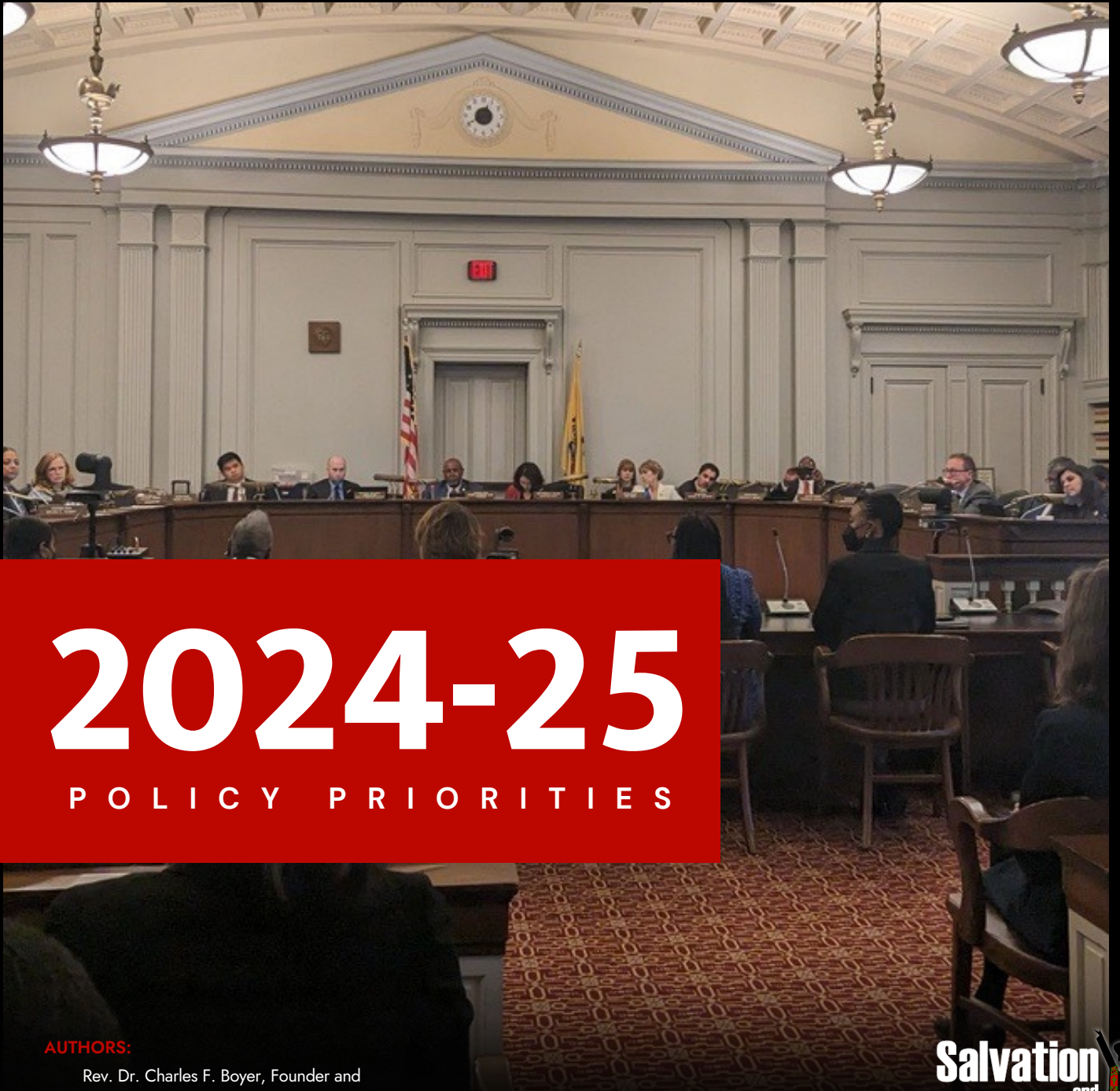


F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 4

POLICY AGENDA



2024-25

P O L I C Y P R I O R I T I E S

AUTHORS:

Rev. Dr. Charles F. Boyer, Founder and
Executive Director

Racquel Romans-Henry, Policy Director

E: racquel@sandsj.org | P: (609) 300-7826

**Salvation
and
Social Justice**
Liberating Public Policy Theologically



TRENTON PEACE ZONE

ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

THIS NEIGHBORHOOD IS A DESIGNATED PEACE ZONE.
ITS RESIDENTS ARE COMMITTED TO CREATING A
HEALTHY AND PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT
WHERE ALL CAN FLOURISH.

6 RULES

1. THINK BEFORE YOU ACT.
2. BE RESPECTFUL, COURTEOUS, & CONSIDERATE.
3. SPEAK UP FOR CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY, & EACH OTHER.
4. IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.
5. REFRAIN FROM CURSING, FIGHTING, & HARMING EACH OTHER.
6. ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT.

OR HELP, CALL THE
TRENTON RESTORATIVE STREET TEAM AT:
909-37-BLACK



Social Justice



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Testimony to Truth

Rooted in Black Faith and Liberation Theology, voice is given as testimony to the impact of systemic racism by those most impacted. This witness is not performative pain, but a truth-telling moving toward liberation.

Equity and Transformation

As organizing gathers force and the community begins to see evil structures crumble and changes begin to advance, we also bear witness to Black joy, discipleship, and calling. In this context, individuals are healed (saved) by the power of community, by evolved community.

Community As Wellness

Those most impacted identify evil and injustice as communities help shape the prophetic demands for just public policy.

LAMENT

PROPHETIC
OUTCRY

THEORY OF
CHANGE

LIBERATION

RITUALS OF
RESISTANCE

SALVATION

Organize, Organize, Organize

The Prophetic Outcry is given strategy and tactics to directly target the systems producing pain. Healing is the complete transformation of the system, as well as the realization of the prophethood or power of the people.

Healing By Community

While never complete, we bear witness to the signs of kin-dom as just policies are established and systems are transformed. We see the Prophetic Outcry now as visionary.

02

INTRODUCTION

MISSION STATEMENT

Salvation and Social Justice seeks to liberate public policy theologically by modeling the hope and resiliency of Black faith; where historically marginalized people move from lament to liberation by envisioning and creating their own community led solutions to a structurally racist society.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

New Jersey continues to lead with some of the highest racial disparities in the country. In New Jersey, Black residents are incarcerated at a rate of 12.5 times that of white residents. Black people make up just 15% of the population in the state yet they represent 43% of the arrests for drug violations despite the fact that there is no evidence that Blacks use drugs at a higher rate than whites. New Jersey has the fourth highest maternal mortality rate in the nation with Black women being 7 times more likely than white women to die before or after they have given birth, and Black babies, 3 times more likely to die than white babies before reaching their first birthday. New Jersey's schools are the 6th most segregated in the nation and the most segregated in the North, adversely affecting scores of Black children subjecting them to disparate conditions such as overcrowding, insufficiently staffed schools, and limited access to resources and opportunities.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is one in which New Jersey not only becomes a more just and equitable state by acknowledging, addressing, and repairing racist structures that continue to harm Black communities, but that New Jersey will lead in the quest for reparative justice throughout the nation.

Our priorities, shaped by those most impacted by harmful policies in our state, seek to heal communities through the creation of a more equitable and just New Jersey.

STOP

CIRCLE TIME

#RESTORATIVEJUSTICE

#PROMOTINGPEACE



Salvation
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Social Justice
Liberating Public Policy Theologically

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES

RETURN & RESTORE

CODIFYING THE NEW JERSEY ATTORNEY GENERAL'S USE OF FORCE DIRECTIVE

In December 2020, Attorney General Grewel released a new statewide use of force policy. If codified it would significantly strengthen protections against police use of force for people in this state beyond any administration. Codifying the Attorney General's Use of Force policy would also make New Jersey a national leader, with some of the strongest statutory prohibitions and guidance on use of force in the country (S2348).



DECRIMINALIZE BLACK BODIES

Draconian drug laws, especially those in New Jersey, have been at the helm of the over policing, disparate arrests, prosecution, incarceration, and disenfranchisement of Black communities.

We call to decriminalize the use and possession of personal use amounts of all drugs. We call to have punitive drug laws abolished, and in its place, we support policy that approaches drug use from a harm reduction and restorative justice framework and prioritizes reinvestment into communities most harmed.

SECOND LOOK LEGISLATION

We encourage legislators to adopt policy that: ends life imprisonment; ends mandatory minimums; and expands the clemency and pardoning processes for those subjected to disproportionate application of the law. We support policy that is grounded in science about public safety and recidivism and recognizes the humanity of all people (S2338).

05

COMMUNITY-LED FIRST RESPONSE

In 2024, our efforts resulted in the successful signing of S4250/A5326, the Seabrooks-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act, which establishes community-led crisis response teams as an alternative to police for nonviolent, substance use, mental and behavioral health calls. S4250/A5326 also creates an Advisory Council tasked with assessing and establishing best practices for the success of these teams as a vital component in violence interruption and the holistic health of our communities. We will work to ensure that the implementation upholds the integrity of this legislation as well as those who commit to this invaluable work.

POLICE DECERTIFICATION

In 2022, we alongside several of our partners, were successful in getting police licensure legislation passed in New Jersey. Up until now, New Jersey was but one of four states in the nation that did not have a police decertification process. While we support the passing of this legislation as a step in the right direction, we also acknowledge that there are several areas in which statute falls short of best practices. It is for this reason that we continue to work to establish regulations that would ensure that its implementation aligns with the intention behind the legislation.

RACIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

In 2018, the legislature passed S677, which requires that the Office of Legislative Services prepare racial impact statements for policy changes that affect pretrial detention, sentencing and parole. To date, there has only been one racial impact statement written as it pertains to decriminalization of cannabis. We are calling for the establishment of the Ronald Rice Institute for Racial Impact, a separate agency secured with the personnel and professional expertise required to ascertain and analyze statistical information that is critical to understanding the effects of legislation on certain socioeconomic and racial demographics as required by law.

CLEAN SLATE EXPUNGEMENT

In 2019, the legislature passed S4154, which created a petition process for “clean slate” expungement for certain New Jersey residents who had not committed an offense in 10 years. The clean slate legislation not only requires the implementation of an automatic expungement system, but it would establish a task force responsible for studying and monitoring the efficacy of this system and its functions. Despite being a huge step in the right direction and its potential to enfranchise thousands of returning citizens, the state has experienced significant stalls in the implementation of this legislation. We are engaging stakeholders and policy makers to examine and assess the current challenges as well as develop a community-led strategic action plan to advocate for the necessary improvements to the current expungement process.





TRENTON RESTORATIVE
STREET TEAM
BRINGING JUSTICE. PROMOTING PEACE.

TRENTON RESTORATIVE
STREET TEAM
BRINGING JUSTICE. PROMOTING PEACE.

GREATER MOTION
African American
TRENTO

TRENTON RESTORATIVE
STREET TEAM
BRINGING JUSTICE. PROMOTING PEACE.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE INITIATIVES

BUILD BACK BLACK

REINVESTMENT OF CANNABIS REVENUE

Ensure that cannabis revenue is reinvested in those communities most harmed by the war on drugs. We will continue advocacy efforts to the Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC), Governor, and the legislature to inform the ways in which revenue should be allocated to have the most impact in repairing Black communities. A significant portion of tax revenue from cannabis should be redirected towards restorative programs in impact zones, especially those that support equity and wealth building efforts. We advocate for a transparent and inclusive process that centers community voices during all stages of the reinvestment process. Reparative efforts must establish an industry framework that supports those disproportionately affected by past policies by providing startup capital, ensuring their participation in the reinvestment process, and prioritizing the applications of Black businesses.

INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The presence of comprehensive community programs that speak to particular needs in Black communities is integral to youth development and violence interruption efforts. We seek to funnel dollars allocated by the state's cannabis revenue to blighted properties owned by Black churches throughout the state in order to house and develop critical community programs such as restorative justice hubs.





INVESTMENTS IN YOUTH VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

New Jersey has had the worst racial disparities among incarcerated Black and white youth in the entire nation. In 2019, Salvation and Social Justice joined the 150 Years is Enough Campaign. Working alongside our partners, our efforts yielded the closure of two of the state's most notorious youth prisons, Jamesburg and Hayes, as well as the passing of legislation to invest more than \$8 million in youth restorative justice hubs. As a continuum of this fight, we are calling for the repurposing of old youth prisons in order to benefit the communities disproportionately affected by mass incarceration.

That begins with the reopening of Bordentown School, which had been historically recognized as the "Tuskegee of the North" and a pinnacle of Black excellence and achievement. We are calling for a space offering education, youth and economic development, workforce investment and, vocational training in coordination with the trade unions and recreational services.

09



ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY-LED BIRTHING SUPPORTS

We seek to address the erosion to access of maternity care by funding neighborhood maternal health centers and other community-led birthing supports in Black communities. For instance, the widespread closures of maternity care units in Trenton have only worked to amplify existing disparities in maternal health. The first step to addressing those disparities involves allocating dollars towards the rebuilding of these critical sources to health care.

GUARANTEED INCOME FOR PREGNANT BLACK MOTHERS

While we understand economic security does not guarantee favorable maternal health outcomes, we know that Black women continue to be excluded from many of the resources needed to have safe and healthy pregnancies. We encourage legislators to adopt a statewide guaranteed income pilot program that would provide pregnant, Black women with unconditional monthly stipends for a length of time intended to provide economic stability during this vulnerable and most critical time in their lives.

TARGETED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Historically, Black midwives have played a central role in the birthing of this nation. Specifically, within the Black community Black midwives have been critical players to ensuring quality care and outcomes within Black families throughout this nation. We begin to see Black women pushed out of the midwifery profession with the emergence of more maternity institutions and private obstetrics practices, with deeply rooted racist traditions embedded in the DNA of these institutions. We are encouraging legislators to adopt policy that establishes a pilot program that would commit to the recruitment and support of Black women in midwifery programs as a response to the maternal health disparities that exist in this state. This program should be intentional in its outreach to target communities, offer financial support to participants as they pursue their certification, and should provide small business training that would equip participants with the “know how” to return to their communities and establish the facilities and care that is required.

REINVESTMENT OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS

In March 2022, New Jersey announced that it would receive \$641 million from the \$26 billion federal opioid settlement against Johnson and Johnson and the three largest pharmaceutical distributors in the nation. While half of this money will go to the state, the other half is to be distributed throughout local governments in an effort to address the harm caused by the opioid epidemic. For years, SandSJ has worked with directly impacted communities to address the War on Drugs and the destructive effects of its punitive policies on Black communities. Our advocacy in this space is largely connected with the issue of reparative justice, which involves significant community investments to repair the harms committed. We at SandSJ encourage New Jersey to invest opioid settlement monies towards the following: violence interruption, harm reduction and restorative justice hubs; community led first response pilot programs in targeted cities throughout the state; and the funding of maternal health centers and support services in cities experiencing a birthing desert and have been disproportionately affected by the decades long war on drugs.

HEALTH EQUITY INITIATIVES

BLACK IN OUR HANDS

BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH

We call for policy that funds, preserves and protects authentic culturally congruent doula care by centering Black women in policy discussion and implementation. Currently, there is nowhere a Black woman can give birth in the city of Trenton, therefore, we advocate for a Trenton-based Black Maternal Health Center that includes pre and postnatal services as well as a birthing center.



UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

In 2022 we, alongside several of our partners, were successful in getting the “Cover All Kids” legislation passed, which provided universal health care coverage to all children in New Jersey. Moving forward we seek to ensure the successful implementation of this policy through adequate community education and outreach efforts. Additionally, we seek to expand coverage for adults who are now ineligible or unable to afford existing health care coverage options for a myriad of reasons.

QUALIFYING RACISM AS A HEALTH CRISIS

We encourage legislators to adopt policy that qualifies racism as a health crisis as well as supporting policy that: requires implicit bias training for doctors; establishes adequate and accessible preventative care in Black communities; and mandates racial impact statements for all health care policy.



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Salvation and Social Justice

TRENTON RESTORATIVE STREET TEAM
RESTORING JUSTICE. PROMOTING PEACE.

The Trenton Restorative Street Team (TRST) is a community-led movement with a vision to reduce violence through restorative justice practices, conflict resolution and promoting peace. After months of training and preparation and in partnership with city stakeholders, we are excited to announce our official launch to the community.

The Trenton Restorative Street Team will fulfill its vision by offering the following three services to the city: Violence Prevention/Intervention, Trauma Informed Victim Services, and Victim Empowerment Services. For more info, scan the code below or visit us at stajdj.org.



4 CCCC's



BLACK MINDS MATTER

DESEGREGATE NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS

We encourage legislators to adopt policy that eliminates zip code barriers and increases access to education across superficial district lines. We support policy that seeks to identify racial and socioeconomic segregation of school districts and ensures better integration into public schools by centering community voices in the process, highlighting recommendations reflective of those community voices, as well as providing transparent reporting of all findings.



ELIMINATE ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES IN NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS

We propose policy to restrict schools' ability to suspend or expel students in certain situations and mandate that they create alternative methods for discipline within a certain time period. We support the implementation of SBIRT in every school. Additionally, we support policy that seeks to examine current school discipline practices and addresses the way in which current policies perpetuate racial disparities that fuel the school to prison pipeline.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

THE BLACK BALLOT

STRENGTHENING AND PROTECTING ACCESS TO THE BALLOT

We encourage legislators to adopt The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New Jersey (NJVRA), which would offer significant protections to all New Jersey voters, but especially to Black voters and communities that have been historically marginalized. We support policy that bolsters democratic principles by eliminating barriers to voting and ensuring that the Black ballot is counted. (A904/S2352)

SOULS TO THE POLLS

We continue to walk in the decades long tradition of Souls to the Polls by which Black churches and faith organizations encourage congregants to exercise their fundamental right and duty to vote. Ours is a robust all year-round campaign to mobilize the Black ballot through community outreach and organizing, public education, voter registration, and on the ground election day support.





**A BLACK
PERSON
VOTED
TODAY**

#TheBlackBallot

🔍 www.sandsj.threadless.com ✕

MEET THE TEAM

STAFF

Rev. Dr. Charles F Boyer
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rosalee Boyer
DEVELOPMENTAL DIRECTOR

Gantry Fox
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Racquel Romans-Henry
POLICY DIRECTOR

Tuoyo Nanna
FINANCE DIRECTOR

Richelle Terese
DIGITAL MEDIA SPECIALIST

Jared Hunter
SENIOR ORGANIZER

Crystal Charley
SENIOR ORGANIZER

Fantaija Graves
RESTORATIVE HOUSING COORDINATOR

Austin Edwards, Esq.
SENIOR POLICY COUNSEL

Tony Hayes
NJ LEAD DIRECT SERVICES CASE MANAGER

Amber Scott
BLACK THEOLOGICAL FELLOW

Retha Onitiri
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE & PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT FELLOW

Rev. J. Amos Caley
PRISON ABOLITION FELLOW

TRENTON RESTORATIVE STREET TEAM

Antonio Bellamy
PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Keyion Jones
HIGH RISK INTERVENTIONIST

Diane Bellamy
HIGH RISK INTERVENTIONIST

Quason Pittman
OUTREACH WORKER

Pete Lewis
OUTREACH WORKER

Micheal Hilton
OUTREACH WORKER

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www.sandsj.org

(609) 37-BLACK

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