

AI FOR THE PEOPLE PRESENTS

THE PEOPLE'S GUIDE TO WAKANDA



OUR MISSION

To increase civic participation around reducing the harms associated with algorithmic bias, and to build a tech sector in which racial and gender justice are foundational to the design, deployment and governance of advanced technical systems.

OUR VISION

AI for the People is a public interest communications firm launched in October 2019, five months before the world headed into a global pandemic. Our goal is to support journalists, policymakers, media and others to increase public understanding about how AI (artificial intelligence), web3 and quantum computing are changing and harming Black lives.

Since launch, we have focused more on the *future of racial justice*. We recognize that algorithmic systems govern every aspect of our lives, so we need to engage the racial justice community alongside us to create better Black futures.

THE FUTURE WE WANT TO SEE

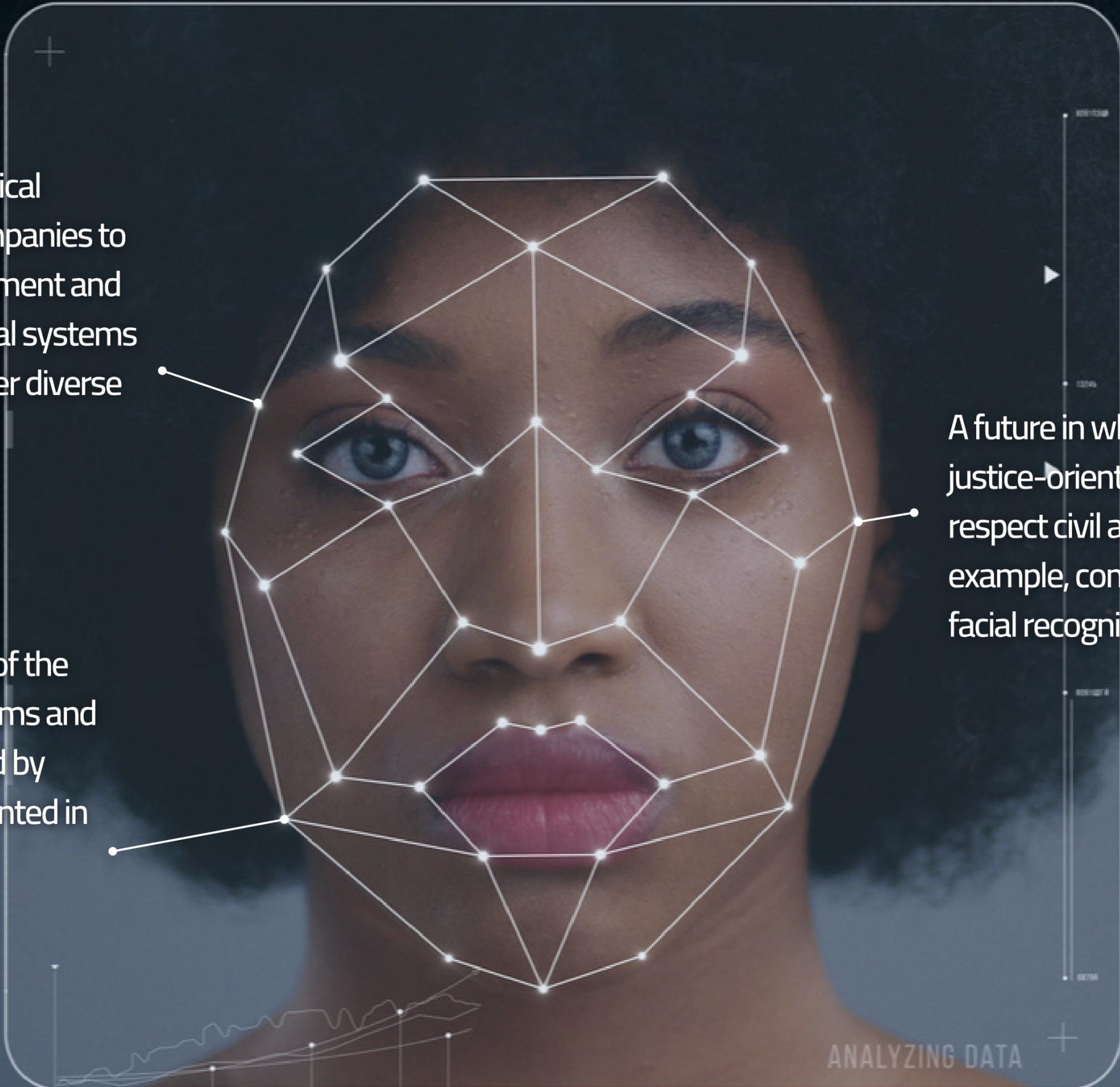
A future in which people with critical perspectives work with tech companies to consider how the design, deployment and governance of advanced technical systems impact the lives of Black and other diverse and underserved consumers.

A future in which the promise of the benefits of technological systems and the wealth created are enjoyed by people currently underrepresented in tech.

A future in which we only commercialize justice-oriented tech products that respect civil and human rights. For example, companies would never use facial recognition for policing.



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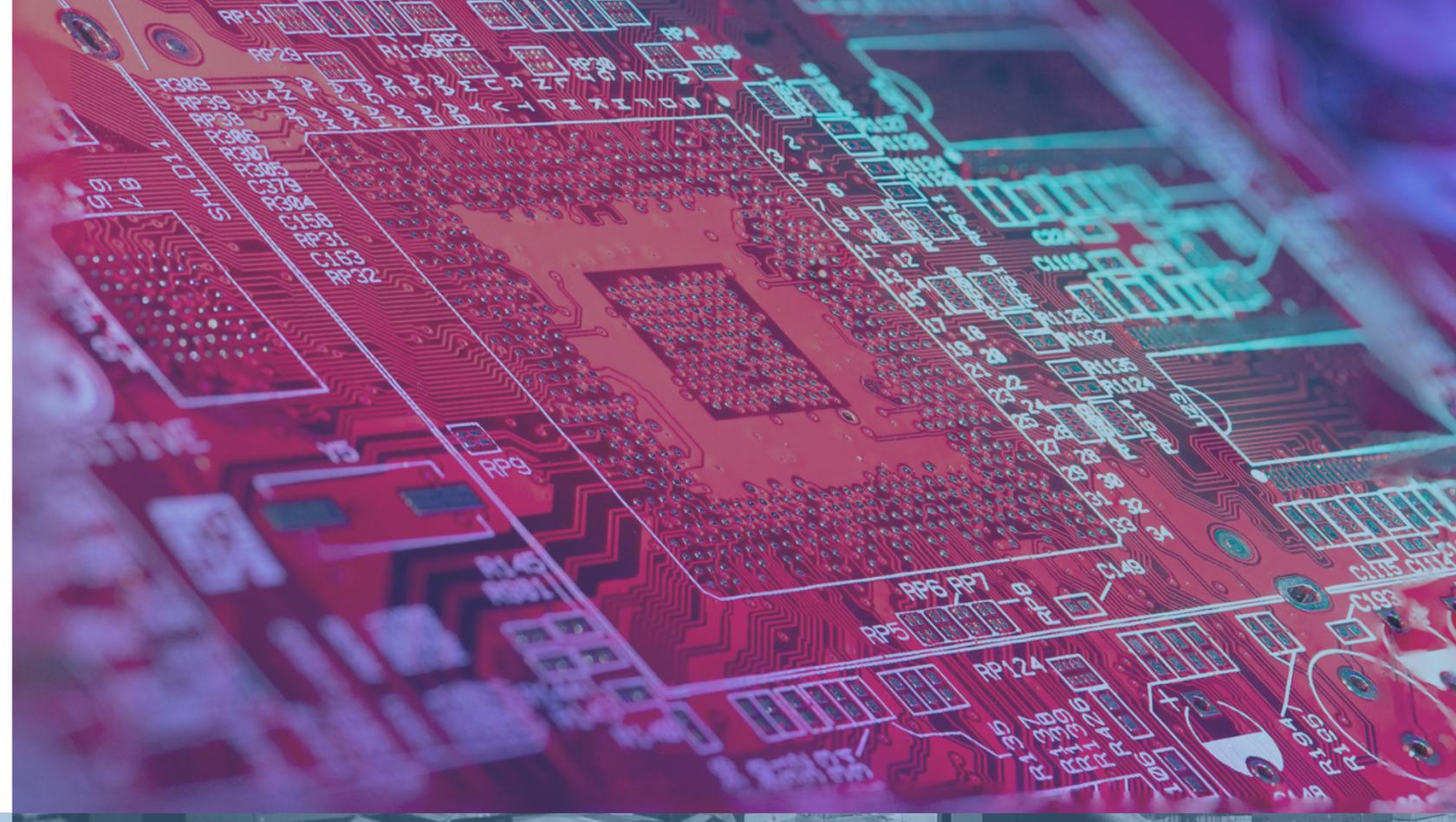


WAKANDA FOREVER? HOW ABOUT...RIGHT NOW!

“I’m expecting some things that I believe I’ll get to touch and feel and experience. And I’m excited about those that I won’t, but that our children will. The freedom to just be Black and the freedom to just have the same dreams, desires, goals, hopes, fears that other people have without the limits that oppression puts on you.”

- Chelsea Fuller

Most people believe that the concept of Wakanda from the Marvel Studios film series Black Panther is a fictitious, extraordinary and abstract place where Black innovation is honored, protected, uplifted, praised and even mimicked. But AI for the People argues that Wakanda is possible today – and, actually, is already happening. We must make certain, however, that Black people and our communities are in the driver's seat to the pathway to our own destiny.



We know that Black genius is real. We know that Black genius is also a threat. We know that Black people and Black women are integral to the future prosperity of everyone. But what truly matters is how we harness opportunities – in tech, AI and data – that help and not harm us.



THE PEOPLE'S GUIDE TO WAKANDA IS THE FIRST PART OF OUR JOURNEY TO FIND OUT WHAT BLACK PEOPLE AND THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE THINK ABOUT TECHNOLOGY AS WELL AS THE ISSUES WE SHOULD BE RAISING WHEN WE WORK WITH TECH COMPANIES, GOVERNMENT AND CONTENT CREATORS.

THE 2042 COUNCIL

To do this, we spoke to 19 wonderful Black thought leaders and experts from across sectors who believe in better Black futures. We asked them what we need to do to make the year 2042 – 20 years from now – the year in which Black people can truly and fully live and thrive in Wakanda.



Diamond Stylz, Executive Director of Black Trans Women's Inc.; Desmond Patton, Professor, University of Pennsylvania; Cara Reedy, Founder of the National Association of Disabled Journalists; Dr. Uché Blackstock, MSNBC Contributor and Health Equity Specialist; Farai Chideya, Journalist, Host of Our Body Politic; Nsé Ufot, CEO of the New Georgia Project; Fabian Rogers, Environmentalist; Tranae' Moran, Data Rights Activist; Jessica Ann Mitchell Aiwuyor, Reparationist; Aerica Shimizu Banks, Technologist; Ryan Ken, Emmy Winning Comedy Writer; Kamal Sinclair, Futurist; Robin Rue Simmons, Reparationist; Sabrina Hersi Issa, Human Rights Technologist; Elijah McKinnon, Artist; Keli Young, Abolitionist; Aisha Shillingford, Co-Founder of Intelligent Mischief; Chelsea Fuller, Communications Strategist; Kristen Marston, Chief Impact Officer, The League

2042: WHY 20 YEARS?

AFTER 9/11, IT TOOK 20 YEARS TO CREATE THE SURVEILLANCE STATE

2000

Activists protest the introduction of cookies on the internet

2001

- THE SHOCK of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil
- Patriot Act passed as national security measure changing surveillance norms

2013

- NSA leaks find the Patriot Act has been used to wire tap millions of Americans
- Electronic surveillance and policing is now everywhere

2020

- Police in Michigan wrongfully arrest Robert Williams using facial recognition
- The ideas introduced within the Patriot Act allow police to use technology as a security measure

2018

Reports indicate that facial recognition does not accurately recognize dark skin

2042: A CALL TO ACTION

In 2020, amidst the backdrop of the country's "reckoning" on racism, corporations pledged \$50 billion to address these challenges and none of it manifested into anything meaningful.

If we can actually turn rhetoric into reality, we could spend the next 20 years investing in and building a real Wakanda instead of promoting empty promises.

An aerial view of Paris, France, with the Eiffel Tower visible in the distance. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. In the foreground, several tall, blue, teardrop-shaped structures resembling Wakanda's vibranium towers are scattered across the cityscape.

OUR BLACKNESS WILL THRIVE: 10 WAYS TO MAKE WAKANDA REAL

With the thought partnership of our 2042 Council as the framework, we have developed 10 strategies and tactics to get to Wakanda:

1. REST – TAKE A NAP, Y’ALL

We cannot be our best selves in this fight unless we learn to rest, rejuvenate and reflect. Black people have endured centuries of oppression. White supremacy and privilege take a toll on us every second of every day. But for us to live in the values of a real Wakanda, we must rest, relax and release the trauma of whiteness. We work at our own pace and our genius has no limit – it is always our time.

"Get some sleep, take a nap. The king already told y'all the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice, and we're always focusing on the bend towards justice part. What are you doing to bend the arc? How is your work, how is your campaign bending the arc? We don't focus on that. It is long, and we're not going to win tomorrow, so you might as well take a nap." - Nsé Ufot

2. BELIEVE IN 'RADICAL' BLACK FUTURES

Simply put: There is no future without Black innovation, power, and agency. We must believe in a future without limits and full of possibility. That starts with a fundamental and foundational belief in ourselves and our gifts, skills and talents. What others think is 'radical' should actually be normal. We are warriors; we are leaders and innovators; we are everything and anything. No one, regardless of technology that collects our data and experiments with our lives, controls us but us. When we understand that, we are living for a future we deserve.

3. UPLIFT STORIES OF BLACK LIFE AND NOT BLACK DEATH

Every day, we are inundated with images and depictions of Black death whether by cops or COVID or everything in between. But we should be uplifting and centering stories about Black life and our contributions. If our lives matter, then we must show how fruitful and incredible and full our lives can be and should be. Let us live!

4. BUILD BRIDGES NOT WALLS

"Immigrants come with hope, and African Americans became hopeless. Our future needs to reflect a world where the diaspora is united and not in just our trauma, but in our mutual understanding that we are all beings that contain multitudes and intersectionalities." - Ryan Ken

Some Black people have internalized oppression that causes us to divide each other instead of conquering together. When we share resources and ideas, in America and across the diaspora, we are stronger together and our innovation and genius can know no bounds. Wakanda must include ALL Black individuals.

5. CREATE ACCOUNTABLE SOCIAL MEDIA AND A PLATFORM FOR US, BY US THAT PROTECTS US

Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and other wealthy white men who have created the social media platforms we use don't care about Black people other than to manipulate us for their personal gain. Their spaces are already and will become more harmful to Black lives with lackluster policies that encourage hatred, bigotry and assaults on Black users. Until we develop our own platforms that are safe, curate and support our genius and ideas, are user-friendly, and incorporate Black experiences, we will keep being trapped in a wealthy, white web. We must sustainably invest and support alternate platforms by Black creators.

"I think that my life and my existence centers on Blackness, and so, therefore, everything that I come into contact with inherently needs to agree to my terms and service." - Elijah McKinnon

6. DISMANTLE DIS AND MIS INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA - THE TRUTH WILL SET US FREE!

Black people's ability to discern what's harmful and what's truthful is being underestimated – others are weaponizing that against us to try to control and harm us. Misinformation is false or out-of-context, while disinformation is intentionally deceptive. Many campaigns today are being advanced by right-wing Black influencers who rely on disinformation to advance their anti-immigrant rhetoric. These misleading tactics have been used from political campaigns to the banning of books about American history to COVID-19 health information. Social media companies must remove disinformation and misinformation from their platforms.

"...even within our own community we have to do so much to articulate and educate and bring awareness to the harm of the past, that we talk a lot about that harm and the disparities and oppression and the lack and disinvestment. But I love to talk about just how resilient and brilliant we are and beautiful and culturally dynamic and how much influence we have had in this nation and in music, in culinary and arts, and innovation and business." - Robin Rue Simmons

7. ABOLISH HOMO AND TRANSPHOBIA

Black lives – all of them – matter. We cannot live in a real Wakanda until we accept Black brilliance from EVERYONE. Black genius knows no gender, no sexual orientation, no boundary. From the Harlem Renaissance to hack-a-thons, all Black contributions make our lives infinitely better.

8. CENTER BLACK VOICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

"From Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. to the lack of vulnerability and lack of infrastructure in several African countries, thinking about how Puerto Rico and other places in the Caribbean are getting beat up like - what were once in a century or decade - happen a couple times a year. We're already suffering from weak infrastructure because of the underinvestment in Black-led governments, and Mother Nature doesn't give a s-t about that." - Nsé Ufot

It is a myth that Black people are not environmentalists or do not care about climate change. Truthfully, we are most impacted by the effects of our environments from the air we breathe to the lack of trees and natural habitats in our communities to the neglect of the Caribbean nations. It's time to center our stories of protecting the land we love (**ahem, we said land, not country...there is a difference) and the planet we inhabit. The Black global experience is inextricably linked to our environment.

9. PROTECT THE ARTS AND CULTURE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME – CREDIT, DON'T COLONIZE

Black people are the culture. We move the culture. The culture moves with us and our culture is often stolen by others, and we rarely get credit – from the earliest innovations of our ancestors to the latest TikTok challenge that everyone enjoys. It's time to credit us, pay us, value our genius and STOP COLONIZING!

10. PROTECT YOUR PEACE

In addition to rest, peace is just as important. The time and space to live in peace is part of our resistance given all of the violence, whether it be policy or physical, against Black bodies. When we are at peace, we are most able to focus on our future, our innovation and our gifts.

A group of seven diverse Black people are sitting on stone steps outdoors. The group includes a man on the far left and six women. They are dressed in light-colored, modern clothing. The background consists of large grey rocks and lush green foliage. Overlaid on the center of the image is large, bold, white text.

WAKANDA FOREVER: A BETTER BLACK FUTURE

BLACK LIVES HAVE ACTUALLY ALWAYS MATTERED

Black lives have actually always mattered. We care about how technology impacts our lives despite what others may think. We are tired of always having to march in the streets for justice and for real action. It's time that we have a real seat at the table and share in the wealth and prosperity. We hold the keys to our own futures and no one has a future without us. We must understand that technology is just a tool, and we have more agency than we think. We can make technology, data and AI work FOR us.

So when we build Wakanda – trust us, it's happening – we never have to leave.



**SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR
FELLOW AFROFUTURISTS
THE 2042 COUNCIL:**

Desmond Upton Patton (he/him), Brian and Randi Schwartz University Professor, University of Pennsylvania. He studies the impact social media has on well-being, mental health, trauma, violence and grief for youth and adults of color. He leverages social work thinking, data science, qualitative methods and community partnerships to develop strategies to support digital grief and trauma and reduce on and offline gun-related violence.

Sabrina Hersi Issa (she/her) is a human rights technologist committed to leveraging innovation as a tool to build power and unlock opportunity and dignity for all. She does this through her work in technology, media and investments. She is Managing Partner of Future Well, the Chief Executive Officer of Be Bold Media, a global strategy and innovation agency, and a Race and Technology Fellow at Stanford University's Digital Civil Society Lab.

Dr. Uché Blackstock (she/her) is the Founder of Advancing Health Equity, an emergency physician and former associate professor of emergency medicine at the New York University School of Medicine. She is also a forthcoming author and MSNBC medical contributor.

Nsé Ufot (she/her) an activist, community organizer, and the Chief Executive Officer of the New Georgia Project, a voter support and legal action nonprofit organization she started with Stacey Abrams in 2013.

Diamond Stylz (she/her) is the Executive Director of Black Trans Women Inc, a national nonprofit led by Black trans women focused on social advocacy, positive visibility and building strong leadership among Black trans advocates, activists and allies

Chelsea Fuller (she/her) is a strategic communications and media strategist with more than a decade of experience supporting movements for radical change. Previously, she held the position of Vice President of Communications at TIME'S UP and was the Deputy Director of Communications at Blackbird. She is also known for her work inside of The Movement for Black Lives.

Aisha Shillingford (she/her) is an artist and social movement strategist. She works across artistic disciplines and across movement sectors to unleash Black imagination to shape the future.

Aerica Banks (she/her) was one of the Pinterest whistleblowers who left the company in December 2020. She went on to found Shiso, where she applies an intersectional equity lens to business development, tech and policy challenges. She creates systems and frameworks to elevate and restore equity in our institutions.

Fabian Rogers (he/him) is a community advocate from Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Brooklyn. He has been on the frontlines with his neighbors, successfully resisting the use of facial recognition technology in their apartment complexes. Since his community's win, he has continued building awareness around facial recognition and the collection of biometric data in residential communities, and civil, legal and tech organizations.

Tranae' Moran (she/her) is a community outreach specialist in the NYC Mayor's Public Engagement Unit. She is the Founder of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Alliance, pushing the narrative that privacy is a right to everyone, and Amalgamation Inc. Studios, providing transitional space for artists of many disciplines to flow using an array of mediums.

Kamal Sinclair (she/her) supports artists, institutions and communities working at the convergence of art, media, culture and technology. Currently, she serves as the Senior Director of Digital Innovation at The Music Center in Los Angeles. Additionally, she serves as an advisor or board member to Peabody Awards Interactive Board, For Freedoms, NEW INC.'s ONX Studio, Civic Signals, MIT's Center for Advanced Virtuality, Juvenile Bipolar Research Foundation and Eyebeam.

Ryan Ken (they/them) is an actor and writer who uses an unconventional comedic perspective to comment on social issues, film, television, politics, race and pop culture. Their popular satirical parodies of Netflix's *The Crown*, *Malcolm & Marie* and *Bridgerton* have garnered millions of views on social media and international media attention. Ken is celebrated for their incisive cultural criticism as well as their broad range as an actor having portrayed figures like Barack Obama, Hugh Grant and Queen Elizabeth II. Their growing social media following already includes celebrated directors Barry Jenkins and Ava DuVernay, and noted cultural critics and writers like Roxane Gay and Tressie McMillan Cottom. Ken's comedy does not shy from controversy or directness, but they skillfully avoid the pitfalls of punching down and recycling tired tropes to produce something fresh. Entertainment reporter Ashley Spencer describes Ken as "the future of comedy." Ken joined *Last Week Tonight* with John Oliver as a staff writer in February 2022.

Robin Rue Simmons (she/her) is the Founder and Executive Director of FirstRepair, a not-for-profit organization that informs local reparations, nationally. She serves as the chairperson of the City of Evanston's Reparations Committee. Rue Simmons is the former 5th Ward Alderman for the City of Evanston, IL, where she led, in collaboration with others, the passage of the nation's first municipally funded reparations legislation for Black residents, which began disbursements in January 2022.

Elijah McKinnon (he/they) is a marketing maven, cultural producer and artist. In addition to serving as the Founder and Director of People Who Care – an independent consultancy that works exclusively with Chicago-based nonprofits and grassroots initiatives – they also are actively involved in Chicago's queer, creative and philanthropic communities.

Cara Reedy (she/her) is a journalist and producer who spent ten years of her career at CNN producing documentaries as well as writing for various verticals including Eatocracy and CNN Business. In 2019, she produced her most recent short doc for The Guardian titled *Dwarfism and Me*, which was an exploration into the treatment of Dwarfs in American society.

Jessica Ann Mitchell Aiwuyor (she/her) is a reparationist and multicultural communications specialist based in the Washington, DC area. Aiwuyor is the Founder of the National Black Cultural Information Trust, Inc. NBCI Trust shares cultural information, stories and resources that uplift the collective freedom of Black communities, while correcting cultural misinformation.

Keli Young (she/her) is a civil rights campaign coordinator at VOCAL-NY, a grassroots membership organization working to create healthy and just communities by building power among people affected by HIV, drug use, mass incarceration and homelessness.

Farai Chideya (she/her) is a novelist, multimedia journalist and radio host. She produced and hosted Pop and Politics with Farai Chideya, a series of radio specials on politics for 15 years. She is the creator and host of the podcast Our Body Politic, which launched in September 2020.

Kristen Marston (she/her) is an entertainment consultant and consulting producer who develops culturally informed narratives for companies like Netflix, HBO Max, MTV, Amazon, Disney, ABC, NBC, Starz, Lionsgate and more. To date, she has advised over 100 major film and television projects, including *Grey's Anatomy* and the Emmy-winning series, *When They See Us*. Marston works with development executives, writers' rooms, researchers, advertisers and racial justice advocates to create powerful media that's reflective of the lives and issues of women, Black people and communities of color. She currently serves as Chief Impact Officer at The League, where her team weaves together advocacy and popular culture to create real lasting impact and to move the conversations that matter most in the world.

She has contributed to think tanks and initiatives for organizations including CAA and TIME'S UP, and her work has been featured in BBC, The New York Times, LA Times, Variety, Hollywood Reporter, The Washington Post, The Guardian, CNBC, FastCompany, Mashable, Mic, The Los Angeles Business Journal, Miss Magazine and more.



To help us build Wakanda,
learn more about what we do at
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