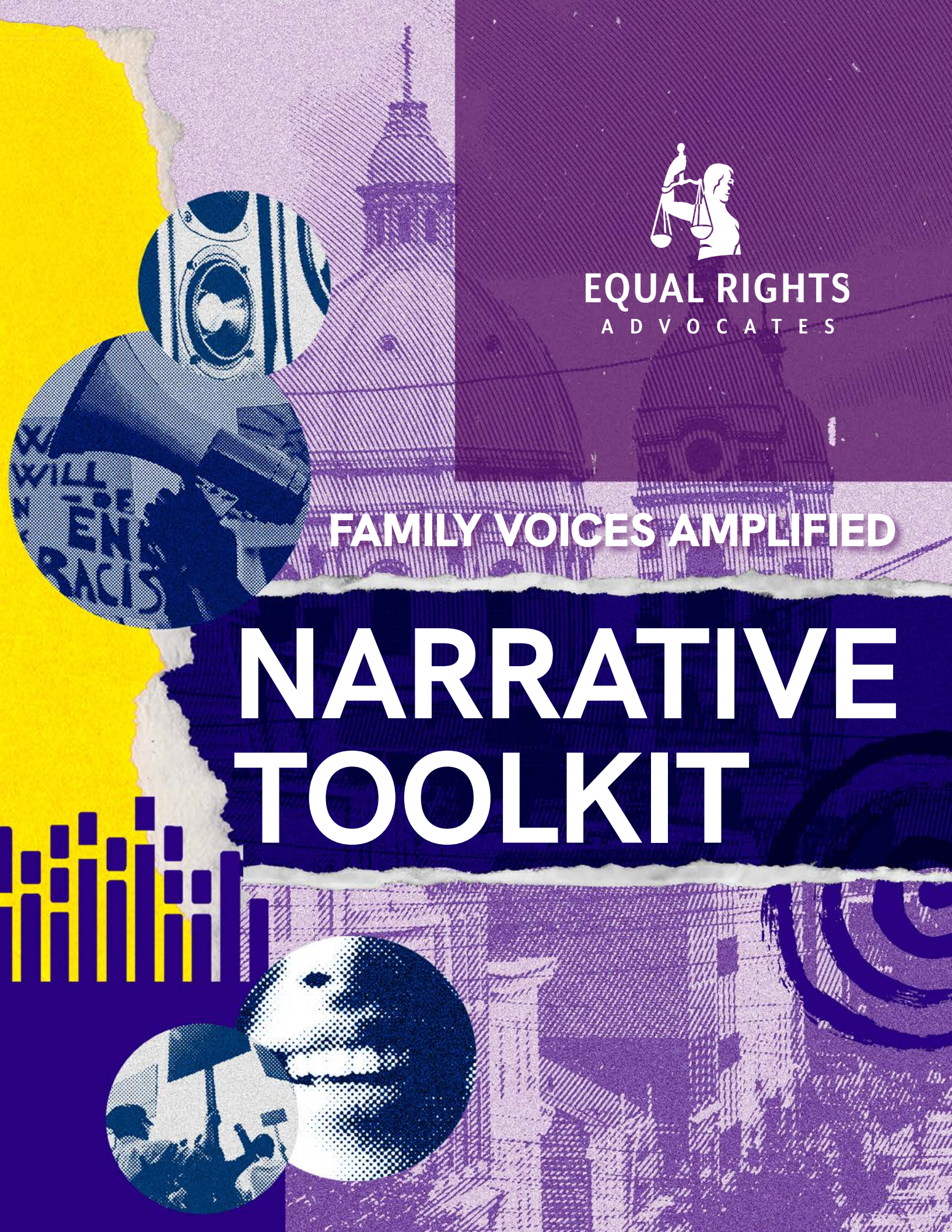

EQUAL RIGHTS
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FAMILY VOICES AMPLIFIED
NARRATIVE
TOOLKIT

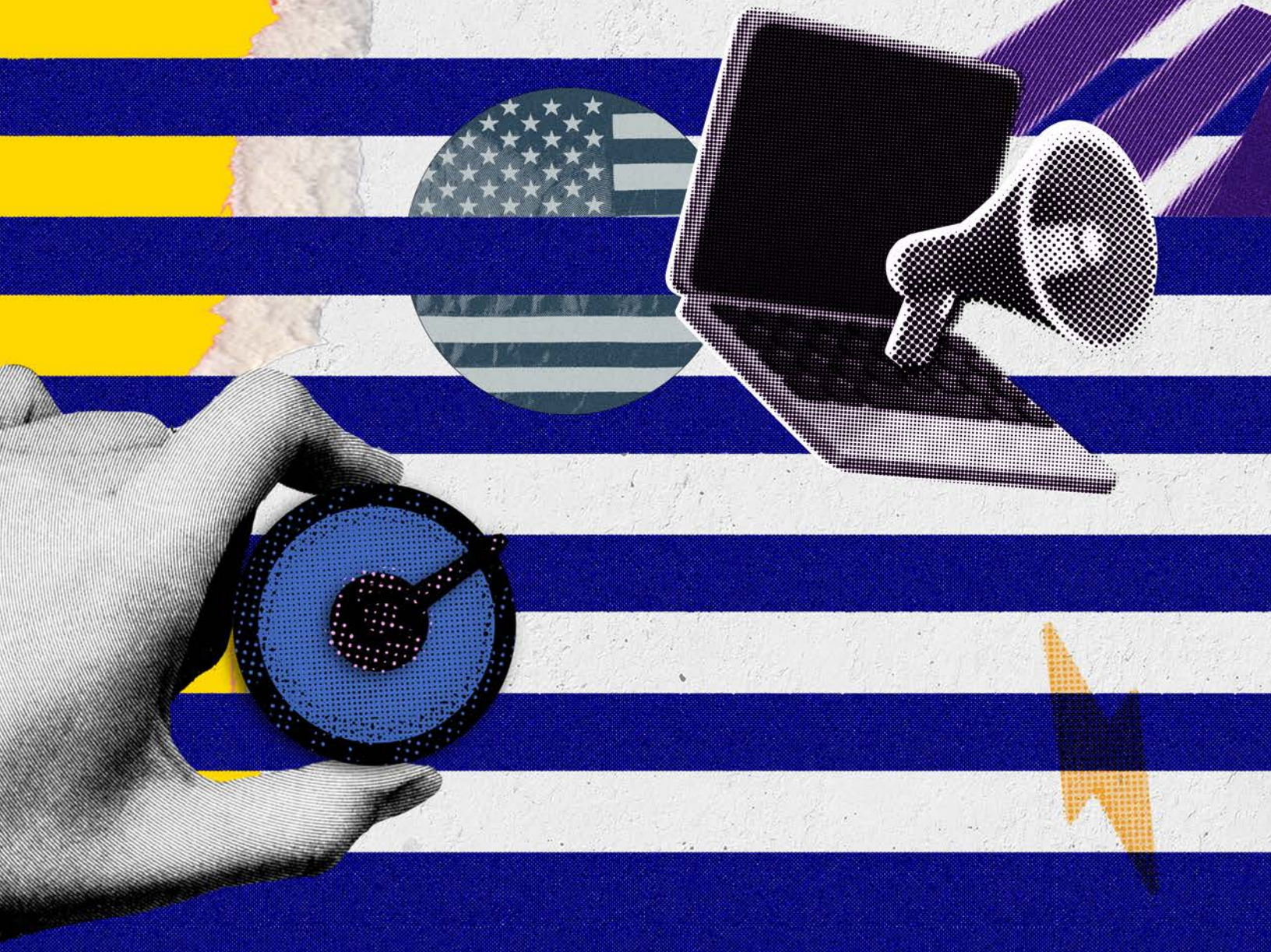
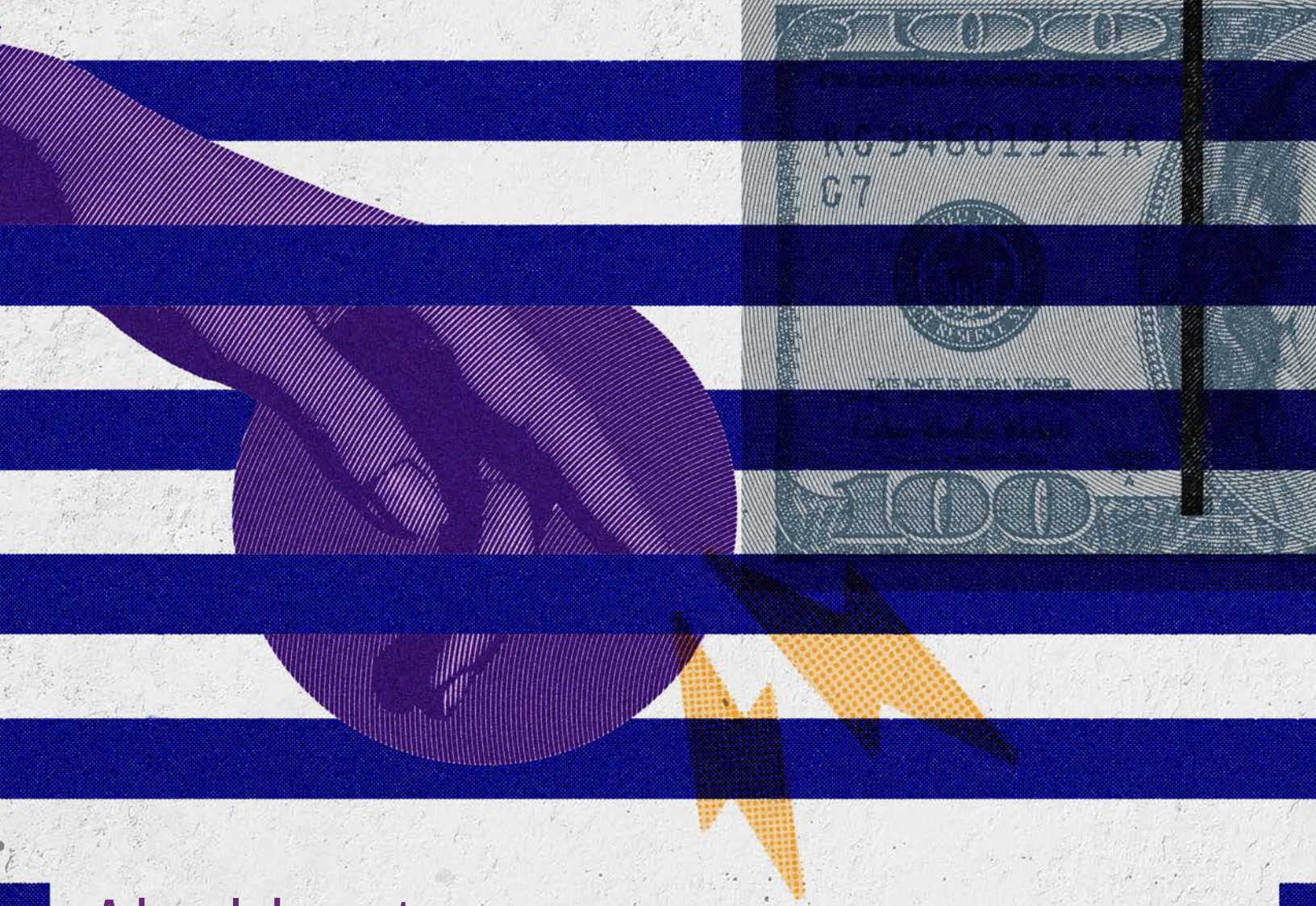


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Equal Rights Advocates is a national civil rights nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and expanding workplace, economic, and educational opportunities for women, girls, and gender-expansive people. Learn more at equalrights.org

> ***"We have to take care of ourselves. We are responsible to one another. We're accountable to one another. I truly feel this, even growing up at home in my family environment. It's a pleasure to take care of your people. It's a pleasure to look after the folks who are yours. So why wouldn't I step up or be present or be available to someone who is of me?...I think, in the past few years of my life has been one of my biggest revelations of like, 'No, I'm for my people. I want us to progress. I want to make sure that if I got it, you got it.'"*** ***— TAMARA O.***

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Why Story Sharing?

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER.

Oppression's many embodiments, forces, and systems do not occur in silos. They show up in our lives as overlapping and intersecting problems often feeding off each other until real solutions seem unattainable.

To build the world that we want for ourselves and future generations, our work as parallel social justice movements cannot be siloed, either.

The stories in this toolkit give us the power to address many injustices at once by highlighting how interconnected these issues are: economic insecurity and ongoing wage injustice, a lack of paid leave and caregiving support, housing insecurity, and a lack of quality, affordable healthcare, including mental healthcare.

This interconnection also presents us with an opportunity to ***join forces across movements and missions, to conspire against these injustices together***. This toolkit aims to bring us together over real, powerful stories and proposed solutions that reflect our shared goals and values.

NARRATIVE SHIFTING & SYSTEMS CHANGE

During and after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Black and Latinx families experienced intensified versions of the systemic harms that have always plagued our country. But the narratives that surfaced about their experiences were flat, listing statistics about unemployment, workplace health risks, and at-home schooling.

It felt like Black and Latinx stories were only being told from an employer's point of view. They painted a picture that was far from complete and often inaccurate.

This toolkit aims to refocus the story of what economic security looks like when you center Black and Latinx families. It empowers us to share their stories in effective ways that have the potential to shift dominant public narratives, and influence people who have the power to enact life-changing policy solutions.

Community stories and policy recommendations are often seen as related, but separate. These stories show just how untrue that is. ***Told by Black and Latinx participants in their own words***, the stories in this toolkit are grounded in their daily lived realities, which reflect the experiences of countless families across the U.S.

Here, the storytellers themselves offer ideas for policy solutions that could spark systemic change. Their ideas are informed by the hard-won and creative ways that they, as Black and Latinx individuals, have carved out space for their families to thrive—even under the weight of multiple systems designed to oppress them.

But for Black and Latinx families to truly thrive, the world needs to change. Together, we can ensure that our stories—and our neighbors' stories—are the foundation of our shared advocacy work. ***This is how we tell stories that change the world***.

"People are still starving. People are still underpaid. People who have lost their jobs, people who have lost wages and stuff, that still need that help with food, still need their help with like extracurricular activities for the children and stuff like that, it's so hard to get. It is like, for the middle class, it is like you either make too much for the programs that are available or you don't qualify at all because you don't make too less...it is very hard. So I feel like the support was heightened more with the pandemic, and now that it's not, it's kind of like the people that was giving and giving is like 'no more to give! Figure it out like, find your way!'" — **ANGELA T.**

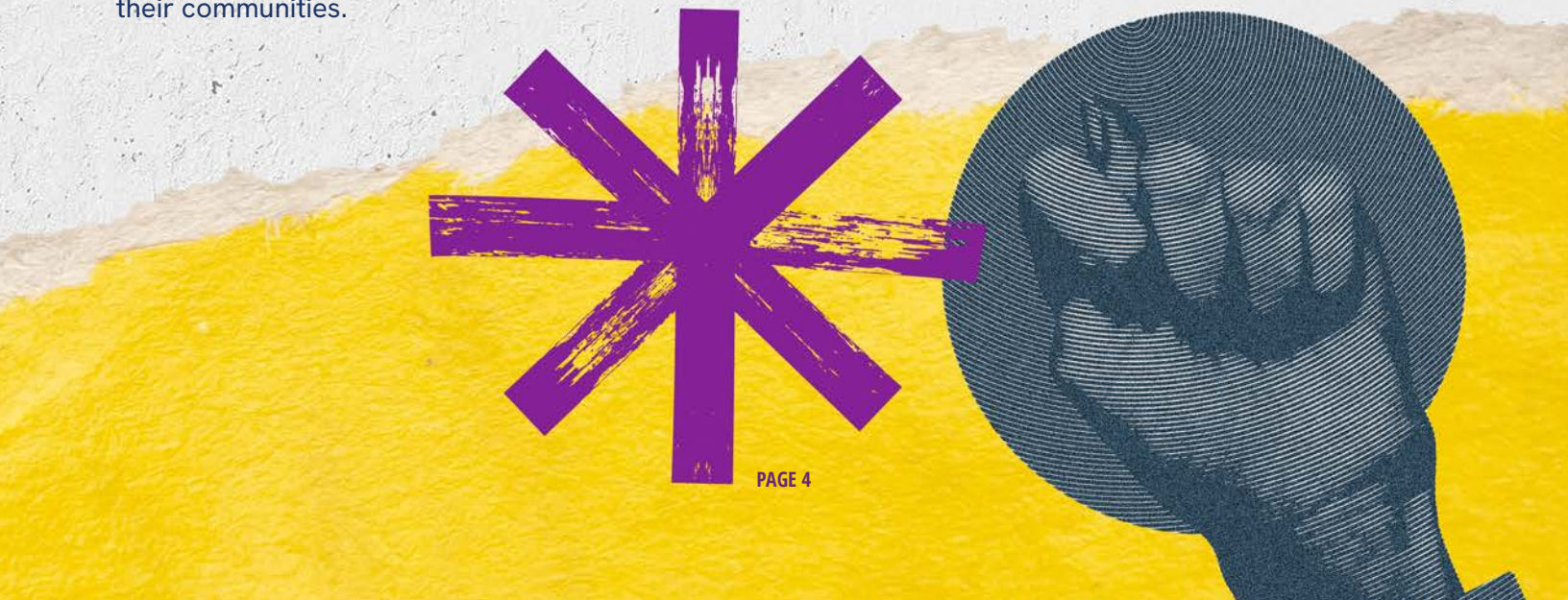
About Family Voices Amplified

Equal Rights Advocates' Family Voices Amplified project seeks to identify how the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath have affected the ***economic and lived realities*** of Black and Latinx families. Our project focuses on developing and broadly sharing narratives that highlight the experiences of communities most impacted by inequity and translating those needs into policy recommendations for systemic change.

In Phase 1 of the project (2021-2022), we worked in partnership with the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) to reach nearly ***900 Black and Latinx women family breadwinners*** in 16 cities across the country, to learn about their most pressing economic and workplace needs emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, and advocate for direct change. You can view our report with results from Phase 1 ***here***.

Phase 2 (2023-2024) continued our work with NBCDI and expanded our partnership to UnidosUS. We reached out to new participants within the Black and Latinx communities, who shared their experience and insights. ***We dug deeper into the stories*** and themes that emerged in Phase 1, revisiting and engaging in deep listening with some former and some new participants by conducting surveys, small focus group workshops, and in-depth interviews to learn the stories, concerns, recommendations for solutions to families' needs, and strategies for resiliency. We aimed to answer: ***What do families still need, and how do they envision reform that makes room for them?*** Additionally, what do they want decision-makers to know about them?

This toolkit presents the stories that emerged in Phase 2, which reveal both the devastating impacts of systemic inequality in the present moment, and how the participants have ***resisted and persisted*** in the face of deeply unfair systems, in ways that are empowering and healing for themselves, their families, and their communities.



OUR GOALS

TOOLKIT GOALS

1. Harness the power of storytelling and story sharing to disrupt public narratives that harm Black and Latinx families
2. Disseminate broadly stories told by Black and Latinx women about their own lives, in their own words, centering their ideas for solutions to inequitable public policies
3. Influence lawmakers and others in positions of power to back these proposed solutions, conveying how they could help transform our communities for the better
4. Build exponential power across social justice movements with parallel missions to achieve our collective goals, and to actively combat the infiltration of capitalist competition culture into the nonprofit sector
5. Root these personal narratives in their truest frame: one of love, boundless community care, deep compassion, resilience, ingenuity, hope, and abundance.

PROJECT GOALS

1. ***Shift Dominant Narratives***
   We aim to reclaim the face and story of economic justice for all communities by amplifying values-based core narratives shared by Black and Latinx women/family breadwinners about their experiences of work, caretaking, economic (in)stability and systemic discrimination since 2020.
2. ***Spark Systems Change***
   In our trauma-informed, healing-centered workshops and video interviews, participants were empowered to share with one another how structural inequalities have impacted their lives over the past 4 years. We deeply listened to their experiences and proposed solutions in order to shape our public policy advocacy priorities—and extended these priorities to our coalitions with hundreds of partner organizations across the country.
3. ***Influence Decisionmakers***
   We interviewed four workshop participants, working to distill their powerful stories for digital amplification, with the goal of reaching those in positions of power to address these widespread needs.



OUR GUIDING VALUES

Openness & Healing

Our accessible, intimate workshops provided participants with a forum to build community while unearthing, documenting, and sharing their narratives in a healing-centered environment. This enabled participants to connect over post-pandemic challenges, share the supports and resources they've discovered and rely on, and recommended public policies that would radically transform their lives.

Respect & Accessibility

In order to respect each participant's time, energy, and shared ideas, each workshop attendee received $200 per 1.5 hour workshop. Each of our 4 video storytellers received an additional $500 for an additional 1.5 hour video interview. We also respected what participants told us they needed in order to bring their whole selves, including live translation services, and options for sharing either verbally or via written answers in a live digital community board.

Strength in Diversity

In addition to working with solely Black and Latinx workshop participants and video interviewees, all partners and consultants on this project specialize in culturally competent that prioritizes supporting Black and Latinx communities, including the ERA Team, our Outreach Consultant, Workshop Consultant, and Creative Team.

Compassion & Authenticity

This toolkit prioritizes accurately portraying participants' stories, including by sharing their own words throughout. The caring environment of our workshops included somatic meditations and journaling exercises to ground participants in a supportive, trauma-informed space before discussing difficult personal experiences from recent years. After hearing multiple attendees name difficulties accessing mental health resources, we provided all participants with an extensive list of mental health services specifically geared toward Black and Latinx women/communities.

Abundance & Belief in a Vibrant Future

Throughout this project, we led all processes with the concepts of abundance and belief in a bright future. These values are reflected in our policy recommendations and narrative shifting goals. Many of our participants, the majority of whom are family caregivers and/or parents, share this lens of abundance and live with a guiding hope that it is possible for us to create a future where all Black and Latinx families thrive.



THE STORYTELLERS



AMANDA J.

(65-74 years old)

A passionately active member of her community, Amanda is a former social work consultant, a mother, grandmother, and a Black woman living in Detroit. She comes from a long family history of community service, and is passionate about person-centered grassroots organizing that has intergenerational outcomes. Amanda shared with us experiences of not having housing for herself and her children in the past, and of feeling overwhelmed while performing a significant amount of extra family caretaking during the pandemic. She strongly recommends public policies that ensure all children have access to basic necessities, including safe water, housing, early childhood care, quality education, and reliable transportation. Amanda hopes for reform at the grassroots level to address systemic injustices including in carceral, banking, healthcare, and education systems.



ANGELA T.

(25-34 years old)

Angela is a South Philadelphia native, a mom, a Certified Nurse Assistant, and a free spirit who loves to travel and meet new people—however, she says the pandemic affected her personality, causing new anxieties that have impacted her relationship to her hobbies and interests. Angela's community supported her through the pandemic, with food programs, with her employer allowing her to work from home in order to care for her daughter, who also continued to receive free school meals even during online schooling. Regardless, she experienced financial struggles during the pandemic, including the stress of increasing debt, despite picking up multiple part-time jobs in addition to her full-time work. Because of her schedule, her efforts to access therapy became untenable. Angela would like to see public policies that make lower healthcare and childcare costs, mental health resources more accessible, provide support for post-secondary schooling and career training, and ultimately protect Black and Latinx individuals, families, and communities.





MARTHA C.

(55-64 years old)

A mother and grandmother who lives in Florida, Martha is originally from Lima, enjoys salsa dancing, and dreams of one day becoming a social worker to help immigrant families thrive in the United States, particularly single mothers. Early in pandemic lockdown, Martha experienced ageism and xenophobia at work when she and five other older Latina women baristas and sandwich makers were laid off, while their younger coworkers were kept on. As she searched for a new job, Martha gratefully received food support from local nonprofits and churches, but she still struggled financially, including having to skimp on cleaning supplies at a time when they were particularly important. Martha survived severe mental health struggles in recent years, made worse by news of multiple Black people being murdered by police. Martha is passionate about affordable childcare, living wages, and ending workplace discrimination.

TAMARA O.

(35-44 years old)

Tamara is an educator, a mom, wife, sister, daughter, and a Black woman who lives in Atlanta, but considers Ohio home. Tamara's experiences of COVID span birth and death: she gave birth to her first child early in the pandemic and was unable to receive in-person family support due to travel bans. Then, she had to decide between attending the funerals of loved ones or ensuring her baby's health and safety. But Tamara also experienced her local community coming together to support their neighbors by distributing food. Tamara is passionate about socioeconomic equity—including living wages and rent control—combating healthcare discrimination against Black women, and ending the common practice of making decisions that directly impact Black communities without consulting Black communities. Most of all, she wants to see policies that ensure access to quality early education for every child, as well as policies that truly take care of and show respect for early childhood educators.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Empowered Story Sharing

Digital story-sharing allows us to reach a broad audience, open conversations with different groups of people, and collaborate with partners — increasing visibility while working toward shared goals. Strategically using social media amplifies the reach of our messages to key communities that can help bring our visions to life. With social media, we can also target our messages to lawmakers and other influential people/groups by tagging them and opening a discussion, simultaneously creating possibilities for exponential exposure.

As with all nonprofit communications, it's important to start by asking ourselves: ***Who is my intended audience?*** This may slightly vary across different social media platforms (e.g. younger audiences on TikTok, and slightly older audiences on Facebook.) Next we can ask: ***What does this audience want to see?*** What will catch their attention and inspire them to take action? This helps us decide which stories to share on which channels, and how to present them — though it is very common to share the same story across multiple social media platforms.

Posting photos, videos, and links on social media is crucial to reaching a broad audience and inspiring them to engage with our stories.

Values-Based Story Sharing

It is equally important to ask ourselves: What is this audience's values? What do they stand for? (Learn more about how to answer this question from our collaboration with ***Story at Scale***.) This question is key to ensuring these stories reach as many people as possible and live up to their potential to spark change.

HOW TO SHARE THESE STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

USE OUR SOSHA CAMPAIGN TOOL

Simply copy and paste our videos, images, and written content onto any social media platform. You can post with just a few clicks, and we've made some of the content customizable to include your organization's branding and/or related key messaging points.

INCLUDE HASHTAGS

Are there hashtags your organization frequently returns to because they yield good results? If they fit with this content, please feel free to include them when sharing these stories.

> ***Tip: Want to optimize your reach? We recommend paying attention to when your different audiences engage with your content most: which days and times, for which messages/ themes and media types (videos, links, photos, infographics etc.) across your different platforms. There are plenty of affordable tools out there that can automatically do this type of analysis. For example, we use Hootsuite to discover the best times of day to post across our different platforms in order to reach the most people.***



BE INCLUSIVE

Add alt text to images when possible to increase accessibility for text readers used by people with impaired vision, limited movement, and other disabilities.

INTERACT

"Like" and respond to supportive or neutral comments to increase engagement and work that algorithm. This also increases the likelihood that the commenter will remember and engage with your organization again in the future.

DRAFTING YOUR OWN COPY

to accompany one of our videos, images, or links? We always recommend using short, direct sentences, strategic spacing, emojis, and/or common yet powerful words to increase potential reach and engagement.

INCLUDE A SIMPLE ACTION ASK

Now that we have their attention, what is the one thing we want this person to do? It may go without saying, but the easier and quicker the action is, the more likely people will do it!

> ***Tip: Even if the person doesn't take your requested action, if they engage with your social media post at all, it's still a win! By liking, commenting, or sharing your post, the person automatically increases the chances that even more people will see the post. Algorithms create this snowball effect: the more people interact with our content, the more likely others will see it. This engagement also makes it more likely that your organization's content will continue to pop up on that person's feed in the future.***

JUMP ON TRENDS

If there is a way to tie these stories to recent social media trends, hashtags, or ongoing popular conversations (e.g. adapting memes, or posting a gif of relevant pop culture moments), please do! This also increases the chances of our stories—and your organization—being seen by an even broader audience.

> ***Tip: Sometimes, inserting ourselves into a trending moment is the best way to ensure our messages reach more people, even if it feels like a stretch!***



WHY THESE STORIES?

Key Findings & Policy Recommendations

POVERTY-LEVEL WAGES & LACK OF BASIC NECESSITIES

A number of our participants expressed the desperate need for higher wages. Due to the prevalence of poverty-level wages, some expressed the need or desire to work multiple jobs just to bring home what their families need. While others had access to nonprofits that offered support, there was often a waitlist/line for resources due to high demand.



NAVIGATING SCARCITY

Even after the height of the pandemic, a number of our participants named that they have struggled to have consistent access to basic necessities, including food, clean water, and childcare. One interviewee shared that she was unable to purchase cleaning products during lockdown, instead relying on vinegar as a cleaning agent, even at a time when stronger cleaning products were needed to keep her family healthy and safe.

These stories are a call to action to end poverty-level wages that far too many people experience across the country. They also highlight the lack of pathways to higher-wage jobs and a lack of governmental financial support. If we want our communities to thrive, it is imperative that we address the rising cost of rent and the widespread implications that the lack of quality housing can have on Black and Latinx lives.

During the workshops and interviews, participants shared stories of how economic injustice impacts their lives, and ideas of how they need lawmakers to address these needs. The recommendations that surfaced present an opportunity to ensure Black and Latinx community needs are centered in our policy advocacy and systemic change work.

READ ABOUT OUR SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PROJECT REPORT: KEY FINDINGS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Access to Higher-Paying, Better Jobs & Stronger Workplace Protections
2. Enact the Raise the Wage Act
3. Enact the Paycheck Fairness Act

> *"We made a dollar stretch that far and, yeah, it was just... it took a lot. It took a lot... Some days it's like, 'Well, we going to have just Ramen, but we'll boil some eggs and put it in it.' [. . .] To be honest, I can't afford the laundry detergent every single week. It's like, 'Stop wearing so many clothes. We're not going outside. Just wear this.' She don't understand why, and it's like, I don't have it. It's like I said, it took a lot of balancing, sacrificing, balancing, praying, maneuvering, and praying."* — ANGELA T.

LACK OF CAREGIVING SUPPORT

Many participants were negatively impacted by the lack of a public care infrastructure, including a lack of job-protected paid leave and employer caregiving supports. A number of participants needed to provide care for children and grandchildren without access to an affordable, high-quality local childcare facility. One woman recounted that she felt stretched thin by the amount of roles she had to play during the lockdown: mother, teacher, therapist, school nurse, and principal to her daughter. Remote work from home and homeschooling children meant some participants had to juggle responsibilities without caregiving support. A few also shared that they were concerned their children may now have "intellectual gaps" due to their learning style and the limitations of remote learning.



INADEQUATE RESOURCES

One interview participant shared that the center where she works opened their computer lab so that families who did not have access to the internet or computers could use their resources. She described that the center was packed each day with BIPOC people, highlighting "the fact that there is this large gap between…the have and the have-nots." This demonstrates how many families' needs were not considered when workplaces and schools went remote.

Several participants shared that they had to put life events on hold due to increased caregiving responsibilities. One woman shared that her son is a special needs learner and that she is currently prioritizing getting him caught up to where his classmates are post-pandemic. Due to this decision, she is unable to go back to work or attain the education that she would like to. Another participant shared that she could not enroll in school during the pandemic because that would mean that she had to balance her own education alongside homeschooling her daughter and working multiple jobs.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enact National Paid Family and Medical Leave, Paid Sick and Safe Days, and Stronger Caregiver Supports
2. Expand access to affordable, quality childcare
3. Enact the Healthy Families Act and the FAMILY Act

"Some days it's like, 'Just put on a shirt that you're going to be in the camera with. Mommy going to wash the uniform bottom. Just stay up in the camera like this.' To be honest, I can't afford the laundry detergent every single week. It's like, 'Stop wearing so many clothes. We're not going outside. Just wear this.' She don't understand why, and it's like, I don't have it. It's like I said, it took a lot of balancing, sacrificing, balancing, praying, maneuvering, and praying." — ***ANGELA T.***

STRUGGLING UNDER DEBT

Many participants shared that they have debt and feel unable to pay off their medical and/or credit card bills. Debt has trapped them in a cycle of being unable to save or use their money for other expenses. None of the participants expressed being in a better financial situation now than they were at the beginning of the pandemic.

According to Census data, we know that Black women and Latinas continue to suffer under appalling pay gaps, and are overrepresented in low-paid, minimum, and subminimum wage (tipped) service work, which frequently lack benefits like paid leave. Additionally, between 2022-2023 the overall gender wage gap ***widened for the first time in 20 years***. It is not surprising that our participants' lived experiences directly reflected these disparities.



WAGE INJUSTICE

One woman named that she accrued more debt because electricity and heat bills increased due to the increased amount of time that she was spending at home during lockdown. A number of other participants noted that the cost of living continues to increase while wages remain the same, which leaves them with no alternative but to take out loans.

A number of participants said they can't move into higher-paying positions in their workplaces because they do not have a degree, and that they cannot get a degree because of education costs. Consequently, they have reached a "ceiling" that prevents them from having upward mobility.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Financial support for families during times of economic inflation
2. Supportive options for families to pay medical bills
3. More opportunities for free and low-cost education and career development support, creating access to better jobs

> ***"I feel that I still lack economically. I still lack because it was too much things to pay back. I feel that I [will] never get in my track again. I feel that I still paying and paying and paying and then borrow again. And I pay credit cards, and I feel I never get away from that, and from all the bills, that I [am] being helped from my family. If I pay one person, then I have to pay the other person, and I never have the money to save for a next situation. That is really hard." — MARTHA C.***





EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

Many participants recounted incidents of discrimination they experienced at work and the barriers to better jobs they faced because of their identities and income status. In both our workshops and interviews, participants were keen to combat a false public narrative that was heightened during the pandemic: that Black and Latinx people do not want to work, and "were sitting at home collecting." In reality, a number of our participants had to work multiple jobs during the pandemic, and that still was not sufficient to meet their family's needs.



NO FAIR SHOT

One participant was called in to interview for a job, but when she arrived and the interviewer saw that she was Latina and Black, she was told that the position was full. The interviewer also spoke to her disrespectfully. Soon after she left, the interviewer called the participant by accident, thinking she was a different applicant, about the same role for which she was just denied. This is just one example of rampant employer discrimination.

Many of our participants recounted discrimination they experienced at work and the barriers to better jobs they faced because of their identities and income status. For example, one participant is a grandmother who shared that multiple major health events have kept her from working more than one job. She expressed a strong desire to work two or three jobs as she did 25 years ago, so she could better provide for her family.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Equitable access to good jobs and career development support
2. Stronger employment protections against workplace discrimination and inequities
3. Better workplace accommodations for caregivers and people with disabilities

> *"So I overheard this conversation about how 'these people just don't want to work.' And so I invited myself into this conversation with 2 total strangers, you know, just pointing out the fact that no, people want to be paid a fair wage, because even at $20 an hour, a family can't really survive on that. And minimum wage in Michigan right now is still around $10 or $11... Just inequity on top of inequity."* — **AMANDA J.**



LACK OF STABLE, AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTHCARE

Most participants identified that they would significantly benefit from more financial support for healthcare and better insurance coverage, including mental health support. Many shared that their and their families' mental health were significantly impacted by the pandemic, including the experience of connection between the consequences of the pandemic and the violence of the police state, referring to the compounding violence as a "dual pandemic."

Participants also identified numerous ways people in their communities were denied access to critical resources and support during the pandemic due to their socioeconomic class. One participant identified finances as the deciding factor that determined whether someone who was admitted to the hospital had a strong chance of surviving. She shared that she lost her aunt to a stroke because "they didn't give her a chance" and that many others lost their family and friends due to similar forms of income inequality and discrimination.



HEALTHCARE DISCRIMINATION

One participant said she was asked to show a social security card or state document in order to take a COVID-19 test and that when the vaccine came out, undocumented people were the last to receive it. Another participant who gave birth during the pandemic experienced racism in her prenatal healthcare, sharing that she was treated like "trash" based on what she looked like, and that they treated her husband like a "stranger" and refused to acknowledge him.

Multiple participants brought up how difficult it can be to find a reliable, quality therapist due to factors including lack of paid time off and cost barriers.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase health insurance programs for unemployed, low-income, and moderate-income families and expand access to high-quality, low-cost, quality health insurance plans with fewer exclusions
2. Provide healthcare options that guarantee affordable, culturally-competent mental health services for all, with a particular focus on marginalized communities, including Black and Latinx families
3. Expand access to mental healthcare through insurance coverage, increasing the availability of community-based mental health resources, and integrating mental health services into primary care settings
4. Require mental health insurance plans to increase the covered number of treatments, allowing patients to keep providers they like, and ensure mental health professionals are trained to address the specific needs and traumas of marginalized populations

"So, okay, I did the therapy. I started it. So first of all, you have to take time off of work to even be able to go to therapy, because they're doing the same hours as you're doing at work. [. . .] So I got into the groove and then I realized, like every 60 days, there was a new therapist, and you had to tell your story over, you had to get to learn this person over, and it was like so many barriers to like trying to help yourself." — S.D.

HOUSING INSECURITY

Multiple participants recounted how their income status compounded race-based discrimination based on ingrained stereotypes, especially with respect to finding safe housing. Stories that emerged across interviews and workshops illustrate how commonplace housing instability is in Black and Latinx communities, and how long it can take people to recover from its consequences.



LEASE DISCRIMINATION

One participant shared how difficult it was for her to find safe and affordable housing for her and her sons in recent years, noting that her credit score was used against her as a mechanism of discrimination, even as she was working hard to improve her score. This participant, who experienced housing instability throughout the pandemic, was supported by other participants during the workshop, who shared that they previously had experiences with housing instability, too.

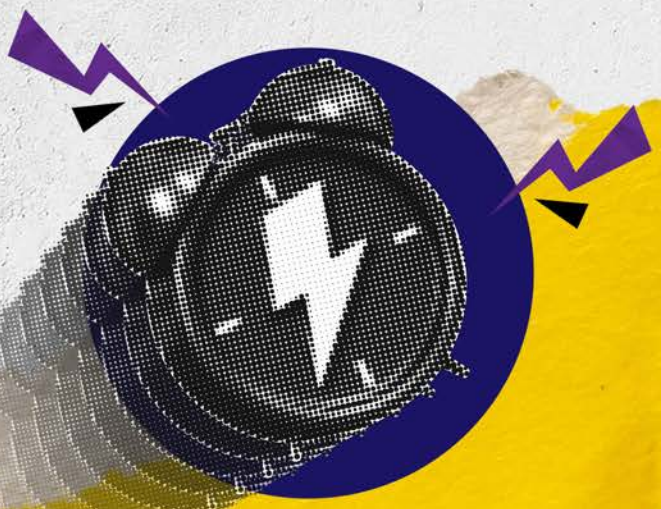
Another participant shared that it took six months for the government to provide her with rent assistance, and by the time she received that support, her landlord had evicted her. A different participant said she believes that if there was a cap on rent, it would help "...the hatred will go down, crime rates will go down, because people out here are struggling. And they're tired, and they're exhausted."

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Anti-displacement measures to prevent gentrification from pushing low-income families out of their neighborhoods, along with rental assistance and housing subsidies for those facing housing insecurity**

2. **Increased investment in affordable housing initiatives to ensure access to safe, stable homes for marginalized communities, including policies to support housing stability, home ownership, rent stabilization, rent caps, and rent assistance**

"One thing that I did notice that is happening is that if you're low income, I have section 8, so they cannot discriminate or look at your credit report. ...[but] I'm still discriminated on, and I'm still looked over, and they find other reasons why not to give me housing. And so this is one thing that I really feel that we need help with here is this, this set up to where we have more people that are being homeless. And I'm going to all the programs. I'm doing everything I can." — C.S.



AVAILABLE SUPPORT NETWORKS

Family and Friends

Several participants named that their loved ones have been instrumental in supporting them from the height of the pandemic to the present day. One woman shared that she coordinates with her sister to plan events, share meals, and offer childcare support. Another participant shared that her two friends were instrumental in making sure that she recovered from COVID-19, bringing her food when she did not have any.

Neighbors

Some participants were supported by neighbors during the pandemic, and/or witnessed hyperlocal grassroots groups helping other neighbors. One participant said her neighbors performed wellness checks, providing food, sharing links and raising awareness about resources available online.

Nonprofits

Several participants shared that they and their family members were able to access support from nonprofits at the height of the pandemic. They shared that nonprofits were instrumental in providing them with access to necessities including diapers, food, housing support, support to pay bills, and transportation to doctor's appointments.

Workplaces

Some workplaces became more flexible with employees by allowing them to pick up their children early, offering remote work options, and letting staff go home early. One participant shared that her workplace sent her home with full pay during the lockdown, which allowed her to focus on her family. Participants shared that platforms like Zoom allowed them to maintain workplace relationships.

Schools

One participant shared that, despite school being closed, her local school district continued to provide breakfast and lunch for the children. Additionally, they provided families with food stamps to help offset the cost of children being home all day.

> ***The neighborhood that I lived in at the time was very...we kind of looked out for one another. So we had people knocking on the doors bringing food, and we were renting a home in this neighborhood. So they just kind of checked on everybody like, "hey, how's it going? Here's some helpful links we got like ways to apply for aid almost like once a week..." They were like, "hey, if you weren't able to qualify for this program — here's another program!"*** — ***TAMARA O.***

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