Black Land & Liberation Initiative

We will honor those we’ve lost by fighting for the world we can build together, the world we know is possible, the world we deserve, and the world we so desperately need.
On Juneteenth 2017 (Monday, June 19th), Black people across the country will be taking back land and reclaiming space, from vacant lots to empty school buildings. We are taking back land that should be used for the good of the people; land that has historically been denied access to Black people. Through these actions we will confront the institutions that have been built off the extracted wealth of Black bodies and Black land and the individuals who have profited from them.
Steps to Designing a Powerful Action

Why take action?

Everything we have ever won as black people in this country has been won through direct action. It has been won by organizing ourselves to meet our needs, assert our rights, exercise our freedoms and confront injustice. From Slave Rebellions to Civil Rights to the Movement for Black Lives, we have always taken direct action to advance our liberation.

What is BLLI?

The Black Land and Liberation Initiative is a vision, strategy and training program grounded in black liberation and anchored by black leadership. Our aim is to develop diverse and interdependent strategies that move us away from the current extractive economy which depends on the violent enclosure of land, labor, culture, power, wealth and spirit. We are asserting the fundamental right to the resources required to create our own productive, dignified and sustainable livelihoods through our own free labor and self-governance. Key among those resources is land. We will co-create strategies for transformation which are grounded in a long-term vision, guided in the resilience, culture, and creativity of our ancestry, rooted in our sovereignty, and which we can begin putting into place NOW.

The Black Land and Liberation Initiative is anchored by The BlackOut Collective and Movement Generation. We are working with diverse black organizers from across the country; we are co-creating this process and collectively putting out The Call to Reclaim for Juneteenth.
Why June 19th?

Juneteenth is our time to celebrate our formal emancipation from chattel slavery and to remind ourselves that we still ain’t free. It is a time to recognize all we have done for ourselves, all we have built for ourselves, all we have given the world and all of our resilience. At the same time, we remind ourselves that we must continue the fight for true reparations that includes both making amends for past harm and repairing our relations so that such harm doesn’t continue and never happens again.

Why Land?

Land is essential in the fight for self-determination and liberation for Black folks. The Call to Reclaim is an intervention to shift the national narrative to incorporate both reparations from a land-based lens as well as to make the connections between land and liberation for Black folks. We see Black folks collectively engaging in land reclamation with the goal of shifting our relationship to the land, engaging in healing while creating hubs for movement work to be housed, cultivated and birthed. We believe Black folks, in this moment, can call on our Maroon legacy to support the creation of Black safe spaces.
BUILD A TEAM

Who are you going to throw down with?
Identifying your needs
Identifying who in your community can fill those needs
Questions for your team
Questions for your community

DREAM

The world we deserve
What does it look, feel and sound like?
How do we translate that vision into action?
Decide what y’all want out of taking action—short and long term

GET READY

Target or Location
Tactic
Media, Messaging and Audience
Onsite Action Roles
Resources and Materials

GET IN FORMATION

Safety
Support Systems
While planning the action, how are you identifying who your squad is? The people who share the same ideology and the same vision around land and a **Just Transition** are the folks you want to throw down with. When organizing an action, it’s great to have folks lead on different elements so you can move quickly and hold a collective birds eye view. Below are some roles that can potentially help the action move smoothly.

**Coordination:** Lead/Action Coordinator, Media, Visuals, Outreach, Logistics, Safety, Legal

**Other planning roles:** Facilitators, Fundraisers, Researchers, Art, Writers

(More detail in “action roles section”)

**Questions for your team:** Making sure your squad is unified during the action is key. Make sure you are on the same page about possible scenarios so that when it’s time to lead and things are faster and more chaotic the day of, you’re able to move together quickly. Share the answers you come up with and ask these questions of people participating in the action, as appropriate.

**Ask:**
- What level of risk are we willing to take?
- What skills does your group have?
- How many people will participate?
- How much money and supplies do you have access to?
- What other resources do we have (including relationships)?
- What inspires us?
- What kind of support will each of us need in scenario a, b, c, etc. (including medical)?
Questions for your community: Understanding the needs and history of your community (especially recent and not so recent black history in your area) is important before taking action.

Ask:

• Who has been working on land-based work in our community already?
• How will this action support the that work your community is ready or nearly ready to engage in?
• What has police response looked like in past actions?
• How will a newly re-emboldened white supremacist front impact this?
• Who do you want to mobilize locally?
• How do we center blackness and black leadership in this action and in our organizing?
• How do we embody our politics in the planning and implementation of the action?
• What is the history of the indigenous peoples of the land you’re liberating?
• Does it make sense to reach out to the community of folks indigenous to the land we’re on?
• Do we have these relationships already?
• If not, how can we foster them?
• What is the history of colonization, the enclosure of land, and also the history of indigenous resistance?
After visioning, spend time thinking about your resources (including the wisdom and skills of your team and community) and revisit your goals/intentions laid out during your regional gatherings. Imagine what it will feel like and what you could build from it. Use visioning as a team to build on the strength and spirit with folks playing roles in the action.

**Showing power together:** No matter what you plan, your action is going to be a part of national kinship, inspiration and power shared between our people (and allies) across the country. This is also an opportunity to build power in your community and true power is in strong relationships and shared vision.

**Ask:**

- What do you hope the action will do for your community?
- What would a safe and proud Black community in your neighborhood look like?
- Can you imagine people in the action feeling empowered—what does that look like?
- How does the tactic being utilized build power for future organizing or help create a shared narrative/vision for your folks?
Target or Location: Remember that vision you developed for a liberated Black community, where can you envision liberated land that is in the commons for our community to use. Revisit the “questions for community” section and make sure your team knows how to be in integrity with the space—Who is standing in the way of liberation here? Who can serve as a symbol to help create a public dialog? Where is a good place that allows you to begin creating the liberated zones? Who is most impacted in this space and how can you lift up their leadership?

Examples: Empty lots, vacant school buildings, foreclosed homes, public land that is not being used for the good of the public.

Tactic/Holding Space: Have fun with this one. Inspire your team to dream big and deep. Find inspirations in history, dreams, superhero powers, magic, ancestors, movement ancestors, your family, your friends. How are you going to use the space?

Examples: Free schools for the babies, community gardens, housing for all, community centers for youth.
**Defense of the Space:** Whether you are taking land with the intention of winning control of it for the community forever or only for 24 hours, there still needs to be a level of defense and maintenance infrastructure.

**Ask:**
- Will you allow police to cross the fence line?
- Who in your crew will be frontline defense?
- How will they feed folks during the day/night?
- Will folks be spending the night?
- How will participants go to the bathroom, especially without running water?
- What permanent or semi-permanent structures can you put in place to extend your staying power (potentially even after you are gone)?
- What repairs or investment of labor will you make to the land/location?
**Media:** Make a list of local media outlets, and send a Press Advisory to them before your action, if it is public. Send a Press Release to go out to local media after your action. Aggregate your photos and videos and send links to the media. Make sure the “press hustler” (described below) at your action writes down the names and publications of all reporters who show up, for follow-up (build ongoing relationships with sympathetic reporters). For social media use relevant hashtags and send your photo, video, blogs to the national team for amplification. Make sure your spokespeople are prepared (talking points and/or practice help make that happen).

**Message and Audience:** What do you want to convey to people inside your community? What is the narrative around land and resilience-based actions that you hope your action embodies? What message do you want to send to the decision makers in your community? What do you want the larger community to feel, think and dream of when they see or hear about your action? How can you build on the national narrative around Juneteenth and reparations to support your action.

**Examples:** Land belongs in the commons. If it’s the right thing to do, we have every right to do it. King wasn’t a capitalist, I have a dream of liberated Black land, Reclaiming the legacy of our ancestors
**Get Ready**

**Action Roles:** Collective agreement and ownership in the lead up to an action is important but on the day of, for safety and moving quickly, it’s best when there is someone who makes quick decisions and a team who can see the whole picture. If your team is small, you can each play multiple roles!

- **Action Coordinator:** hold the bird’s eye view with tactical leadership and the police liaison, makes decisions
- **Tactical Leadership:** 2–4 people from your team designated to make quick decisions if necessary during the course of an action.
- **Press Spokesperson:** Person(s) designated to interpret the group’s action to the press.
- **Press Hustler:** One or two folks who proactively approach press people, offer them press packets, and direct them to press spokespersons.
- **Photographer/videographer:** Records the action on film or video; knows where to upload and post it for media and coordination.
- **Support & Jail Support:** Person(s), usually working with specific affinity groups, who carry out specific support roles for anyone who is arrested such as comfort, food, jail support liaising, etc.
- **Police Liaison:** Person(s) designated to speak with police during the action; communicates police message to the tactical leadership, and, whenever possible, to the entire group. *(Unless specifically designated to do so, this person does not negotiate with police or make decisions on behalf of the group.)*
Get Ready

- **De-escalators / Peacekeepers**: Person(s) who know the action scenario (including contingency plans and any pre-action rally) and can help direct people in the appropriate activities and/or directions (form picket line, stay on march route, etc.). Peacekeepers can wear something distinctive, such as arm bands or hats. Peacekeepers should be prepared to deal with confusing or disruptive situations: both police provocateurs, counter-protestors, and mentally unstable people are real possibilities that should be considered, with responses prepared.

- **Emcee**: If you have sound and program; leaf-letters; song and chant leaders, speakers, etc.

- Additional roles if relevant: medic, legal observer, care bears

**Resources and Materials**: Deciding and sharing action agreements that respect everyone’s risk level and collective intention. A plan for how visuals and art get to the action. A symbol, logo, or colored armbands to show unity or distinguish action roles.
**Risk:** Deciding and sharing action agreements that respect everyone’s risk level and collective intention. A plan for how visuals and art get to the action. A symbol, logo, or colored armbands to show unity or distinguish action roles.

**Ask:**
- What are the risks?
- Who and how will onlookers respond?
- Who is most impacted by these risks?
- How do you make people who were not part of planning aware of the risk (ex. action agreements, action visuals that make the intervention clear).
Safety: A lot of an action’s safety depends on the support roles outlined above. Security, de-escalators and support roles should stay aligned by a safety lead/team and be ready for what may come.

Ask:

- How will your team make decisions and stay united if things get out of hand or the situation changes?
- How will you de-escalate a situation if a plainclothes police provocateur, counter-protester, or dis-aligned/angry community member tries to throw your discipline and create conflict?
- Who is at most risk and how is your team prepared to support them?
- How do our trans and gender nonconforming family need to be supported?
- What kind of violence is a particular risk in our community?
- How are we prepared to stay safe and proud?
Get in Formation

**Prep:** Create safety and support plans in advance. Security and surveillance are always changing. Keep your plans close and have a security culture everyone can follow. Decide on affirmations that will bring you back to your purpose in times of stress. Know who your safety team is and how to use them.

**Ask:**

**What will I/we do if ____ happens?**
- Angry (Black? POC? non-english speaking?) neighbor who disagrees strongly with what you’re doing in their neighborhood
- Provocateur who wants to escalate the action outside of the action agreements
- Young person with anxiety
- A medical emergency
- Different levels of police violence
- ICE comes
- Hella white folks show up
- How would I/we like to be supported?

*Say aloud: “my people are free”, “Black love”, “I am enough”, etc.*
Support Systems: Resources—Make sure you have what you need and have communicated your needs to at least 1 other person. What are the needs of the action, what do you need to have prior to the action starting and what can community who want to support the action provide? How do you communicate that to folks who want to support the action once it starts? What other needs will the potential weather conditions create for you, how are you planning for the weather?

Examples: Water to drink; milks to wash skin or eyes if pepper-sprayed; healthy snacks/fruits; comfortable protective shoes you can move and run in; zip-lock bags with bandana soaked with cider vinegar (water if you don’t have any) for breathing during tear gas or chemical exposure; any medicines—nhaler, epi-pen, insulin or other meds/healing herbs, several days of prescription medication and doctor’s note in case of arrest; protective herbs and crystals (ie: sage, cedar, osho root, onyx, amethyst), nervous system tinctures (ie: oatstraw, motherwort, lemon balm, Rescue Remedy, Throat lozenges (for all that chanting!); tampons and pads, first-aid kit
Jail/Legal Support: Before the action, everyone who participates should fill out a jail support form and have the working phone number of the jail support liaison handy. If arrested call the Jail support liason (not a partner or loved one, the Jail point person can call family for them with the info on the form). The Jail Support point person will stay off-site from the action, and be ready to do things like call the jail immediately after arrests to track our people in the system, coordinate with legal defense, and coordinate with others at the action to tell them where to go to greet and support people when released, have food, water, and transport ready, etc.

After Care Support: Trauma affects all of us in actions, not just those who go to jail. Debriefing the action is a great way to emotionally process with the whole group and learn from each other across roles. Ask for support and find healing space you can go to before the action (bathtub with epsom salt and/or other de-stressing herbs, bodywork/massage, mani/pedi, clean sheets on your bed and your favorite movie ready, journal). Have people who knew you were taking action and are ready to show up with some love. Check in with the folks you took action with. Drink all the water and have all the sleep. Debrief and grieve with your team as needed (always bring food). Additional ideas: host a grief circle, meditate, work with community healers to plan a healing space and let folks know when and where in advance, google acupressure points and perform them on yourself and/or others.
Resources

National Lawyers Guild: (212) 679-5100
Jail Support Form:
Sample Press Release:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4JrM3n58HppelljVi14VUNmcWM/view?usp=sharing
Know Your Rights Guide:
http://midnightspecial.net/materials/kyr.html

Other suggested resource links:

Homes For All toolkit:
Take Back The Land:
http://takebacktheland.org/
Occupy the Farm:
http://occupythefarm.org/