# Untokening
# Mobility

## Beyond Pavement, Paint and Place

# Content

WHO ARE WE? We are the activists who got into biking and walking activism and advocacy because we saw mobility as a tool for our communities. We became advocates because we saw how mobility injustice and inequity tie into a bigger picture. We are the individuals who are stepping into active transportation equity jobs. Our professional labor is rooted in our personal experience, and we know from other movements what it takes to move toward equity and justice. Yet, we're having the disorienting experience of being tasked with change in your organizations while being given limited authority or resources.

THE UNTOKENING was created as a space to share experiences of tokenism, sharpen decolonizing tools to grow beyond it, and identify actions to help guide the mobility system toward equity. This document was created from group discussion notes gathered at The Untokening: A Convening for Just Streets & Mobility held in Atlanta on November 13, 2016. We would like to thank all of the attendees and notetakers for their contributions.

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MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES can be found at untokening.org

# What Makes Us Unsafe?

## I.

In today's street safety advocacy, "street design" is usually the answer to the question "what makes streets unsafe?" This has spurred countless efforts to leverage political will toward redesigning streets in ways that center the menace of motorized vehicles. In mobility justice, we focus on the wellbeing of people who travel through streets, rather than centering the wellbeing of streets. For us, "street safety" begins with asking what makes us unsafe in streets.

As we pass through public spaces such as streets, we experience multiple kinds of security and insecurity due to social attitudes toward race, class, gender, age, ability, and modes of transportation. The menace of aggressive driving is one problem, but not separate from these others.

Some individuals are fearful when they travel, because their appearance may draw unwanted attention and even violence. Some individuals struggle to move through streets designed without them in mind. Some individuals had to flee countries that did not protect them and they must hide to survive. Some individuals have been marked as worthless and their fellow travelers treat them accordingly.

It takes tremendous effort and many advocacy hours to convince politicians and bureaucrats that they should spend money on street design that separates people who are traveling in one mode from people traveling in another mode. Biking and walking advocacy's strategic focus on these "wins" privileges one very context-specific form of safety over other, deeper dangers that make some people worth more and some worthless. Our mode of transportation is only one aspect of what makes us safe or unsafe in public.

This might seem like an academic distinction, between one kind of safety and others. But it's not. Urban design-oriented street safety efforts of public spaces routinely include an approach to police enforcement rooted in historically discriminatory practices. Or they are "placemaking" efforts that skip the crucial step of ensuring that community members have an ownership stake before using public funds to spur gentrification.

As **we** pass through public spaces like streets, we experience **multiple** kinds of security and insecurity due to social attitudes toward

RACE GENDER CLASS AGE ABILITY and modes of transportation.

We are what gets removed when spaces get safer for you. We're either priced out or policed out.

Because of this, we do not agree that street safety for all can be achieved through championing design changes that trigger urban renewal and displacement.

Making us safe will take different actions than what has made you safe. We need time and resources to develop these actions.

It's time to break with the old paradigm — this vision of safety defined by our exclusion — and create a new one from which collective safety can grow.

## II.

Some of us come from families that have managed to survive genocide, the cruelty of dehumanization, the theft of our bodies' labor. Some of us have been cast out of families that don't want to accept us. This means our relationships to home, land, air, and water, are often painful ones. We have lived in the toxic zones left over, cast aside, and we are a reminder of the direct line between the order at the top and the chaos at the bottom. In the face of all this we have been graceful, joyful, and resourceful.

Our cultural wealth and social networks have kept us going, because government has so often been used against us.

White immigrants to this country and their descendants have experienced a legal right to stake a claim to land, through programs like the Homestead Act of 1861 and homebuying assistance after World War II. White veterans were able to use government programs to buy homes in new developments that barred non-whites, thus concentrating wealth in some places at the exclusion of others. The law protects their right to watch as their land increases in value and to cash in for future generations. We know because some of us have benefited directly from this system.

Consider whose claims to place are broken and denied in order to keep this system intact. Native nations. All the people who come here without the protection of the law, because they are desperate to keep their families alive and must flee the problems the global economy created at home. The people who were ripped from home by the slave trade. So many of us don't know where we came from; the way we left was that brutal. We've been living out displacement for generations. And while we haven't been wholly excluded from making money off of

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**We're either priced out or policed out.**

land, the shadow that racism has cast over what makes a place good or bad has never lifted. It is from within this shadow today that we witness and experience displacement due to gentrification.

In the face of our bonds to place being actively ignored, in the outright historic denial that we have a sense of place worth honoring, it's hard to take seriously "placemaking" or "tactical urbanism" efforts focused on superficial and temporary changes to streets and other public spaces. These little investments that sometimes use our own cultural aesthetics can have big effects; however, since we're usually not the developers and property owners, we don't win the prize. We get the loss and they get the gain, but this time, it's in our name. Our own cultural resilience gets used against us to "transform" urban neighborhoods from slums to arts districts.

Making money off of homes, through real estate, rests on foundations of scarcity and exclusion. And yet, many people we know are trying to get in on it, even though we're the thing that lowers the property values.

What else are we supposed to do? Owning a home and getting rich: it's the American Dream.

## III.

And what is the mobility counterpart to owning a home, American Dream-style? Owning a car. Just like home ownership, car ownership is a system where being on one side seems a whole lot better than being on the other. Cars make people feel powerful and safe, perhaps because, after generations of displacement, motorized travel can take us back. Cars give us access to jobs, family, faith, and other nourishing resources. They allow us to return to neighborhoods where we can no longer afford to live, but where our institutions remain. Many people view car ownership as a passport to upward mobility. A positive view of cars shapes the landscape of accessing sustainable mobility in our communities, as anathema as that may sound to folks who identify as car-free.

The stark realities that mass car travel produces toxic air and violent deaths and that these burdens fall disproportionately on the shoulders of communities of color don't outweigh the car's symbolic importance. Problematically, transportation justice has often been equated as access to a car as a mobility civil right. Traveling inside of a car can feel like a spa when you've had to spend years making do without one in regions designed around driving.

Our own CULTURAL RESILIENCE gets used against us to

"TRANSFORM"
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ARTS
DISTRICTS

Because that's where history matters: Public transportation spending decisions made long, long ago coerce people into car-based travel today. These decisions created winners and losers along race and class lines. The winners —highway commuters — gained convenient access to suburban homes and recreational opportunities. The losers — highway neighbors — had to stand aside as block upon block of housing in communities of color was bulldozed. They lost clean air, while the pollution corridors enabled the winners to avoid whole neighborhoods in the shadow of race. Highways were often strategically planned and built through low-income communities of color despite their protestations, even as basic services were (and are) neglected in the neighborhoods they cut apart. The effect of those highway siting decisions can be felt today in very tangible forms, such as higher asthma rates in communities of color. On the cultural side, driving can feel like the only respectable way to access job centers, civic participation, and social life.

These car-dependent systems were created at the expense of communities of color. They pollute and divide communities of color. Communities of color depend on them for survival. So who should be directing the machinery to untangle this conundrum? We don't want to watch as, again, transportation infrastructure decisions are made without us. You may think that building for cars was the mistake; we think the whole process was rotten.

## IV.

Driving all the time distances people from the neighborhoods they travel through, and plenty of people view this as a good thing.
For most people, traveling outside of a car is an expression of how little security they have in this world. Like the man who fled hunger and violence in his native village, who paid thousands of dollars for the privilege of crossing a treacherous desert, who rides a broken mountain bike on broken sidewalks for 10 miles each morning to get to a worker center and wait for opportunity, who on a good day rides home worried about getting robbed of the cash payment in his pocket. To say that this not uncommon man is unsafe because he is on a bike overlooks that he is on a bike because that's where we put people who are unsafe.

When people's lives have been shaped by economic exploitation, arbitrary national borders, high costs of housing that separate jobs from affordable dwellings, how is it respectful to claim that their safety will be increased with the addition of a cycle track or bike share station?

It should be easy to see what a poor match these solutions are to complex street safety questions. All these insecurities haunt public streets, especially for those who cannot afford to travel by car. Racist oppression of our cultural expression, not to mention the disinvestment that accompanied

These decisions
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& class lines

suburban white flight, emptied our streets and parks, making them unsafe. This means that urban dwellers built community in private spaces, which in turn fostered deep distrust between the community and the city or outside organizations. It even broke or prevented bonds between neighbors.

Historically, divide-and-conquer approaches to governance and resource distribution have pitted marginalized communities against each other. The sense that one group can only gain when the other loses, or that one group is untrustworthy, or that one person is a representative of a whole group, has made multi-racial or cross-cultural organizing challenging. Beyond this divide-and-conquer approach, there has also been a misguided impulse within the dominant culture to reject interdependence as weakness. Social isolation is the ideal this country is moving toward technologically: being alone in your dwelling, interacting only in brief and circumscribed transactions to serve your needs. In a world of Amazon and Facebook, socializing is supposed to be something you curate, not something you are compelled to do.

On a bus or train, or on a sidewalk, you are compelled to spend time with others. Our deep cultural commitment to social isolation, in part enabled by the car, makes it easy to devalue public transit.

## V.

Of all the reasons why traveling inside a car might feel safer than traveling on foot, bike, or public transit, one deserves special attention: the possibility of being detained, or worse, due to your appearance.

We are deeply concerned about the constraints that racial profiling, violence, and immigration policies put on access to green space and other public space improvements, especially for youth.

Policing, particularly in urban centers, has long acted as a key partner in larger urban renewal efforts that used public funding to reinforce segregation. Historically, "undesirable" people were kept within redlined zones with police raids and harsh treatment (either by police or by whites who were able to act with total impunity) for those who dared venture beyond the boundaries in which they were supposed to remain. The legacy of repressive policing is devastating — the more intensive the repression, the more insecure the public space and the more likely youth seemed to be to seek security in the mutual protection societies that later evolved into gangs.

A conventional approach to public safety all too easily turns these young people into prisoners. It does not increase their safety to push them into the vicious cycle of over-incarceration in both public and, increasingly, private jails, prisons, and detention centers.

POLICING has long acted as a key partner in larger urban renewal efforts that used public funding TO REINFORCE SEGREGATION.

The segregation of communities via planning, disenfranchisement, and disinvestment has also worked in law enforcement's favor, demonizing entire communities and practicing overt repression where there were no white/"credible" witnesses to question that behavior. To shocked people of privilege watching on their TVs, unrest in cities like Los Angeles in response to that repression seemed only to justify segregation, stereotyping of communities, and a disinterest in understanding how continued profiling of Black and brown folks, especially those moving through whiter spaces, not only limited mobility but communicated to those Black and brown folks that the public space was not for them.

Privileged groups continue to benefit from this uneven policing, and one aspect of their privilege is that they can grow to be adults without ever being made aware of how they are protected from us. This racialized policing of public spaces has never ended or even been fully acknowledged.

It rings hollow when those who benefit from social exclusion advocate for public space designs and regulations that express their own preferences, without addressing the limitations on mobility that discrimination and inequality impose.

## VI.

When it comes to changing the status quo of devaluing mobility without motors, there's a complicated relationship between government-level change and social/cultural change.

Consider these common mobility challenges that make driving easier for our communities:

> discriminatory planning practices and policing that make streets and neighborhoods hard to access;

> the use of infrastructure to divide communities and to make it easier for groups to avoid interaction;

> limited transportation networks, the hours and hours spent in transit, and the policing of methods used by folks of color, especially those that are lower income, that make access to resources, jobs, education, other communities more difficult;

> multi-generational family situations and obligations and irregular work patterns that make private vehicle ownership essential for some; and

> the subsequent bias against methods used by the poor that encourages those on the margins to aspire to private vehicle ownership.

Privileged groups continue to benefit from this uneven policing, and can grow to be adults without ever being made aware of how they are

PROTECTED FROM US

While some of these seem like mistakes of urban design that can be remedied through investing public resources in different kinds of transportation systems, we are not equally positioned to benefit. Government is not something separate from social life; government agencies are run by humans who are part of the same broader culture we want to change. In fact, this official-as-individual approach is something that biking and walking advocates have promoted for a number of years as they attempt to influence what elected officials and their employees think about active transportation. They have paid for these officials to visit European cities where biking is unexceptional, with the hope that they will return ready to "Copenhagenize" U.S. cities and towns. In this advocacy model, the problem isn't the overall framework of top-down planning and engineering of public space; the problem is that white men with cars were at the center of the 20th century approach.

For our communities, it's not as simple as putting on a suit and going to city hall. The experiences and input of marginalized communities are often disputed or disbelieved by institutions of power. Government systems planned the destruction of our neighborhoods during the white flight era and government systems still regulate public spaces by harassing and detaining us. We can see structural flaws in the design for top-down planning and engineering of public space.

The influence-the-officials approach also relies on an underlying colonial attitude that European models for public space can, and should, work well in all parts of the world. The colonial project imposes the preferences of able-bodied, straight, well-to-do, white male bodies on the rest of the world, and champions the structures, frameworks, and narratives designed to uphold their superior position. These still-living, Eurocentric hierarchies have been enshrined in many of our governing institutions, narratives, cultures, and practices. They are also embedded in urban planning policies, frameworks, standards, practices, cultures, and narratives.

In the first decade of this century, biking/walking advocates expressed the colonial thinking embedded in their approach to public space by creating the trend to sell "human-scale" street design and infrastructure as an urban renewal tool. Officials seem to support biking and walking — as long as it leads to cycle tracks. Never mind what the rest of us were already doing here, how we were already living, what struggles we face in getting around.

We're often treated as though we are unfit to design our own futures, guide public spending, or understand the "real" issues at hand. Our communities are given limited access to information, asked to choose from a pre-determined menu of options for street design, and judged by how well we respond to engagement and interventions imposed from outside. Then, when we don't go head over heels for the colonization of our public spaces, we're marked NIMBYs, barriers to progress.

We're often treated as though ~~we are unfit~~ to **~~design~~** our own futures, guide public spending, or understand the **"real"** issues at hand.

Why has it been so easy for this exclusionary approach to become standard, even in planning circles that see themselves as championing people and place?

Here's a possibility, again based on the fact that we're all humans tied into the same cultural systems: Individuals who grew up in suburban zones where cultural barriers, high costs, and police enforcement kept out undesirable populations, may unconsciously associate feelings of safety with economic and racial segregation. Some of those individuals go to urban planning school and read about "urbanism" as some design ideal that exists apart from the lives of the people who survived white flight in urban neighborhoods.

Many planning schools fail to offer standard training around the inequities embedded in urban history and today's built environments, and to the particular experiences of communities of color. Because planning schools do not require students to investigate how they developed their own perspectives on public space, it's perfectly natural that planners imbue their vision for transforming urban neighborhoods into "livable" zones with their own unexamined preferences. It can feel perfectly natural for them to further an exclusionary vision for urban space through their professional work.

It doesn't help that the professional field of planning relies on collecting quantitative data, actively rejecting the knowledge of community residents and erasing our stories and struggles.

Social movements oriented toward streets and mobility professionalized into planning and design trends that today have increasing political and financial support. They tend to prioritize government-level change, such as planning models and political advocacy, without addressing our communities' disillusionment with and distrust of government systems. In setting this reality aside, these movements continue the legacy of planning without us, sometimes even acting as the city's partner as a faux grassroots without actually bringing oppressed groups into the process. In a culture where racial exclusion is normal, it's easier to champion designs from respected but faraway places than to respond to our local community needs.

We're tired of being erased, having to fight to get in the room, being shushed when we complicate business-as-usual by knowing different worlds.

## VII.

Here are the truths that life has not hidden from our view: When people live at the intersection of multiple vectors of oppression, unfettered access to public space and unfettered mobility are not guaranteed, regardless of street design. Racism, sexism, classism, able-ism, xenophobia, homophobia, constraints imposed upon gender-non-conforming folks, and insecurity in the public space resulting from historic disenfranchisement can make it hostile to many.

We're tired of being
ERASED
and having to FIGHT
to get in the room

Being SHUSHED
when we complicate
business as usual by
KNOWING different worlds.

This can be especially true for young men of color. The people who most need reliable transportation equipment, accessories, and repairs often have the least access to them.

Without including each community's experience in defining safety targets, it is unclear whether changing street infrastructure increases overall security for existing residents. Keeping "safety" narrowly defined in terms of collisions leaves out a lot, which makes it an inherently inequitable framework.

Bodily ability, gender presentation, clothing, race, and other elements of appearance limit our access to what privileged groups view as open spaces. Our bodies encounter different risks and have different needs. Many women and trans individuals experience sexual harassment on streets and on public transit. Black and brown bodies experience disproportionate policing. One-size-fits-all approaches to urban design do not respond to the complexity of our different bodies in motion.

**As long as we are seen as less-than, marginalized people will not be able to freely and safely access and move through public spaces. It is not streets, but individuals who carry the burden of arbitrary borders that say "you are safe" and "you are not." We cannot stand by and watch as "street safety" gets contained to one border between those-in-cars and those-not-in-cars, when we know there are countless borders dividing us and people who look like us, who share our DNA, who suffer with the reality that the American Dream is the world's nightmare. The borders are always porous because we are creative and we find ways to continue to survive, against devastating odds, but we cannot accept being told that we should use our bodies to carry out someone else's vision.**

# Our Vision

## Collective safety in streets.

Liberating those whose oppressed mobility is symptomatic of broader hardship should be a central aim of sustainable transportation projects.

True "safety" and equitable mobility address socioeconomic, cultural, discriminatory, and physical barriers to access and to having safety within public spaces. We all have diverse abilities and challenges and, therefore, different bodies demand distinct social, physical, and cultural supports within shared mobility environments. True safety and equitable mobility require radical inclusion in mobility planning and implementation.

We resist the culture of fear that allows those most secure to paint othered individuals as enemies. Instead, we advocate that trust, trust-building, and relationship-building be the cornerstone of any process of engagement.
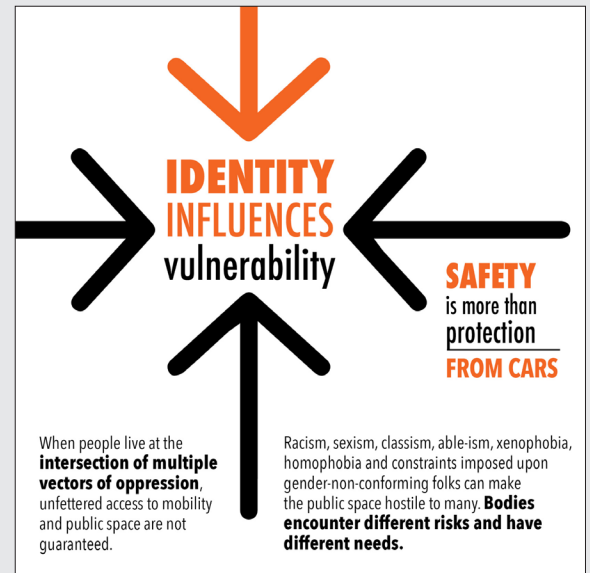
Young people should be at the center of urban design. We must create supportive environments where they can define their own needs and play a meaningful role in a democratic future.

Public spaces must be made safe and accessible for the most vulnerable populations — those who face historical and ongoing systemic oppression. We want public space improvements that contribute to a sense of well-being for those most burdened.

## Public processes that distribute public resources equitably.

Mobility justice demands that historically marginalized communities be heard as full partners in planning processes, not asked to rubber stamp pre-determined objectives but engaged in the effort to generate those objectives from the outset.

## Principles of Mobility Justice



IDENTITY INFLUENCES vulnerability

SAFETY is more than protection FROM CARS

When people live at the **intersection of multiple vectors of oppression**, unfettered access to mobility and public space are not guaranteed.

Racism, sexism, classism, able-ism, xenophobia, homophobia and constraints imposed upon gender-non-conforming folks can make the public space hostile to many. **Bodies encounter different risks and have different needs.**

### Mobility Justice

demands that "safety" and equitable mobility address not only the construction of our streets but the socioeconomic, cultural, and discriminatory barriers to access and comfort different communities experience within public spaces. **We must shift focus from the modes of transit people use to the bodies and identities of the people using those modes** by centering the experiences of marginalized individuals and the most vulnerable communities. It acknowledges that safety is different for different people, and should be defined by those most economically and legally vulnerable.

Different bodies in motion

**RESIST**

one-size-fits-all approaches

to

transportation.

Addressing barriers to mobility entails an exploration of why people choose the modes they do and tackling the wider range of barriers to mobility imposed upon communities as a whole, as well as individual bodies. Oppressive systems such as ableism, toxic masculinity and white supremacy undermine the free expression of marginalized communities and perpetuate narrow approaches to streets safety that fuel inequities and exclusion — and must be abolished.

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People of color and other marginalized groups are often told that civic participation must take place within spaces and frameworks designed to benefit and empower those with privilege.  We must be able to reject these frameworks that oppress us and alternatively create our own frameworks and spaces centered in our experiences. We must be able to engage in discussions and ideas that do not by default cast us as less-than and criminal.

In addition to addressing the need for neighborhood-level measurements, the lived experiences of community members must be given priority as "data" in assessing infrastructure and investment needs, while also accounting for the deep and lasting trauma from the erasure of social, cultural and economic networks.

We will support each other in speaking out about the relationship between policing and planning, and the extent to which it can deny people of color (especially those with non-conforming gender identities) basic mobility due to  fear, trauma, and more, concretely, bogus ticketing, incarceration, and deportation.

Mobility justice affirms the rights of all people to have access to the equipment and technology necessary to move in ways that achieve their individual and collective goals. The community resources that create more access to equipment and repairs deserve public investment. We believe there should be more economic opportunities to create community repair centers and other social environments where people can share mobility knowledge.

Discussions around transportation modes must always include recognition of the human and community context, the exploration of options available to those communities, and the examination of how investments in the alleviation of contextual constraints would make more sustainable modes of transit more tenable (e.g. policing, transit access, housing affordability, child care options, immigration issues, job opportunities/viable wages, access to education, etc.)

## Principles of Mobility Justice

# PRIORITIZE PEOPLE

## over profit, property or placemaking $$$

Segregation and gentrification provide economic benefits to privileged populations, both historically and today. They define what counts as development, while those who bear the hidden costs are overruled or silenced through displacement. Those reaping the financial, cultural, and infrastructural benefits of gentrification are complicit in perpetuating oppression.

**Mobility Justice centers** people over profit, property or placemaking, and prioritizes the community's lived experiences and aspirations as the primary driver of change and progress. It recognizes the significance of human infrastructure and ensures new projects enhance rather than erase or displace existing communities or neighborhood mobility strategies.

Successful development should be defined by effects on people, not economic efficiency. Benefits of neighborhood changes must accrue most to those who live in the community and historically have experienced the most neglect. Sustainable, equitable mobility projects take place in landscapes where profit-sharing models are plentiful.

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Principles of environmental justice must be integrated into mobility planning and implementation, including recognizing the social and emotional impact of disconnection from nature, addressing the health disparities due to the toxic emissions and land use impact of motorized travel, and connecting the displacement of marginalized communities and the necessity of longer commutes to the acceleration of climate change and pollution. We demand and expect the provision of healthy environments as a right for all residents, as well as equal access to the benefits of green space — and remediation of past environmental harms.

## A deeper understanding of place.

Mobility justice centers people over property or placemaking, and prioritizes the community's lived experiences and aspirations as the primary driver of change and progress.

Mobility justice challenges the assertion that places have yet to be "made," instead examining the historical processes that make it possible to label marginalized communities' living spaces as poor quality.

We are creating a deeper understanding of place that begins with (rather than erases) Indigenous sovereignty. We need time to learn from Native nations who have worked tirelessly as guardians of land, air, water, and animals. We want to learn how to treat place as sacred.

We need space to tally the costs of long-term harm done to communities, space to consider the costs to vulnerable communities of purely market-based approaches and approaches that do not acknowledge that the playing field is not level, space to discuss ways to right historical wrongs, and space to challenge narratives about the future of the city and who has a stake in it.

Principles of Mobility Justice



## See structural BARRIERS

Streets, infrastructure, and transportation are intimately tied to the human experience. For many, mobility is shaped by deliberately designed barriers, including the use of highways or rail lines to divide communities, and the stigmatization of transportation methods used by low-income and communities of color.

## Mobility Justice

examines the context and options available to communities **AND** what investments **BEYOND STREET INFRASTRUCTURE** would make more sustainable modes of transit more tenable, like **>>>>>**

changes in policing, better bus schedules, lower fares, housing affordability, & family-oriented engagement

Until many past wrongs and inequities are addressed, pursuit of mobility justice for marginalized communities may involve **looking beyond individual choices about transportation modes to deeply related issues** like housing instability, job options and over policing.

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We want to think beyond the real estate model to collective thriving in shared places. Given the racialized wealth gap that has resulted in fewer homeowners of color, do we want to shore up the inequitable real-estate-as-wealth system through creating more homeowners? Do we want to create alternative systems that secure our bonds with place? Both? We need to talk amongst ourselves and learn from other movements how to honor our bonds with place.

The right of communities to stay in place must be affirmed and prioritized so that residents who have suffered the social, economic and health harms of disinvestment and environmental racism are able to contribute to and benefit from access and ownership of green spaces and a cleaner environment.

## A sustainable economy.

Sustainable mobility projects will be equitable if they take place in landscapes where profit-sharing models are plentiful. Cooperatives, community land trusts, and other community-oriented forms of business and property ownership will prevent new mobility projects from exacerbating the effects of racialized wealth inequality.

Mobility justice argues that economic (re)development must not come at the expense of low-income communities. Those reaping the financial, cultural, and infrastructural benefits of gentrification are complicit in perpetuating oppression — and thus they hold us back from examining and dismantling unjust systems.

We must have space to develop positions on our labor, how to define it, how to ask for compensation, and shift away from being exploited by well-resourced systems. We refuse to pass on the exploitation.

### Principles of Mobility Justice

**DISCARD "best practices"**

**Respond to local needs**

Social movements oriented toward streets and mobility prioritize planning models and political advocacy without addressing communities' disillusionment with and distrust of government systems. **This often results in the use of colonial, oppressive or inaccessible language, and designs and ideas that export Eurocentric "best practices" rather than responding to local needs.**

**Mobility Justice** de-centers Eurocentric solutions as the default model and looks toward dynamic, grassroots approaches and solutions elsewhere, such as South and Central America, and Southeast Asia. It demands language justice and information access that does not exclude some because they speak different languages or through professional, technical, or academic jargon.

Mobility advocates and practitioners must find peers in places **where the vulnerable and marginalized feel comfortable or have power.** These community leaders must have access to conferences and information, to get exposed to different people and perspectives, and gain support once at the table.

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# A better movement.

We want our people to have the freedom to experience the power of the body in moving without a car. This will take building a movement around our existing multi-modal lifestyles, with dialogue that is sensitive to the positive and negative experiences we have had with mobility and in streets. To address, sensitively, the role of transportation infrastructure and car culture in the historical and ongoing destruction of low-income, ethnic, and racialized neighborhoods, we need community-led reflection processes on how discriminatory transportation spending forces people into car-dependence today. We believe that increasing our communities' access to the current destructive system does not go far enough, but we are uninterested in imposing a different mobility hierarchy from outside.

We are invested in gaining self-knowledge about how we are shaped by and how we shape our places, not as a resource for urban planning, but as a resource to be directed by our own communities.

Multi-racial organizing is vital for communities to reclaim power and agency from the structures, policies, and programs that have divided us. We will acknowledge distrust grounded in anti-Blackness, anti-immigrant sentiments, competition, and other destructive forces, tracing these resentments back to their sources, and using that process as a way to foster communication, build trust, and forge a common vocabulary and agenda.

We must have access to conferences and information and be exposed to different people and perspectives. We will support each other in speaking freely about our experiences navigating oppressive systems such as toxic masculinity or white supremacy.

We are becoming a social movement for mobility justice that actively works toward addressing historical and current injustices experienced by communities. Instead of centering Eurocentric solutions as the default model, our movement learns grassroots approaches and solutions from elsewhere, such as those in South and Central America, Southeast Asia, and other places.

## Principles of Mobility Justice



**REJECT POLICING** as a street safety solution

**Built on a history of explicit racism,** policing prioritizes the life and property of white communities, while criminalizing and traumatizing people of color. Policing has long acted as a partner to segregate and disenfranchise communities of color, **making public space unwelcoming, unsafe and deadly.**



**Mobility Justice** demands an understanding of the relationship between policing and public space, and reject law enforcement — increased ticketing, beat cops on bikes, etc — as a solution for street safety.
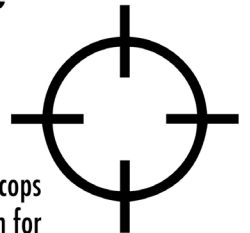
Mobility advocates and practitioners should align with and integrate the Movement for Black Lives Platform on "End the War on Black People," found at **policy.m4bl.org/end-war-on-black-people**

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We are decolonizing and freeing ourselves from dependency on systems of oppression. We must go to where people are, rather than staying in our silos of power and comfort. This requires us to listen, to use appropriate language, to acknowledge lived experiences, to connect with people already doing work, to be willing to go to places where those erased feel comfortable and have power.
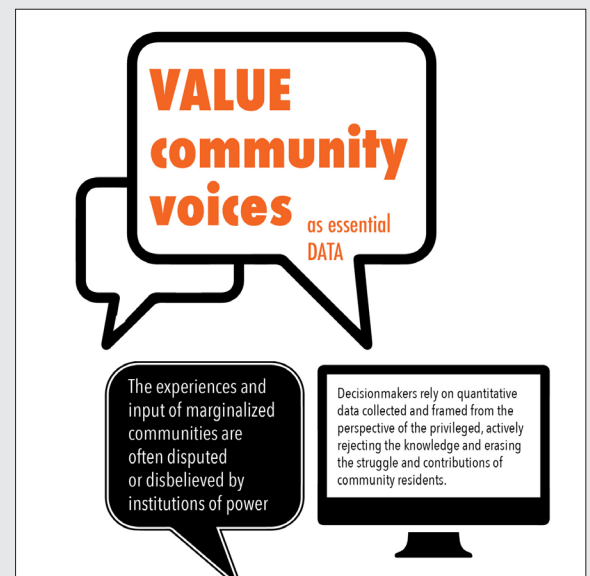
## The Support We Need

We won't stop doing this work; it's in our bodies, it's in our blood. Our commitment aside, our movement must have adequate resources if we are to enact our vision. We challenge the technical and professional authorities that shape mobility policy and planning to interrogate their own privileges and practices. We were never part of the strategy to rely on white privilege to associate biking/walking improvements with gentrification and neighborhood change, and we urge advocates and officials to move on from that exclusionary chapter of biking and walking advocacy and join us in a movement that integrates mobility into the larger landscape of social movements focused on justice and liberation.

We are aware that some biking and walking advocates may view our message about collective safety as a barrier to their own vision. Sadly, they are not alone; many white people in this country still see our success as taking away from their own. And so do some people of color; we see you, sisters and brothers who feel threatened when we speak these truths. You may believe, firmly, that your vision of safe biking/walking has nothing to do with broader social transformation and liberation. You can stay busy forever in your paradigm, because doing what you do is not easy and takes much of your time and energy.

But if you are ready to transform your work, we invite you to shift directions and grow with us. Our roots are already entangled, deep down, whether or not you turn with us toward the sun.

Principles of Mobility Justice



**VALUE community voices** as essential DATA

The experiences and input of marginalized communities are often disputed or disbelieved by institutions of power

Decisionmakers rely on quantitative data collected and framed from the perspective of the privileged, actively rejecting the knowledge and erasing the struggle and contributions of community residents.



**Mobility Justice** demands that the lived experiences of community members be given priority as "DATA" in assessing infrastructure and investment needs, while also accounting for the deep and lasting trauma from the erasure of social, cultural and economic networks.

Respect and value the assets inherent and abundant in marginalized communities, rather than their deficiencies, and develop data tools that serve the current community rather than transform it for others. Value the local knowledge of these communities and compensate them for sharing that wisdom.

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Our vision for collective safety and self-determination can be supported in the following ways:

Recognize that what constitutes safety is different for different people, and should be defined by those most economically and legally vulnerable. Take the time to witness and address the vulnerabilities they face.
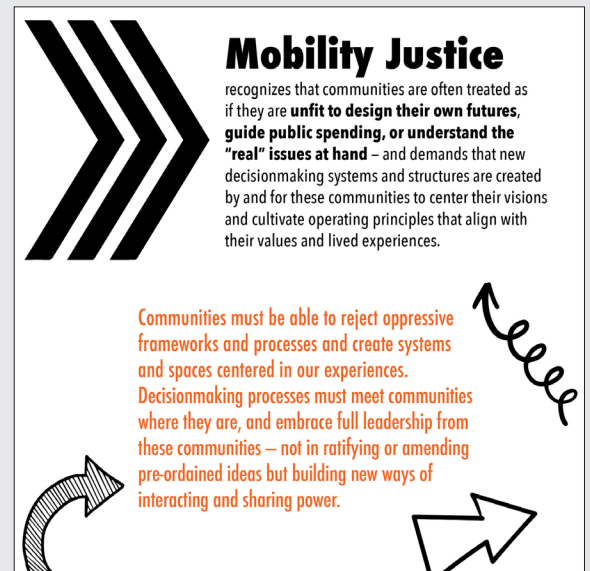
Shift the conversation from streets to bodies. Focusing on the body allows for the consideration of the constraints imposed upon that body and centers the lived experience of marginalized people.

Ask yourself: How have I benefited from the over-policing of communities of color and those living in poverty? How have I been harmed?

Privileged populations must probe their fears about insecurity. These feelings have roots in white supremacy, class privilege and fragility of identity. Acknowledging the complicity of privileged fears in historic and ongoing oppression can give us courage to move past conflicts, and unearth new tools to bridge gaps between groups and communities. We are connected, even when it feels negative. Men need to step up to help dismantle patriarchy; likewise, white people need to help undo white supremacy. Speaking from the side that has benefited is a crucial step in recognizing that we are all implicated in each other's lives. We don't have a choice about being part of one ecology, but we do have a choice about the nature of our impact.

Join urban planning discussions from a perspective of respecting and valuing the assets inherent and abundant in marginalized communities, rather than their deficiencies, and develop data tools that measure community vulnerability and the impacts of gentrification to serve the current community. Development's success should be measured by its effects on existing residents, not by its economic return for absent investors. The benefits of neighborhood changes must accrue most to those who historically have experienced the most neglect.

## Principles of Mobility Justice



**CO-CREATE new decisionmaking processes**

People of color and other marginalized groups are often told that civic participation must take place within spaces and frameworks built on white supremacy and designed to benefit and empower those with privilege. Inviting marginalized communities to these decision-making "tables" puts them at an inherent disadvatage and reinforces white-centered constraints.

**Mobility Justice** recognizes that communities are often treated as if they are **unfit to design their own futures, guide public spending, or understand the "real" issues at hand** – and demands that new decisionmaking systems and structures are created by and for these communities to center their visions and cultivate operating principles that align with their values and lived experiences.

Communities must be able to reject oppressive frameworks and processes and create systems and spaces centered in our experiences. Decisionmaking processes must meet communities where they are, and embrace full leadership from these communities – not in ratifying or amending pre-ordained ideas but building new ways of interacting and sharing power.

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Educate yourself and your networks about how environmental racism and disinvestment have disconnected many urban communities from green spaces and disproportionately created toxic environments, including polluting the air and water, eroding systems of self-sufficiency, like food production, and pitting environmental sustainability against economic justice. Getting outside is not simple for everyone. Consider the role that "green infrastructure" improvements, like bike lanes and parklets, play in environmental gentrification as longtime and lower-income residents are displaced.

Use your privilege to defer so that community members take a lead in development and planning processes, with their labor and expertise properly recognized and compensated. Local activists should lead in developing solutions for existing multi-modal challenges that address long histories of discriminatory transportation planning. Expect communities to have complex relationships to exploitative and polluting systems such as highways, which is why solutions should be on their terms.

Identify and combat institutionalized racism within planning processes, programs, and policies, the role policing plays in implementing urbanist visions and in communicating to people of color that they are not part of that vision of the future, and ways we can work with marginalized communities to curb the extent to which "enforcement" is part of creating safer, more secure, and more welcoming public spaces for all.

Educate yourself and your networks about how oppressed communities have survived and thrived in spite of systemic neglect, and how these most vulnerable populations continue to struggle because of structural inequalities. While publicly funded projects may play a role in highlighting this resilience, it does not belong to urban planning or city projects; it is a resource that should be directed by community interests. Value the local knowledge of these communities and co-create sustainable economic systems around their abilities.

Join us in accelerating the shift to a just economy by paying us for our expertise, and move beyond tokenism when hiring or appointing for diversity. Access is important, but we also need support once we are at the table.
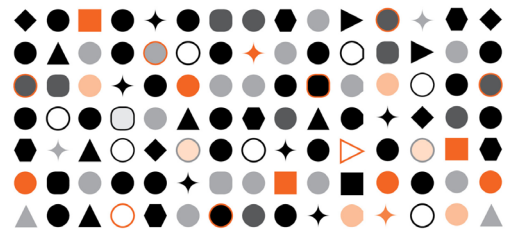
## Principles of Mobility Justice



**CULTIVATE** collective, cross-community **POWER**

Historically, divide and conquer approaches to governance and resource distribution have pitted marginalized communities against each other. The sense that one group can only gain when the other loses or that one group is untrustworthy has made cross-community collaboration a challenge.



**Mobility Justice**

includes **multi-racial organizing** for communities to reclaim power and agency from the structures, policies, and programs that have divided them. It acknowledges distrust grounded in anti-blackness, anti-immigrant sentiments, etc., traces resentments to their sources, and uses that process to **foster communication, build trust, and forge a common vocabulary and agenda.**

Join us in our work to build a multi-racial movement for mobility justice at untokening.org | @untokening | #untokening

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