populations disproportionately subjected to incarceration, including Black men. Voting rights should be automatically restored after incarceration, and states should review broader barriers that permanently sever citizens from democratic participation. Civic-reengagement initiatives should also encourage voter registration, public service, jury participation, community-board service, candidate development, and leadership training among Black men and boys.

13. Reparations With Specific Recognition of Black Male Harms

The national reparations debate should recognize both the collective injuries inflicted upon descendants of American slavery and specific harms that operated differently across sex. Reparative policy for Foundational Black Americans should address slavery, exclusion from property and wealth accumulation, racial terror, convict leasing, employment discrimination, discriminatory federal programs, segregation, housing discrimination, and other state-sanctioned harms. Within that larger framework, Black-male-specific remedies should consider lynching, forced labor, disproportionate criminalization and sentencing, exclusion from occupations, and other harms that particularly affected Black men. Remedies could include direct compensation, baby bonds, housing and education benefits, business capital, debt relief, and other wealth-building programs.

14. International Human Rights Review of the Treatment of Black Men and Boys

Following the international-human-rights orientation proposed in Johnson's agenda, the United States should permit serious examination of historic and contemporary state actions affecting Black men and boys under recognized human-rights standards. Such review could address racial terror, lynching, forced labor, convict leasing, discriminatory policing, wrongful conviction, incarceration, and other state-supported or state-tolerated harms. The review should be evidence-based and should not prejudge a particular legal conclusion. Its purpose should be transparent investigation, historical accountability, and consideration of remedies under domestic and international human-rights principles.

15. Title VII and Intersectional Civil-Rights Reform

Civil-rights enforcement should better recognize discrimination that occurs because a person is simultaneously Black and male. A Black man alleging discrimination should not be forced into an artificial choice between proving discrimination solely as a Black person or solely as a man when the alleged conduct operates at the intersection of both characteristics. Federal and state agencies should improve data collection, enforcement guidance, legal analysis, and remedies for intersectional discrimination in hiring, pay, promotion, discipline, termination, contracting, and workplace access.

16. Mandatory Data Disaggregation for Black Men and Boys

This principle should become the statistical foundation of the entire agenda. Federal, state, and local agencies receiving public funds should, wherever statistically reliable and privacy-protective, publish major education, employment, income, health, housing, criminal-justice, and public-benefit outcomes by race and sex together rather than relying only on race-wide or sex-wide averages. Bellamy's 2026 research brief makes the case that aggregate figures can obscure problems specific to Black men and boys. What is not measured cannot be properly governed. Data disaggregation should therefore be treated as a basic instrument of democratic accountability.

17. Black Men's Equal Rights to Lawful Self-Defense and Personal Security

Black men should receive the same presumption of humanity, vulnerability, and right to personal safety afforded to every citizen. Policymakers should examine racial disparities in self-defense claims, charging decisions, and the application of use-of-force laws. Lawful firearm ownership, where permitted, should be accompanied by responsible safety education and training, while public policy should simultaneously invest in violence prevention, conflict mediation, trauma services, and community safety. A Black man exercising lawful self-defense should not receive less legal protection because of racial stereotypes.

18. False Accusations, Wrongful Allegations, and Due-Process Reform

Knowingly fabricated serious allegations can destroy employment, family relationships, reputation, and liberty, while false-accusation policy must also avoid deterring genuine victims from reporting crimes. Johnson's agenda proposes a False Accusation Offender Registry. A social democratic approach should subject any such proposal to constitutional, evidentiary, and due-process review and limit consequences to intentional fabrication established through appropriate legal process. At minimum, states should strengthen remedies for deliberate false reporting, protect the rights of the accused and genuine victims, and provide compensation, record correction, and reintegration assistance when wrongful convictions or official errors are formally established.

19. GI Bill Reparations for Black Veterans and Their Descendants

The federal government should examine reparative remedies for Black veterans who served the United States but were prevented from receiving the full wealth-building opportunities associated with veterans' benefits because of racial discrimination in housing, education, lending, and local administration. Remedies should consider surviving veterans and, where supported by evidence and law, descendants when benefits denied to one generation produced measurable intergenerational losses. Potential programs could include housing assistance, education benefits, homeownership support, business capital, and other wealth-building mechanisms.

20. War on Drugs Reparations, Record Repair, and Equity in Legalized and Emerging Drug Markets

The movement away from prohibition in a growing number of jurisdictions must be accompanied by repair for communities that carried the burden of criminalization. Black Americans, and Black men in particular in many jurisdictions, experienced severe consequences from drug enforcement, incarceration, criminal records, exclusion from employment and housing, and family disruption. As cannabis has moved into regulated medical and adult-use markets, public policy should prevent a system in which people punished under prohibition remain excluded while others accumulate wealth from conduct that is now legal or tolerated. A War on Drugs reparative-justice program should include automatic expungement or sealing of eligible records, resentencing review where penalties have been reduced, restoration of civil and economic opportunities, removal of unnecessary licensing barriers, and community reinvestment. Legal-market equity should include grants, low-interest capital, licensing assistance, workforce development, and business incubation for people and communities disproportionately harmed by enforcement. The same equity principle should guide emerging psychedelic and therapeutic markets, including policy changes involving psilocybin and regulated medical treatments such as ketamine: government should not repeat a cycle in which one population is criminalized while a later and wealthier market captures the economic upside. Public-health safeguards, rigorous medical standards, harm reduction, and treatment should remain central throughout.

Why This Agenda Is Necessary

Dr. Wes Bellamy's 2026 research brief provides a useful empirical snapshot of the urgency. It estimates approximately 22.7 million Black men and boys in the United States. Its eight-number summary reports,

among other indicators, that Black men represented about 26 percent of total HBCU enrollment in 2022, down from about 38 percent in 1976; that Black men's employment-to-population ratio declined 1.7 percentage points from the first quarter of 2025 to the first quarter of 2026; that median weekly earnings for Black men working full time were \$1,039 in the report's cited 2025 earnings data; and that about 30 percent of unemployed Black men in a cited May 2026 analysis had been out of work for at least 27 weeks.

Bellamy's report is careful about what those figures do and do not measure. Some indicators are specific to Black men, while others describe Black people of all genders or households with a Black householder. The report is a policy research brief rather than a new nationally representative survey. It synthesizes federal data and published analyses, together with community engagement, and proposes an annual scorecard approach to measure progress.

That methodological discipline should inform this agenda. Black men and boys should be visible in public data without turning policy into a competition with Black women or other communities. The point is to identify where specific outcomes are deteriorating, determine the strongest evidence for intervention, and hold institutions accountable for measurable improvement.

An Annual Black Men and Boys Policy Scorecard

Social Democrats of America should establish an Annual State of Black Men and Boys Policy Scorecard evaluating progress across these 20 points. Each year, the organization should review measurable indicators involving literacy, educational attainment, college enrollment and completion, labor-force participation, wages, wealth, business ownership, homeownership, homelessness, health and life expectancy, incarceration and sentencing, fatherhood and family stability, voter participation, and representation in public institutions.

The 20-Point Agenda should remain a living document. Policies that work should be expanded. Policies that fail should be redesigned. New evidence should produce new recommendations. Black men and boys themselves should participate directly in the annual review through community hearings, surveys, research partnerships, listening sessions, and public forums.

Preserving Foundational Black American Culture

Economic advancement alone is insufficient if the historic communities, institutions, and culture that produced generations of Black American life disappear in the process. Public policy should recognize preservation of Foundational Black American cultural heritage as a legitimate component of community development.

This includes historic neighborhoods, Black-owned businesses, churches and religious institutions, HBCUs, Black newspapers and media, music traditions, archives, social clubs, civic organizations, barbershops, cultural gathering spaces, historic sites, oral histories, and the political and artistic traditions developed by descendants of enslaved Americans and their communities. Preservation should not freeze culture in the past. It should ensure that development, displacement, technological change, and economic inequality do not erase institutions and traditions that took generations to build. Recognition of this particular American lineage can coexist with political solidarity across African, Caribbean, immigrant, and other Black communities.

A Social Democratic Principle

This proposal should not be understood as a competition between Black men and Black women, nor as an argument against universal social programs. We support strong universal institutions, including accessible health care, quality public education, labor rights, housing, family benefits, Social Security, public infrastructure, and a robust economic safety net.

But universalism works best when policymakers are also willing to examine who is still falling through the universal system. A social democratic program can be universal in its guarantees and targeted in its remedies. Black men's disadvantages in particular areas should be addressed because those disadvantages matter in their own right, and because improving the lives of Black men and boys can strengthen children, families, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and the country as a whole.

Proposed Action by Social Democrats of America

- Adopt the 20-Point Black Men and Boys Policy Agenda as an official discussion and policy-development paper for the next election cycle.
- Establish a working group of researchers, Black men and boys, community organizations, attorneys, educators, health professionals, labor leaders, economists, veterans, formerly incarcerated people, fathers, and affected families to refine each proposal.
- Invite Dr. T. Hasan Johnson, Dr. Wes Bellamy, and other scholars and practitioners working on Black male policy to participate in public discussions and policy forums.
- Identify municipal, state, and federal legislation, budget provisions, administrative actions, and agency rules capable of implementing individual points.
- Request written responses from candidates and elected officials regarding the agenda and publish those responses for members and voters.
- Publish an updated version and evidence-based scorecard each year so the agenda develops with new data, legislation, and community input.

The fundamental proposition is simple: Black men and boys deserve to be visible in our data, present in our policymaking, protected by our institutions, invested in by our economy, connected to their families and communities, and empowered to participate fully in the democratic, economic, and cultural life of the United States.

A politics of solidarity should be capable of saying that clearly. A politics of equality should be capable of acting on it. And a serious social democratic movement should be willing to measure whether we succeed.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Selected Sources and Intellectual Foundations

1. T. Hasan Johnson, Ph.D., and contributors to The Onyx Report, “The 19-Point Black Male Political Agenda.” The current agenda describes itself as a living document and lists 19 policy areas including family court reform, education, employment, criminal-law reform, health, reparations, data disaggregation, and GI Bill reparations. <https://newblackmasculinities.wordpress.com/>
2. Wes Bellamy, Ph.D., The Economic State of Black Men and Boys in the United States, July 2026 Research Brief, John Mercer Langston Institute for African American Political Leadership, Virginia State University, in conjunction with the Virginia Alliance for Black Men and Boys. <https://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/history/economic-state-of-black-men-and-boys.pdf>
3. U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, research and statistical publications concerning racial disparities in drug arrests and criminal-justice outcomes. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/>
4. Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act (MORE Act), federal legislative proposals addressing cannabis decriminalization, expungement, community reinvestment, and equitable participation in legal markets. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/5068>
5. National Conference of State Legislatures, state cannabis legislation and policy tracking. <https://www.ncsl.org/health/state-cannabis-legislation-database>

Research note: This document is a policy proposal and synthesis. It adapts themes from Johnson's agenda, incorporates evidence and methodological principles from Bellamy's research brief, and adds an original twentieth point on War on Drugs reparative justice and equity in legal and emerging drug markets. Specific legislative language should be developed with counsel and updated against current federal, state, and local law before formal introduction.