

untokening 1.0

Principles of Mobility Justice

These principles were drafted using perspectives gathered at **The Untokening: A Convening for Just Streets & Communities** held in Atlanta, GA on November 13, 2016.

Justice-oriented advocates are generally denied the opportunity to bring their whole selves to a space and are more likely to be tokenized – forced to pick their battles, to speak within a constrained set of categories, to suffer outright dismissal for straying too far from those categories, and to serve as stand-ins for the entirety of the diverse communities they represent. Instead of offering ready-made solutions, these principles outline recommendations for mobility justice that are rooted in the liberation of historically marginalized communities. **Each “principle” is broken into three parts:**

Problem

We challenge the current paradigm by illuminating the range of barriers to mobility access that have long plagued marginalized communities.

Principle

We offer a new vision that lays the foundation necessary to pursue mobility justice.

Practice

We suggest approaches that can help justice advocates work toward that alternative paradigm, either in white-centered planning spaces or in their own work in marginalized communities.


We affirm that the Principles of Mobility Justice comprise a **living document** that will change and evolve over time as our challenges and community priorities shift.

Join us in our work to build a multi-racial movement for mobility justice at untokening.org or [@untokening](https://twitter.com/untokening)

Our communities look and function the way they do because of **INTENTIONAL HARM** perpetrated by **WHITE SUPREMACIST POLICIES** and actions by government and advocacy. Historical disenfranchisement, disinvestment, disproportionate exposure to pollution, and repressive policing in communities of color **CONTINUE TO NEGATIVELY IMPACT** our collective health, wealth, mobility and security.



**Seek to repair
harm, not
erase history**



Mobility Justice demands that we fully **excavate, recognize, and reconcile** the historical and current injustices experienced by communities – with impacted communities given space and resources to envision and implement planning models and political advocacy on streets and mobility that **actively work to address historical and current injustices** experienced by communities.

Seek to understand how oppressed communities have **survived and thrived in spite of systemic neglect**, & how these most vulnerable populations continue to struggle because of structural inequalities.



**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.**

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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.

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.

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.

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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.



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.**




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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.

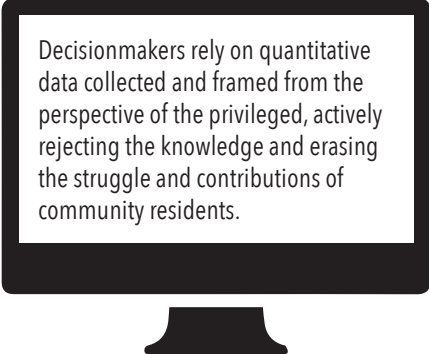
Mobility advocates and practitioners must find peers in places **where the vulnerable and marginalized feel comfortable or have power**. These community leaders must have access to conferences and information, to get exposed to different people and perspectives, and gain support once at the table.



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.

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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.





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 disadvantage and reinforces white-centered constraints.

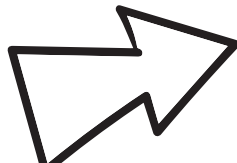
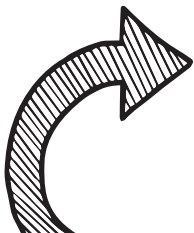


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recognizes that communities are often treated as if they are **unfit to design their own futures, guide public spending, or understand the “real” issues at hand** – and demands that new decisionmaking systems and structures are created by and for these 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.



REJECT POLICING

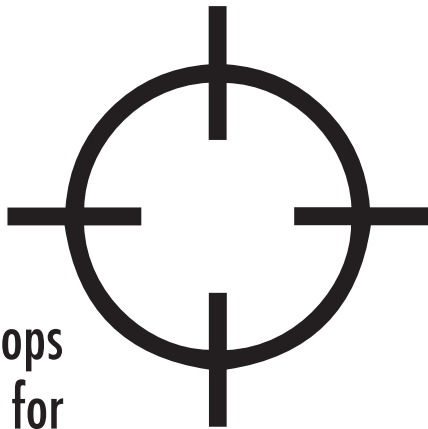
as a street
safety solution

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.**



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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

Environmental racism and disinvestment have disconnected many urban communities from green spaces and disproportionately created toxic environments. Infrastructure improvements like bike lanes and green space often result in **environmental gentrification as longtime and lower-income residents are displaced by more affluent populations.**

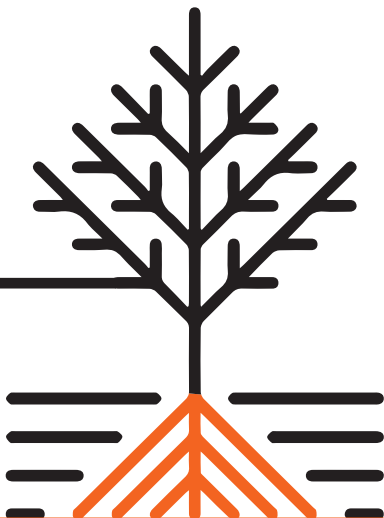


address
environmental
RACISM

without green gentrification

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integrates environmental justice principles to address health disparities, displacement and disconnection from nature. It prioritizes the right of communities who have suffered the harms of environmental racism to stay in place to benefit from access and ownership of green spaces and a cleaner environment.



Communities have the right to demand and expect healthy environments, and EQUAL ACCESS to the benefits of green space – and remediation of past environmental harms. Advocates must critically examine the implementation of “sustainable” development, so that healthier environments aren’t active agents of displacement and cultural erasure.

CULTIVATE

collective, cross-community

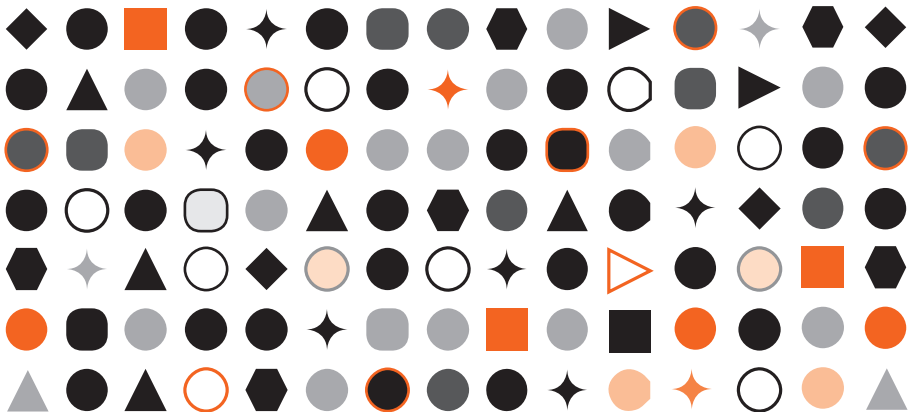
POWER

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.



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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.**



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