

LEADING WITH RACE IN CLIMATE SOLUTIONS



KEY REMINDERS AMIDST THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

1

Climate justice is racial justice.

2

The Trump administration is trying to create chaos and instill fear.

3

We are powerful when we raise our voices collectively—now is the time to lead with what we know our communities need.

4

Civil rights laws are a necessary safeguard to protect our communities.

5

Racial justice and diversity work is still legal—and we need it.

6

They are launching a full-scale attack to erode trust in government and consolidate their power.

7

What the Trump administration is doing is illegal, and we won't let them get away with it.

8

Action gets results—we need to defend our rights and democracy.

9

There's still a lot you can do to lead with race in your climate work.

Leading with Race in Climate Solutions is a collaborative project focused on equipping community leaders, local government practitioners, and philanthropy with the information and resources necessary to continue leading with race in their climate change and social justice work.

Core project partners include:

[Just Solutions](#) [The Greenlining Institute](#)
[The Chisholm Legacy Project](#) [The Urban Sustainability Directors Network](#) [Upright Consulting Services](#) [Gilmore Khandhar, LLC](#) and [Facilitating Power](#)

Given the constantly shifting legal and political terrain, our team¹ has distilled nine key points to keep in mind as you work to center racial justice in your climate efforts.



1 Climate justice is racial justice

- * For decades, communities of color have experienced under investment from the government and over pollution by large corporations.
- * Increases in climate disasters like flooding, wildfires, and extreme weather mean that communities of color are on the front lines of experiencing the most acute harm.
- * At the same time, the administration is escalating mass deportations and abductions, directly threatening people displaced by the climate crisis and causing widespread fear and panic.
- * Meanwhile, the oil, gas, and utility corporations responsible for causing and accelerating climate change are also poisoning our air, land, and water while making huge profits.

2 The Trump administration is trying to create chaos and instill fear

- * The flurry of Executive Orders (EOs)—nearly 75 in Trump’s first month in office—is meant to overwhelm and confuse us.
- * The reality is that not much has actually changed from a legal standpoint. The political climate sounds and feels very different, but the laws themselves have not changed.²
- * By being vague and not defining terms in the EOs (such as DEI and equity), they³ are hoping people will overreact and obey in advance.

3 We are powerful when we raise our voices collectively—now is the time to lead with what we know our communities need

- * Most Americans agree with the idea that everyone deserves a fair chance at success.
- * There is broad public support for many of the programs and public services the administration is illegally trying to dismantle.
- * Numerous states, local governments, organizations, and community efforts are still working to support climate and environmental justice.
- * Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts offer critical support to a wide range of communities, including people of color, Indigenous peoples, women, low-income families, people with disabilities, LGBTQ folks, immigrants, and more.

4 Civil rights laws are a necessary safeguard to protect our communities

- * Decades of organizing and advocacy finally put in place protections that shield our communities from unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or age.
- * These laws protect our right to vote, to a fair trial, to government services, and to a public education.



5 Racial justice and diversity work is still legal—and we need it

- * Despite what Trump says about DEI in his Executive Orders, that doesn't change the law.
- * The federal government does not have the power or authority to categorically declare that a certain activity is discriminatory.
- * In our Constitutional order, courts determine what is legal, not the Executive Branch.
- * DEI and racial equity efforts help us live up to our country's promise that everybody has an equal opportunity to thrive.

We are powerful when we raise our voices collectively—now is the time to lead with what we know our communities need.

NOTES:

- 1 In addition to the organizations listed as part of the core project team, we're grateful to guidance from our partners at Racial Equity Legal Initiative (RELI), the Othering & Belonging Institute, and We Make the Future, which has informed this content.
- 2 Before Trump took office, nine states had anti-affirmative action laws and the Supreme Court ruled against race-based affirmative action programs in most college admissions in SFFA vs. Harvard (2023).
- 3 For the purposes of this document, "they" refers to the Trump administration and/or the organized group of conservatives launching legal and legislative attacks on racial justice work.



**Keep reading
for more!**

6 They are launching a full-scale attack to erode trust in government and consolidate their power

- * DOGE is haphazardly and illegally slashing budgets, laying off federal employees, and wreaking havoc—none of which leads to greater efficiency.
- * They're slashing critical services that most Americans rely on for energy assistance, housing, food, and healthcare to subsidize more tax breaks for the rich.
- * By decreasing the power of regulatory agencies, they're making it easier for corporations and the wealthy to game the system at our expense.
- * They're weaponizing the law for their own agenda—pushing past the limits of existing law and blatantly defying the separation of powers that are at the heart of the constitution.

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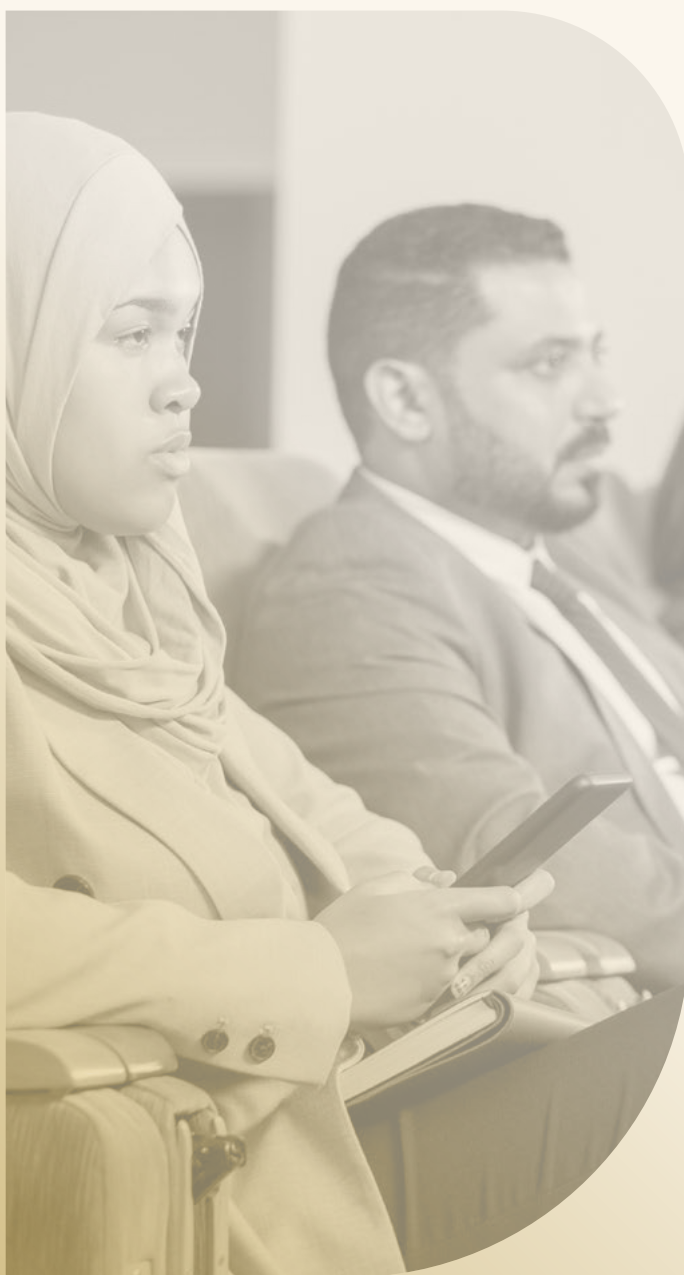


7 WHAT THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION IS DOING IS ILLEGAL, AND WE WON'T LET THEM GET AWAY WITH IT.

- * Multiple lawsuits are underway challenging the Executive Orders and actions of the Trump administration, and the administration is losing in almost all cases.
- * We'll continue to see more lawsuits challenging Trump and DOGE in the coming months.
- * In addition to fighting the administration on the legal front, numerous organizations and coalitions are doubling down on their commitment to leading with race in their work.

8 Action gets results—we need to defend our rights and democracy

- * Stay the course—by dismantling programs or walking back your climate justice and racial equity work in advance, you're doing their job for them.
- * Inaction gives the administration free rein to take their extremist agenda even further.
- * You can't ever fully protect yourself from getting sued—what you can do is ensure that your work falls under the current guidelines of the law.
- * Whether or not you're targeted is more of a political question than a legal one.



HERE ARE WAYS YOU CAN CONTINUE LEADING WITH RACE IN YOUR CLIMATE WORK..

1. Find legal support, analyze your risk, and make decisions that enforce equity and justice in your work.
2. Document and share the impact of your work publicly so people understand the benefit it has to our communities.
3. Establish goals and targets in your work to hold yourself accountable.
4. Collect, track, and analyze data, and advocate for local and state governments to do the same.
5. While your programs and policies can't consider race at the individual level, consider using relevant, non-racial factors that correlate with race (i.e. neighborhoods that have experienced historical redlining, energy burden, income, asthma rates, etc.)
6. Organize your peers across issue areas and sectors to continue leading with race in your work; this will strengthen your ability to fight back.
7. For ideas about state and local level climate policies you can implement, check out this [recent report](#) from [Just Solutions](#).
8. For a deeper dive into what's still permissible, read this [Racial Equity Legal Guidance FAQ](#) from Othering & Belonging Institute.
9. Envision and organize around a decades-long strategy to advance racial justice and climate justice.
10. Stay up to date on what's happening and how it impacts your work (see below for resources).
11. Fight any legislation that attempts to codify Trump's harmful rhetoric into law (i.e. Dismantle DEI Act).
12. Call and email your elected officials to get their support in standing up for racial justice and climate justice.

RESOURCES

FAQ: Racial Equity Legal Guidance and Advancing Racial Equity: Legal Guidance for Advocates

Othering & Belonging Institute

Multi-State Guidance Concerning Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Employment Initiative

Multiple state AGs

10 ways to be prepared and grounded now that Trump has won

Waging Nonviolence

Federal Data and Lawsuit Tracking and Resources

GARE + Needle Strategies tool

Investing In Racial Equity Through Charitable Grants And Services

Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Racial Equity Advancement and Defense Initiative

ABFE

Digital Toolkit: Mobilizing Towards Climate Justice

We Make the Future

Defending and Advancing Climate Justice Policies

Just Solutions

Explainer on the EOs most relevant to climate justice advocates

Just Solutions in collaboration with the Climate and Clean Energy Fund

Navigating the Movement Against Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Center for Urban and Racial Equity

Learn more about the Leading With Race in Climate Solutions project at our website:

<https://justsolutionscollective.org/leading-with-race/>