



Eradicating Poverty

In the Deep South, racism and poverty are entrenched in laws and policies that perpetuate the economic exploitation of Black and Brown communities. Our focus states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi have some of the highest rates of poverty, childhood hunger and illiteracy; the highest need for affordable housing and tenant rights protections; and the worst health outcomes in the country. For example, Mississippi has the country's highest poverty rate (18.1%), 28% of children live in poverty, and 22.9% of children have difficulty meeting basic food needs. In many areas, the experience of poverty is not situational but is instead persistent and concentrated, limiting opportunities for Black and Brown communities to access affordable housing, quality public schools and good jobs.

The Southern Poverty Law Center works to build power, wealth and resources in the Deep South, especially for Black and Brown communities. We advocate for the human right to affordable housing, quality public schools and good jobs that provide Black and Brown communities in the South the opportunity not only to meet basic human needs, but to thrive. We fight to expand access to economic opportunity in Black and Brown communities by challenging discriminatory laws, practices and policies that result in the exacerbation of poverty or pose barriers to building and transferring generational wealth. We aim to tear down the negative, racist and sexist stereotypes around poverty, change the narrative about poverty, and educate decisionmakers and the public about how the world's richest nation can support those with the greatest needs.

Our Work

- 1. Ensure equitable, inclusive and non-discriminatory access to federal funding.** We push for increased appropriations and expanded access to health care, food and nutrition, housing, disaster relief, farm aid, child care, TANF and other federal anti-poverty programs without discriminatory barriers. We demand more transparency and accountability of federal funding allocations and distributions, such as challenging the discriminatory funding scheme in our states that deprived residents of clean, safe and drinkable water.
- 2. Advance housing as a human right and combat the criminalization of people experiencing homelessness.** Guided by the international human rights framework of housing as a human right encompassed in an adequate standard of living, we urge for more federal tenant rights protections and affordable, high-quality, safe and healthy housing. We challenge attempts to punish those experiencing homelessness for conduct necessary for survival – such as sleeping, storing property, asking for help, or otherwise being present in public spaces. We champion more investments in quality housing and the Housing First approach to end homelessness.
- 3. Prevent systemic land loss and wealth extraction in historic Black communities.** We fight to preserve historic communities from development and imminent domain threats so that land can be used to benefit and enrich the community. We challenge efforts to unduly extract wealth and block the creation and passing on of generational wealth for communities for color.
- 4. Preserve and advance anti-discrimination laws and policies and access to ladders of economic opportunity.** We fight attempts by opponents of civil rights to weaponize and misconstrue anti-discrimination law and challenge remedial programs and services that support underserved communities. We work on preserving and advancing protections and proactive measures, including diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts within the public and private sector.

For more information contact Theresa Lau theresa.lau@splcenter.org or visit splcenter.org.