

# MICHIGAN LIBERATION FREEDOM PLANS



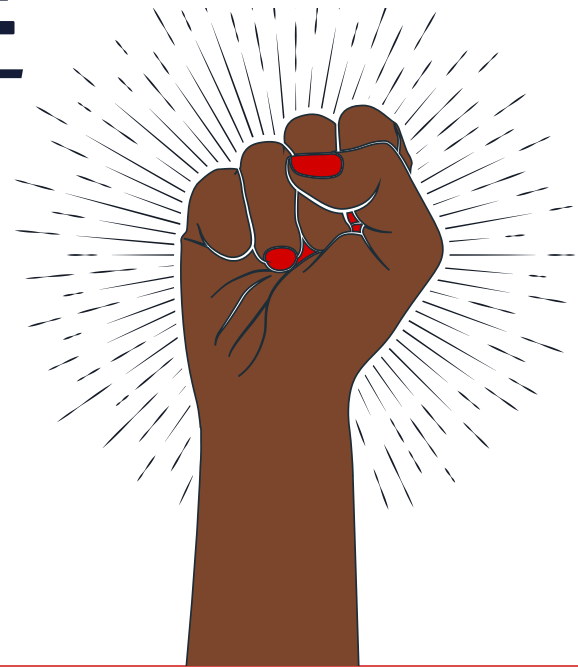
***BLACK MAMA  
BAILOUT***

*APRIL 2020*

# POWERED BY THE PEOPLE

In Spring 2019, Michigan Liberation organized to free Black mothers from cages in Michigan who were jailed solely because of the immoral and unconstitutional practice of money bail—also referred to as wealth-based pretrial detention. Our action highlighted the role of profiteers in the bail bonds industry, exposed the massive underlying social inequities leading to contact with the legal system, and inspired community action.

This **Bailout Day** is rooted in the history of **Black Liberation**, where enslaved and free Black people used their collective resources to purchase each other's freedom. Until we end the practice of caging human beings, we will continue to find ways to get our people free. Our bailout seeks to root itself in community-centered values that engage and support the communities that we are fortunate to build with.



## 2019 BAILOUT FACTS

### \$36,000

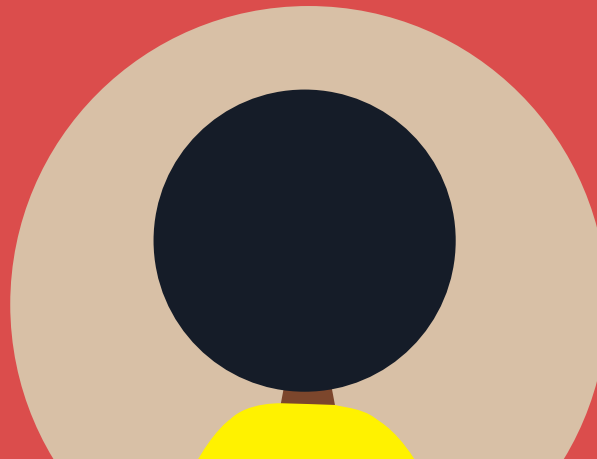
It costs the state of Michigan approximately \$36,000 per year—or about \$100 per day—to incarcerate one person<sup>1</sup>. The total cost of incarcerating the mamas we bailed out was almost \$11,000.



The mamas we bailed out would have spent an **average of 16 days in jail before their first court date without support getting out**. This is 16 days away from families, jobs and homes.

### \$1,000

The highest bail we posted was \$1,000. The lowest bail we posted was \$150.



We bailed out **15 mamas in 2019**. There are still hundreds more who need our help.

**More women are incarcerated in jails than prisons<sup>2</sup>.  
Our bailout seeks to break cycles of incarceration that disrupt entire families and impact entire communities.**

# THE BAILOUT WAS JUST THE BEGINNING

What started as a bailout has evolved into a quest for transformational change across the criminal legal system in Michigan and a commitment to making it happen. In community with the work of the National Bail Out, our teams were able to secure the release of Black mothers in three Michigan counties: Wayne, Oakland and Kalamazoo.

Michigan Liberation knew that the criminal legal system was oppressive, and disproportionality impacts Black, Brown and poor communities. In community with the work of the National Bail Out, our teams bailout revealed a multitude of additional obstacles—some obvious, others less so—that serve as barriers to freedom for our people.

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To me the bailout means liberation, abolition, and the pure love of building community. We don't want our people subject to bounty hunters and bail bondsman. We started with the bailout and have turned this into much more, including a court watch program that exposes the harsh and outdated 'tough on crime' policies that have destroyed Black and Brown communities.

**NICHOLAS BUCKINGHAM**  
Michigan Liberation  
Campaigns Director

## LIBERATION FOR ROSE



We expected to raise funds, identify Black mothers incarcerated in local jails, and post their bails. We found that posting bail was just the first step. Because of a long history of systemic racism in Michigan, economic inequality, and an intentionally created lack of services for poor people and Black people, **each mama we bailed out needed support beyond providing the cash necessary to buy their freedom.** Rose<sup>3</sup>, a Black mama, was arrested and jailed in Oakland County for driving with no license and driving without insurance. In spite of her poverty, the state set her bail at \$750. Identifying Rose was just the first step.

Figuring which jail Oakland County held her in was next. Finding the information to locate a loved one can be challenging without access to online court systems, and without transportation to reach them. We know through the bailout and through our own experiences that many Detroiters are stopped and ticketed on the Oakland County border as they travel through the Detroit-metro area. Suburban courts fund themselves on fines and fees collected on the backs of Black people and poor people in surrounding counties. We are seeking to attack this process through our *Innocent Until Proven Otherwise and Community-Determined Public Safety* workgroups. These workgroups are part of our statewide agenda designed to radically reimagine the criminal legal system in Michigan.

Once we were able to locate Rose, posting bail was not easy. With Rose and in other cases, some judges require people to sign up for pre-trial probation or electronic monitoring, sometimes referred to as *tethering*. In addition to posting bail, women across the state are forced into paying arbitrary and exorbitant fines and fees in order to maintain their freedom. If a person misses a payment to pre-trial probation or to the company that monitors their tether, they can be thrown back in jail.

In addition to expensive fines and fees and mandatory tethering, judges require mothers like Rose to follow special strict rules, called *conditions*. These draconian conditions can include a curfew, which can make it hard, or even impossible, for people to get to and from work or care for their families. If the person does not follow these conditions, they will be penalized—often with jail time. **It is important to remember that the mothers we worked with were not convicted of anything, yet they were still being punished.** We believe in the presumption of innocence and that people should be free to fight their cases.



## KEEPING FAMILIES STRONG

More than 51,000 women are released from jail each year in Michigan. There has been recent mainstream acknowledgement about the need for re-entry services for people returning home from prison—but few people are focusing on jails. About 11 million people cycle in and out of local jails every single day in our country. A short stay in jail can have the same devastating effects as a sentence in a prison. In the span of a week, some of our mamas risk losing their homes, their jobs, and even their children. Through the experience of working with Rose and the other mamas we bailed out, we have built a coalition focused on developing a network of support services that includes those returning home from jail.



About 80% of the women in jails across the country are mothers. Working collaboratively with The Bail Project Detroit, we ensured that the mamas we worked hard to make sure that the mamas we bailed out were able to return home as soon as possible. We have identified the need for gender responsive services specifically for women, trans and gender nonconforming people focused on securing housing, transportation to and from court, childcare, and job placement. Michigan Liberation is calling for the creation of needs assessment, wraparound services, including mental health and drug treatment care, to support people fighting their cases and working to build safe, healthy lives for themselves and their families.

# GET INVOLVED!

Join us as we prepare to launch our 2020 Black Mamas Bailout Campaign! You can support our call to action by learning more about our statewide agenda: *Vision for a Liberated Michigan*, supporting our 2020 bailout, volunteering in our court watch program, and joining our movement for transformational change across Michigan. We have been developing campaigns to hold elected officials accountable across the state. Our work has included hosting town hall meetings, leading a listening session with state senators and state representatives focused on the needs and experiences of formerly incarcerated people returning home from jail and prison, political education trainings, and leadership development for directly impacted individuals.



**People should not be held for ransom by the justice system, especially for private profit. All arrestees, no matter their income, are presumed innocent. They deserve their freedom and their day in court, two of the most basic rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Hundreds of people are exploited by local court systems every day. Our justice system is not supposed to work this way.**

**EARL BURTON**  
Oakland County Bailout Squad

## DONATE TO THE 2020 BAILOUT

[secure.actblue.com/donate/blackmamasbailout](https://secure.actblue.com/donate/blackmamasbailout)

### MICHIGAN LIBERATION MISSION STATEMENT

We are Michigan Liberation: a statewide network of people and organizations organizing to end the criminalization of Black families and communities of color in Michigan. We envision a state without mass incarceration or mass policing. We envision a state with the best public education in the nation, single payer healthcare and thriving Black and Brown communities. Michigan Liberation conducts grassroots organizing, leadership development, lobbying and supports candidates that share our vision for Michigan. Michigan Liberation promotes changes in all areas of the criminal legal system, including courts, prosecutors, policing, prisons, juvenile systems, re-entry and diversion programs, and parole.



### ADVANCEMENT PROJECT NATIONAL OFFICE

Advancement Project National Office works alongside Michigan Liberation to end mass incarceration and policing in the state. We are a multi-racial civil rights organization. Founded by a team of veteran civil rights lawyers in 1999, Advancement Project National Office was created to develop and inspire community-based solutions based on the same high-quality legal analysis and public education campaigns that produced the landmark civil rights victories of earlier eras.



# TO OUR VILLAGE

**Extreme gratitude to our partners for their support of our 2019 Bailout.**

Nation Outside  
BYP100-Detroit  
FORCE Detroit  
Detroit Justice Center  
Detroit Action  
We the People Michigan  
The Bail Project  
Focus: Hope

Black Women's Roundtable  
Metro Detroit  
JustLeadershipUSA  
For Our Future Michigan  
National Bail Out  
Metro Detroit Democratic  
Socialists of America  
Out for Life Re-Entry  
Church of the Messiah

**Report Authored by Ashley Carter, Advancement Project National Office**

## SUPPORTED BY



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## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Kristen Jordan Shamus, *Michigan spending one-fifth of its general fund budget on prisoners* (December 19, 2018) <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2018/12/19/prison-michigan-corrections-jail/2230794002/>
- <sup>2</sup> Aleks Kajstura, *Women's Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2019* (October 29, 2019) <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2019women.html>
- <sup>3</sup> Rose is a fictional name to protect the identity of the mamas we support.
- <sup>4</sup> Wendy Sawyer, *Who's helping the 1.0 million women released from prisons and jails each year?* (July 19, 2019) <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/07/19/reentry/>
- <sup>5</sup> Peter Wagner, *Jails matter. But who is listening?* (August 14, 2015) <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2015/08/14/jailsmatter/>
- <sup>6</sup> Aleks Kajstura, *Women's Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2019* (October 29, 2019) <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2019women.html>