

# THE BIG PAYBACK



**A FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE**

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# THE DEFINITIONS OF REPARATIONS

2

rep·a·ra·tion

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the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury

4

reparation

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the payment of damages: indemnification

1

Reparations: What is it?

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"It is the making of amends for a wrong that one has done by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged. It comes from two words: repair and action. Thus it is the action of repairing the damage one has caused. It is a noun and we need it now."

[-RZA, The Big Payback Podcast](#) ←

3

re-pə-'rā-shən

---

compensation in money or materials payable by a defeated nation for damages to or expenditures sustained by another country as a result of hostilities with the defeated nation

**“ IT IS  
A NOUN  
AND WE  
NEED IT NOW. ”**





## A WORD FROM **ERIKA ALEXANDER**: CO-DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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I've been an actress and writer for decades, but it's a unique honor to record this moment in history and help tell the Big Payback reparations story, with my co-director and friend, Whitney Dow, alongside our amazing producers and crew.

A lot of wonderful people made this film possible, all while living through a global pandemic that gave way to millions who suffered severe illness and millions who succumbed to death. They made this film, while enduring mass unemployment, public lynchings, uprisings, political unrest and unlawful insurrection. Those were the conditions under which this film was made, but we all knew that only made our work more urgent. So together, we put our heads down and pulled our masks up and carried on.

We talked to the best minds and experts in the reparations arena. American grassroots masters, great educators, respected clergy, modern-day legends, and everyday citizens all gave us a helping hand to complete this film. They were 'essential workers' to the telling of this complicated story, and we thank you.

Now, here are the undisputed facts: chattel slavery and racism is an evil virus injected into the fundamental systems and foundations of America. Systems designed to rob, enslave, assault, persecute, and torment Black people. For generations, it's taken our lives and livelihoods away without apology or compensation. But like all powerful viruses, its toxic effect bled well beyond its intended borders to parts unknown and back again to infect the whole.

And here we are, four hundred years later, still struggling within this morass today. Whitney and I are just two people, white and Black, in a long line of multi-colored American and global citizens, trying to understand how and why these systems were created, why they endure, and why it's so important to dismantle them.

Living through this extraordinary experience has taught me this: it is the American government's duty, and moral responsibility, to address the American Holocaust of slavery. Therefore, it is America's debt to repair the damage, by any means necessary, for however long it takes.

As a filmmaker, I am advised to be a neutral arbitrator in my work, but on this I can't be, because I am also the great, great grandchild of enslaved African Americans. And though I may not live to see reparations fully brought to bear for my people, the true test of human courage and conviction is whether you can work for a result, and a "greater good," that may not benefit you in your lifetime, and still do it. If you ever find yourself under those circumstances, and I believe we are all in these circumstances now, please answer "yes." It's definitely worth your time, energy and sacrifice.

In the meantime, enjoy *The Big Payback*, a film that shines a light on the visionaries, activists and extra-ordinary people, in Evanston, Illinois; Washington, D.C.; and from sea to shining sea, toiling and stirring this powerful movement. This film is dedicated to your success; for the sake of our ancestors, for the healing and health of America, for the future of our world, for a better tomorrow, today...reparations, now.







I would like to address the White, and non-Black people reading this guide. Reparations is a complicated topic, especially so for White Americans who at times can have a hard time understanding their relationship to events - such as slavery, or state and community-sanctioned racism and persecution - that took place either before for they were born or in which they did not have a direct hand in establishing or perpetuating.

When I began the journey of making *The Big Payback* with Erika in 2019, I too had a hard time clearly seeing my connection to, and more importantly, my responsibility for, things that I had rejected and actively fought against for many years. This guide contains a lot of my learnings from the past four years about the ways in which long-past events leave dynamic legacies that are very much alive today and are actively impacting the lives of all Americans on a day-to-day basis.

There are many resources in this guide that I hope will expand your understanding about the ways that black Americans have been victimized by both the government that was supposed to protect them and uplift them and the communities they called home, and how repeated attempts to right these wrongs have been blocked at both the national and local levels. I also hope you will use it to explore your and your community's relationship to the systemic forces that have excluded Black Americans from fully participating in the American experiment.

Lastly, I hope that as you watch *The Big Payback* and read through this guide, you will remember that regardless if anyone currently alive is responsible for events from the past, we as Americans all have an undeniable responsibility to address the injustices and inequities that affect our communities today.

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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Big Payback Film Discussion Guide is designed with your communities in mind, whether they are curious citizens or seasoned activists and change-makers. Each narrative, primary source, and discussion prompt will help you and your audience in navigating a full reparations conversation. The guide will also allow viewers to explore their reactions, thoughts, and questions about the film.

This guide contains information about "The Big Payback" and its subjects. It lays out the path to Evanston's historic step towards reparative justice. We've also included essential resources to deepen your understanding of the history of reparations, the current movement, and how any person can be involved and take action.

Facilitators should watch the film first, then review this guide before the discussion to connect information and resources with current coursework or meeting agendas. Then, after screening the movie for your audience, share this guide so they may review and reflect on various discussion topics.



If you are accessing or using this document virtually, any time you notice an arrow and a piece of text underlined in red, you will be able to click it to be taken directly to a source of information.



If you are accessing or using this document virtually any time you notice a 'play' symbol, you are being asked to revisit the film at the mentioned timecode to help you reflect on the discussion questions.



# AN IMPORTANT NOTE

In this guide, we refer back to the era of enslavement to contextualize reparation efforts. In the spirit of [The 1619 Project](#), we've tried to avoid using the word "slave" to describe the painful bondage of the ancestors.

Alternate terms you'll find in this guide are: enslaved person, enslave, enslaved, enslaver, or enslavement. These terms "convey the condition without stripping the individual of his or her humanity."

Some primary and secondary sources used in this guide contain the word "slave," and we could not modify these pieces. We have substituted where possible, and we hope you'll do the same.



## REPARATIONS FOR ENSLAVEMENT

The nation's first attempt at reparations dates back to 1865, close to the end of the Civil War.

Emancipation of the formerly enslaved left many families in financial limbo: many had little to no education, property, money, or a clear path to economic independence.

Charged with repairing this injustice, Union General William T. Sherman and President Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, issued Special Field Order 15, which decreed that 400,000 acres of property confiscated from Confederate landowners be redistributed to Black families in 40-acre plots.

### HISTORY OF EMANCIPATION: TRANSCRIPT:

"On January 12, 1865, U.S. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and General Wm. T. Sherman met here at the home of Charles Green with 20 leaders from Savannah's African-American churches, including Garrison Frazier, Ulysses L. Houston, and William Campbell. The meeting resulted in Sherman's Issue of Special Field Orders No. 15, which encouraged freedmen's enlistment and reserved coastal land from Charleston south to Florida's St. Johns River for settlement by freed families in 40-acre tracts.

The Freedmen's Bureau Act of March 1865 formalized government aid to formerly enslaved people but made no provision for land. After President Lincoln's death, President Andrew Johnson revoked Special Field Orders No. 15, hampering efforts by African-Americans to gain economic independence after Emancipation."



**Reparation <noun> : rep·a·ra·tion re-pə-rā-shən**

: the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury

: something is done or given as amends or satisfaction

: the payment of damages: indemnification

specifically: compensation in money or materials payable by a defeated nation for damages to or expenditures sustained by another country as a result of hostilities with the defeated nation



An article in the  
→ National Farmers Union  
estimated the value of the 40  
acres for those 40,000  
formerly enslaved people to  
be \$640 billion in 2020.

This, many would argue, was  
the nation's first attempt to  
repair the harm committed  
during enslavement.  
However, its benefits never  
came to fruition.

After Lincoln's assassination  
in April 1865, Vice President  
Andrew Johnson assumed his  
role. Shortly after, President  
Johnson passed the Amnesty  
→ Proclamation on May 29,  
1865, restoring all property  
rights except those once  
enslaved to Confederates. As  
a result, Black families were  
abruptly evicted from the  
land as former Confederate  
owners made their way back  
home.

"40 acres and a mule"  
wasn't the first or last time  
the nation attempted  
reparations, nor the last  
time these attempts would  
fail.

**“RECONSTRUCTION FAILED AFTER 12 YEARS, AND AFTER RECONSTRUCTION, A REIGN OF TERROR THAT HAD NEVER BEEN SEEN (HAPPENED): THE HANGING FRUIT, THE LYNCHING—THE BILL (H.R.40) SAYS THAT THIS IS A PROPOSAL FOR REPARATIONS FOR THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY, BUT THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY HAS NEVER GONE AWAY.”**

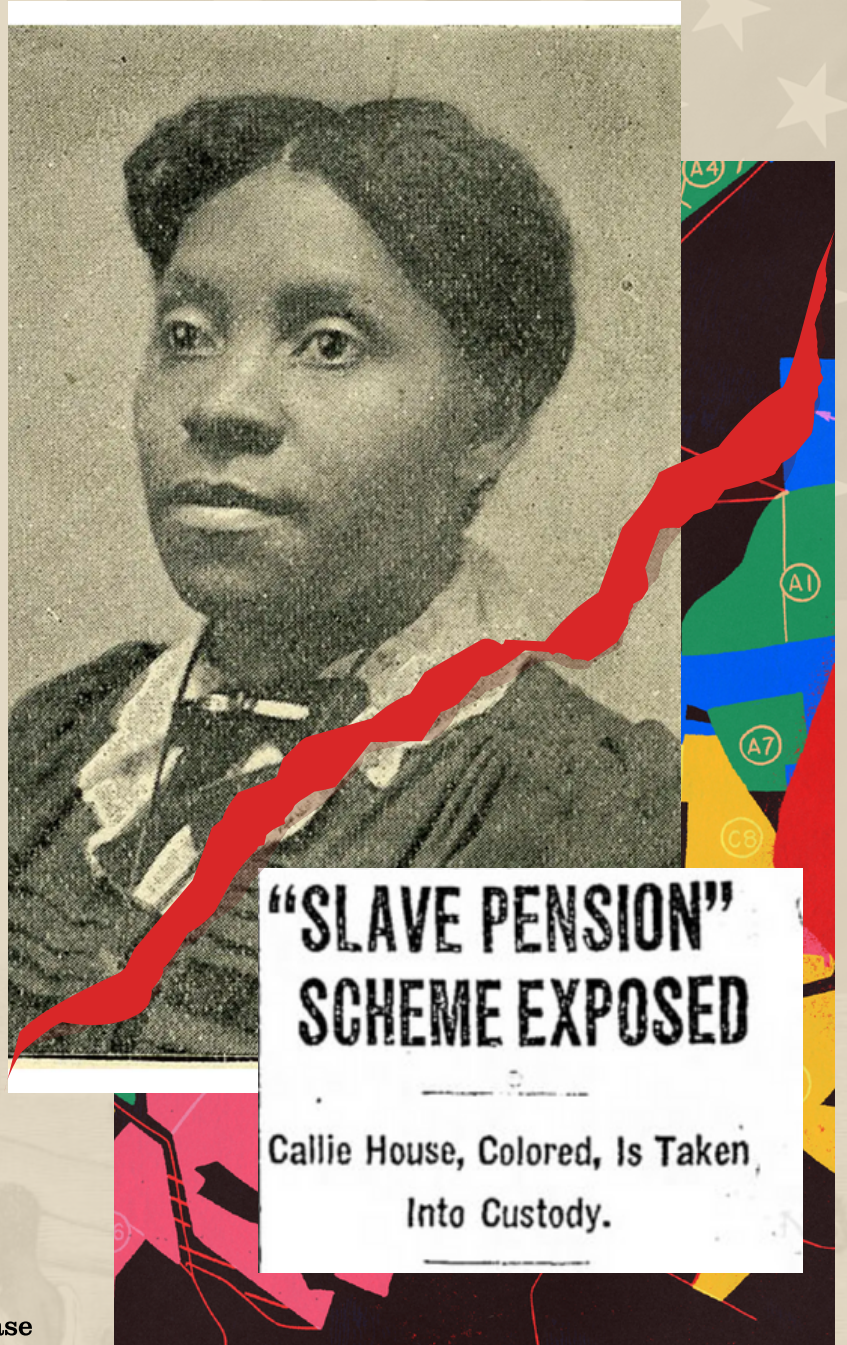
**— CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE [D-TX-18]**

# BUT YET THE EFFORTS CONTINUED...★

Following the dissolution of efforts via Special Orders No. 15, Callie House, a formerly enslaved leader and organizer, worked alongside Rev. Isaiah Dickerson to establish the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association in 1896 and was chartered in Tennessee in 1898.

You will have a chance to learn a bit more about House and Dickerson on the following pages. Read the upcoming primary sources detailing their reparations efforts and reflect on what you have read by answering discussion questions.

## C A L L I E ★ H O U S E



In addition to the primary sources, please use "The Big Payback" film clip at 14:11-16:22 to provide more context for the discussion questions.

Callie House (1861–1928) was a formerly enslaved leader of the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association. Her organization was one of the first organizations to campaign for enslavement reparations in The United States. ←





# **"SLAVE PENSION" SCHEME EXPOSED**

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**Callie House, Colored, Is Taken  
Into Custody.**

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**THOUSANDS VICTIMIZED**

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**Ingenious Methods Used to De-  
fraud Aged Negroes of  
the South.**

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When Deputy United States Marshal Southall took into custody Callie House of Nashville, a dusky woman of ample avoirdupois, Thursday afternoon, he accomplished one of the purposes toward which officials of the United States post-office department and the department of justice have been working for several months.

## **Pensions, Potatoes and Pennies as Bait.**

One of the meanest of dishonest raids upon the meagre savings of old age was disclosed by the government's exposure of Mrs. Callie House, of Nashville, Tenn., operating the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association of the United States of America in that city and in Chattanooga. The last fraud order was issued against her on June 30 of this year, but it was not the first. A similar order was issued, for similar reasons, on September 21, 1899, when she operated under the title of the Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association of Nashville. Mrs. House's scheme was to lead aged negroes to believe, through advertising, that membership in her organization would insure government pensions. She prospered through many years, although her implied promise was absolutely impossible of fulfilment.

THE NATIONAL EX-SLAVE

# Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association

OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

## Certificate of Membership.

This is to Certify that Edwin Jordan of Barren County of North State of North is a member of the **Ex-Slave Bounty and Pension Association** of the United States of America, having paid the membership fee of 50 cents to aid the movement in securing the passage of the **Ex-Slave Bounty and Pension Bill**, as introduced February 17th, in the 57th House of Representatives of the United States by the Hon. S. S. Mackay, of N. C. The holder of this Certificate agrees to pay ten cents per month to the local association to

### AID THE SICK AND BURY THE DEAD.

I hereby testify that I was born a slave on Chatham County, N. C. My age is 58 years and am entitled to all the benefits included in said Bill.

Signed Edwin Jordan

Issued at Washington, D. C., this 7 day of November 1902

W. W. Weaver S. S. T. Walter Nease President Secretary



RECEIVED  
 THE NATIONAL EX-SLAVE  
 MUTUAL RELIEF, BOUNTY AND PENSION ASSOCIATION  
 NOV 10 1902

H.B.

# ONWARD TO VICTORY!



I. H. DICKERSON.



HEADQUARTERS OF THE



MRS. CALLIE HOUSE.

## Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty & Pension Association

OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Office—No. 708 Gay Street.

*To all Local Ex-Slave Associations in the United States We Come Greeting, as General Manager and Promoter of the movement, which has had so much opposition and more combats in its own circle than any other organization of the present day:*

I have devoted two years of my time wholly to this cause, and have...

An MRB&PA broadside features both Isalah Dickerson, the general manager, and Callie House, a national promoter and assistant secretary of the association, with the emblem of the United States in the center. (Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15)



Since the first attempt at reparations and its immediate reversal, as seen with Special Orders No. 15 and the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, & Pension Association, U.S. citizens of African descent have spent a generation's worth of time, blood, sweat, and tears in search of repairs against the injustice and inhumane condition of enslavement and its aftermath:

## NOTABLE ATTEMPTS INCLUDE:

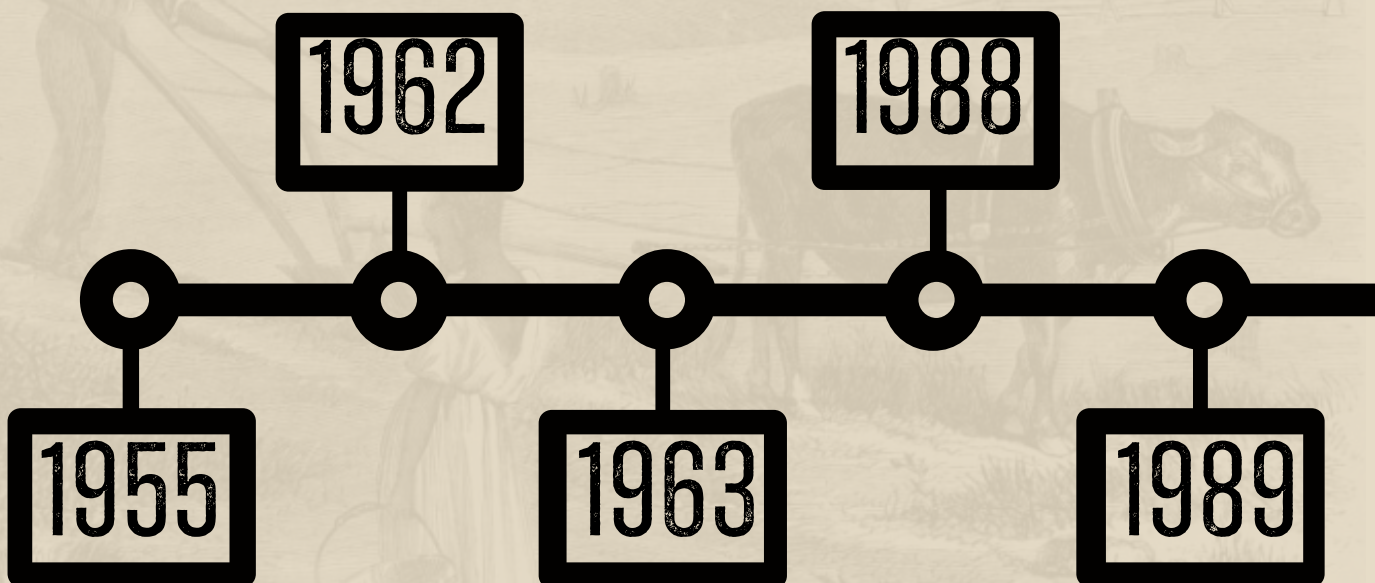
1955: Reemergence of grassroots organizing around the demand for reparations;

1962: Queen Mother Moore and Dara Abubakari ← form the Reparations Committee, which delivered a communiqué to the UN;

1963: An organized petition received 1 million signatures in support of the fight for reparations;

1988: Massachusetts State Senator ← Bill Owens filed a reparations resolution with state legislature in Mass;

1989: Congressman John Conyers' H.R.40 - Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act introduced;



1994, 1995: Florida legislature passes reparations settlement in Rosewood, Florida;

1997: Tulsa Race Riot Commission was established by the Oklahoma State Legislature;

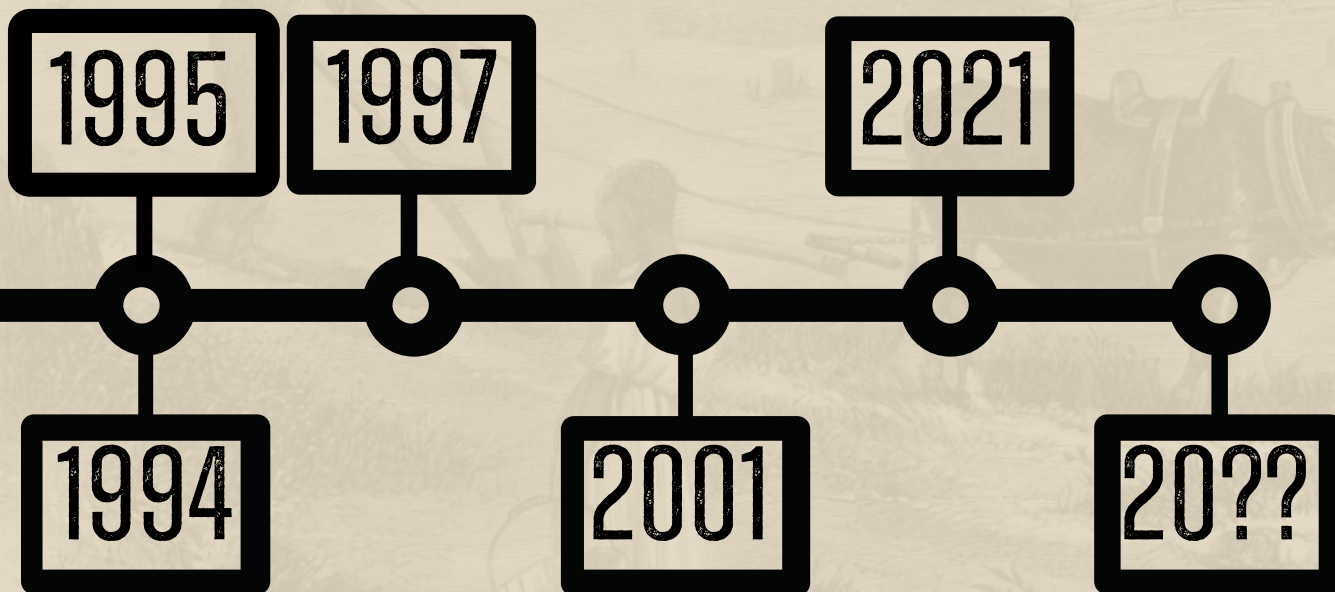
2001: Publication of Randall Robinson's *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*, which presents a powerful argument for reparations for the Transatlantic Slave Trade;

2021: Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee introduced the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act on January 1st, 2021. This bill seeks to establish a commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans.

As evident in the timeline above, the struggle for reparations has been fought in communities, the government, and the courts. That is why Evanston's historic progressive stands starkly against the rest.

From the first installment of \$400,000 delivered to Evanston's Black residents via Resolution 37-R-21 to [House Resolution 40](#) ← clearing the U.S. House Judiciary Committee for the first time, we make leaps and bounds during tumultuous times.

But when have we yet to make leaps and bounds during rough times?





Watch *The Big Payback* film clip from 2:32-4:54 and answer the following question.



**OTHER THAN ENSLAVEMENT, WHAT FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS ARE MENTIONED IN THE CONVERSATION FOR REPARATIONS? LIST THREE EXAMPLES. WHY DO YOU THINK THEY ARE INCLUDED IN THE CASE FOR REPARATIONS?**

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FEDERAL

RESERVE

NOTE

MF 54635417 D

FV B 114

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

F6



We the People

MF 54635417 D

THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER FOR ALL DEBTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

SERIES 2013

*Janet L. Yellen*

Treasurer of the United States

*Paul D. Miller*

Secretary of the Treasury



**1890**

**1890-1916:** The sell-out of Field Order #15; Callie House, National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief Bounty and Pension Association;

**1914 to Present:** UNIA and the Garvey Movement;

**1914**

**1948**

**1948:** Genocide Convention Treaty, UN;

**1950:** Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad begins to voice their demands for Reparations; Robert Brock in the 1950s started Reparations Movement in Calif. and spent 40 years working on the issue;

**1950**

**1951**

**1951:** Paul Robeson, William Patterson, and W.E.B. Du Bois launch the 1951 Genocide Campaign;

**1955:** Reemergence of grassroots organizing around the demand for Reparations;

**1955**

**1962**

**1962:** Queen Mother Moore and Dara Abubakari form the Reparations Committee – they delivered a communique to the UN;

**1963:** Organized petition of 1 million signatures in support of the demand for Reparations;

**1963**

**1968**

**1968:** Founding of Republic of New Afrika (RNA) with Imari Obadele;

**1969:** James Forman disrupts Riverside Church in New York and presents Black Manifesto Reparations demands;

**1969**

**VISUALS**

**1972**

Throughout the **1980s**: the African Peoples Socialist Party sponsored nationwide Reparations hearings; Reparations Ray emerges in Detroit as a leading Reparations activist;

**1987**

**1988**: Massachusetts State Senator Bill Owens filed a Reparations Resolution with State Legislature in Mass;

**1989**

**1993**: The First Pan African Conference on Reparations was held in Abuja, Nigeria, April 27-29 and attended by African Americans

**1994**

**1995**: On October 16, during a brief NOI MMM presentation, Dr. Worrill mentioned the demand for Reparations, freeing all political prisoners, and support for African Centered Education.

**1996**

**1998**: Africa Group Resolution [states] that the Transatlantic Slave Trade was a Crime Against Humanity;

**1972**: National Black Political Convention, Reparations resolution passed by ten thousand people and presented to all Presidential candidates; African Liberation Day, 60,000 people and issue of Reparations raised;

**1980**

**1987 to Present**: National Coalition of Blacks in America (N'COBRA) formed. It becomes the premiere Reparations org in the US; Dorothy Lewis Benton, founder of the Black Reparations Commission publishes two informative books on Reparations;

**1988**

**1989**: Congressman John Conyers' HR40 Study Bill introduced;

**1993**

**1994**: Lost and Found Nation of Islam/Silas Muhammad Petition for hearings at UN on Reparations;

**1994, 1995**: Florida legislature passes reparations settlement in Rosewood, Florida;

**1995**

**1995**: CATO Decision, California courts ruled against reparations lawsuit;

**1996-1997**: National Black United Front (NBUF) Genocide Campaign: Holocaust, Genocide – Reparations;

**TIME LINE**

**1997**

**1997:** Tulsa Race Riot Commission established

**2000:** Legal Strategist/Atty. Deadra Farmer-Paellmann launches campaign to expose corporate complicity in slavery; secures apology from Aetna, Inc.

**2000**

**2000:** The Dec 12th Movement's role in following Malcolm X's idea of exposing the plight of African people before world bodies. They have played a leading role in organizing around the Transatlantic Slave Trade as a Crime Against Humanity an NGO for 15 years at the UN.

**2001:** Pan African Unity convenes on the Question of Reparations;

**2000:** Local municipalities adopt resolutions in support of HR40 during the most publicized Chicago Alderman Dorothy Hearing; Atty. Adjoa Aiyetoro, N'COBRA Lawsuit; RNA Reparations Lawsuit; Reparations/Assessment Discussion of Lawsuit: Cochran, Pires, Ogletree, Gary, etc.

**2000:** Mass discussions of Reparations and a variety of strategies unfold: Lawsuits, Trust Funds/education, Land set-asides, International law, the release of political prisoners and other prisoners, economic development funds;

**2001:** The Durban 400 and the African and African American Descendants Caucus and Pan African Unity on the Question of the TransAtlantic Slave Trade, Slavery, Colonialism, and Apartheid being Crimes Against Humanity and that Reparations are owed to African people worldwide;

**2001**

**2002:** Attorney Deadria Farmer Paellmann sues more than 20 U.S. corporations for their predecessor companies profiteering from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Millions for Reparations Rally Called by the Durban 400 on Aug 17th, 2002 in Washington, DC. Attended by 50,000 people, viewed by millions on C-SPAN; March 21, Queen Mother Reparations Bill introduced by Councilman Charles Barron (NY) recognizing the Transatlantic Slave Trade as a Crime Against Humanity; Oct. 2nd, Chicago Slave Era Disclosure Act-Corporations must disclose their ties to slavery before conducting business;

**2001:** Publication of Randall Robinson's "The Debt," which presents a powerful argument for Reparations for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade;

**2002**

**O F R E P A**

**2002**

**2003:** February 26th, First Hearing of the Consolidated Class Action Corporate Lawsuit in Chicago Federal Court. Lead Attorneys were Lionel Jean-Baptiste and Roger Wareham. Over two years, Millions For Reparations organized mass rallies on the streets and filled the courtroom;

Dr. Raymond Winbush's book on the reparations question, "Should America Pay?"; Creation of Ndaba Movement by Dr. Conrad Worrill, former National Chair of NBUF. Over a period of one year, five cities in the U.S.-Chicago, Jackson, Miss., Houston, Baltimore, and Atlanta hosted mass meetings with Minister Farrakhan and Worrill, educating thousands about reparations;

**2004:** March 20th, Nationwide NBUF Elected Officials Reparations Survey Scorecard Campaign; May 12th, 2004 Second Reparations Lawsuit filed by Bob Brown, Chicago;

**2005**

**2006:** Wilmington Race Riot Report published in N.C. calling for reparations for the 1898 Wilmington Massacre.

**2007**

**2002-2003:** Reparations Lawsuits; the addition of corporate entities to target groups for Reparations lawsuits; Reparations Corporate Lawsuit filed March 26, 2002, in Brooklyn, NY; Tulsa Riot Reparations Lawsuit filed February 24, 2003, in Tulsa, Oklahoma;

**2003**

**2003-2004:** Other City Council Resolutions (following the Chicago Model) require corporations to disclose their ties to slavery, January 8th, Reparations Lawsuit filed by Bob Brown in Chicago, March 20th Phase IV of NBUF Genocide Reparations Petition Campaign, worldwide;

**2004**

**2005:** Millions More Movement organized by Minister Farrakhan endorses reparations for the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

**2005-2007:** The state of Illinois Transatlantic Slave Trade Commission was established, and two reports were published.

**2006**

By **2007** all Reparations Lawsuits were dismissed on the U.S. legal concept of Statute of Limitations. However, under International Law, this concept does not apply. That's why International Reparations organizing is essential.

**REPARATIONS**

# 2008

**2014:** Institute of the Black World and the Carruthers Center For Inner City Studies, led by Dr. Ron Daniels, sponsored CARICOM Representatives at a central forum on Reparations at Chicago State University on April 19, 2014. Prominent leaders spoke before Hillary Beckles – author of the profound book "Britain's Black Debt."; Minister Farrakhan, Dr. Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Dr. Iva Carruthers, Kamm Howard, and Worrill preceded Beckles's presentation on CARICOM's Ten Point Reparations Program. More than 3,000 were in attendance; The Atlantic Monthly magazine publishes Ta-Nehisi Coates' "A Case For Reparations"; discussions continue around his article exposing real estate rip-off of Black people on Chicago's Westside in the '50s and early '60s;

# 2015

**2018:** Yvette Carnell and Antonio Moore establish #ADOS hashtag, stirs up great controversy regarding their Reparations conceptualization and positions; a great deal of their strategy is based on Duke University professor Dr. William Darity's research on African-American wealth gap disparities;

# 2019

**2008:** Institute of the Black World sponsored the State of the Black World Conference on September 8, 2008, in New Orleans, major reparations workshop held with reparations scholars, organizers, and activists from throughout the United States;

**2008-2016:** Reparations Movement conflicted on strategy related to President Barack Obama's tenure in office. N'COBRA, NBUF, and others continued to push HR40. N'COBRA sponsored through their National Plans of Actions, in Feb., each year around the country –Reparations Awareness Days;

**2015:** National African American Reparations Commission (NARRC) was established at York College in N.Y. Over three years NAARC and N'COBRA collaborated in upgrading HR40 beyond just a Study Bill;

# 2018

**2019:** U.S. House to hold reparations hearing on Juneteenth with testimony from Ta-Nehisi Coates and Danny Glover.





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UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI  
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI  
100 UNIVERSITY BLVD  
UNIVERSITY, MISSISSIPPI 39264-0001  
TEL: 662-915-7200  
WWW.UMISSISSIPPI.EDU

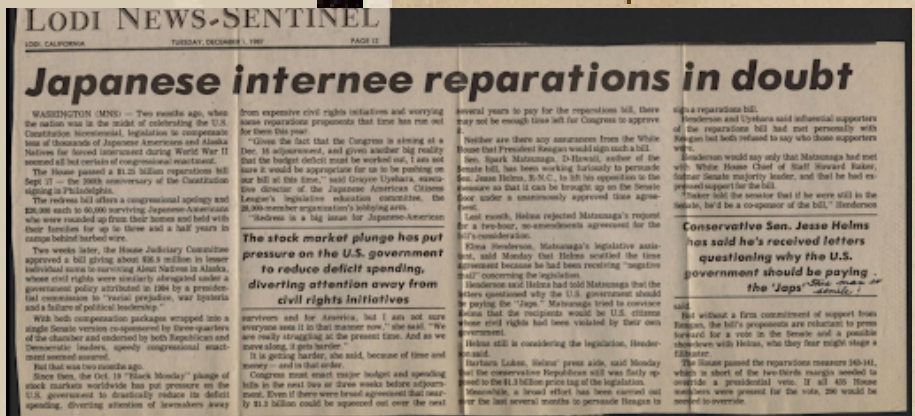
# REPARATIONS ARE NOT A NOVEL CONCEPT

There are quite a few examples of how reparations have been paid to the United States or global citizens.

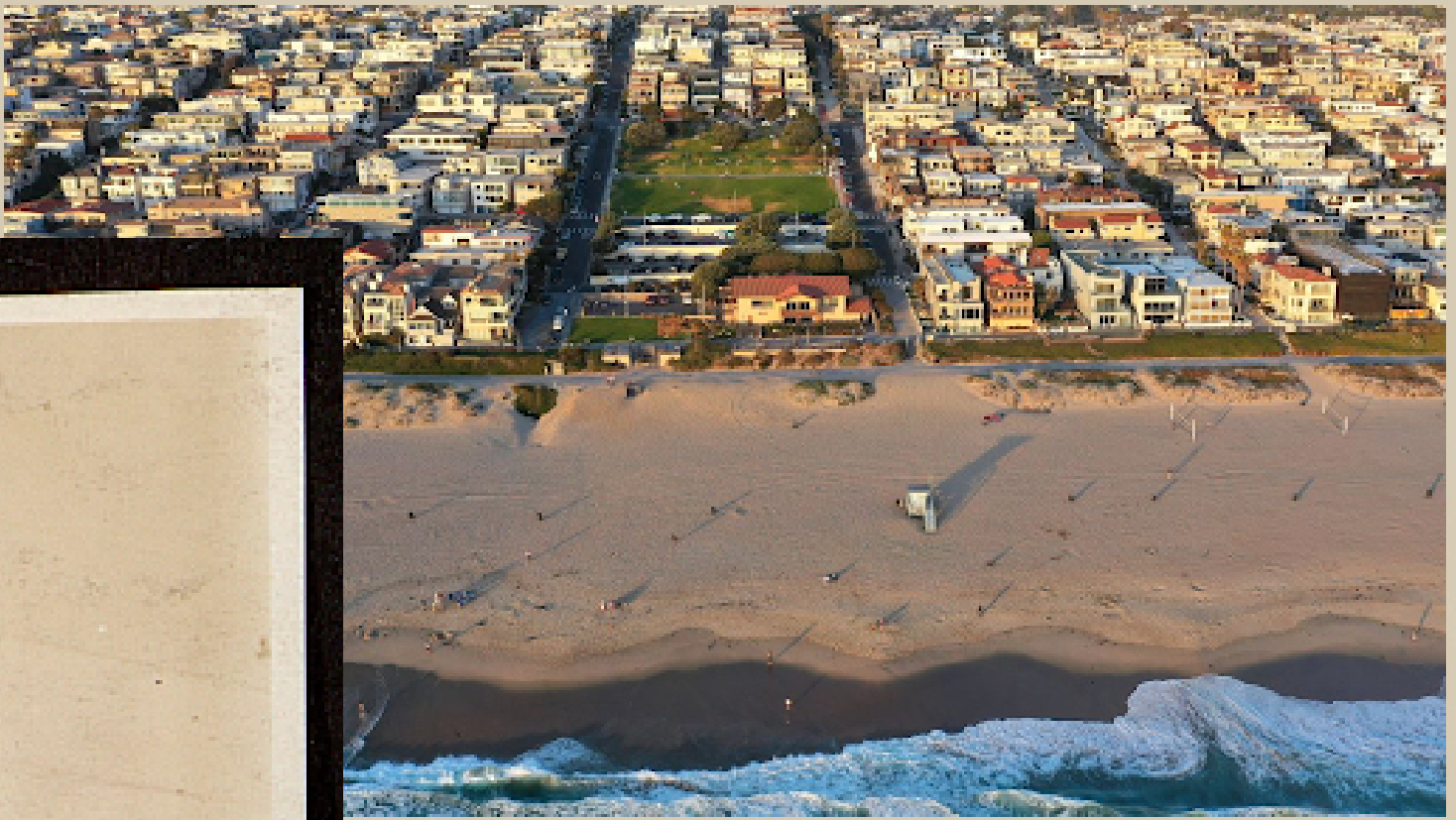
From 1971 to 1986, six Indigenous nations received some form of reparations.

In 1990, more than 100,000 Americans of Japanese descent placed in internment camps during World War II received \$1.2 billion under a law signed in 1988 by President Ronald Reagan.

In 1990, victims of the syphilis experiment at Tuskegee University received settlement funds that went to hundreds of Black patient survivors, their wives, widows, or their children.







**In 2010 and 2021, reparations were paid to Black farmers.**

**In 2015, the Obama administration paid reparations to Jewish Holocaust victims, which would be doled out over a 5-year timespan.**

**In 2022, a once Black-owned beach called Bruce's Beach was returned to the descendants of the Bruce family in a landmark move signed by Governor Gavin Newsom. As of January 3rd, 2023, the beachfront property is currently in the process of being sold back to Los Angeles County for an agreed amount of \$20 million.**



117TH CONGRESS  
1st Session

# H. R. 40

To address the fundamental inequities, injustices, inequalities, and inadequacies of history in the United States and the 21st American century between 1863 and 1865 and to establish a commission to study and create a national apology and program of reparations for the institution of slavery, its enforcement to 1865 and the moral and economic benefits being accrued to African Americans, to the impact of those forces on living African Americans, to the contributions to the Congress in appropriate monetary and other programs.

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. JACKSON LEE

Mr. WALTER

of California

Mr. WALTER

Mr. WALTER

Mr. WALTER

Mr. WALTER

Mr. WALTER

Mr. WALTER

Mr. WALTER

Mr. WALTER

Mr. WALTER

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Mr. WALTER



# WHAT MAKES REPARATIONS, REPARATIONS?

Most people see the word “reparations” and assume it solely means monetary compensation for enslavement. In reality, reparations are far more nuanced, considering the institution of enslavement has gone far beyond Black labor during chattel slavery.

Examples: Convict Leasing, Voting Oppression, Redlining, Loan Refusal, Eminent Domain, International Law Standards, etc.

According to the **United Nations**, ← adequate reparations fall into five distinct components:

- Cessation and Guarantees of Non-Repetition
- Restitution
- Compensation
- Satisfaction
- Rehabilitation

Among the many reparation initiatives, two have made substantial progress toward defining, creating a framework and parameters for reparations.



**ROBIN RUE SIMMONS**

**[FIRSTREPAIR FOUNDER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE]**





The first, House Resolution 40, or H.R.40, is the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act. This “Reparations Remedy Bill” meticulously lays out the parameters of the proposed legislation and what can be achieved through its approval. Initially championed by Congressman John Conyers, who died in 2019, and currently shepherded by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, it has cleared the U.S. House Judiciary Committee for the first time in 30 years and is heading to the House Floor for a total vote. As mentioned in *The Big Payback*, H.R.40 has 196 cosponsors and enough pledged “yes” votes for passage out of the house.

The second, H.R.40 Primer, was produced in collaboration with the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N’COBRA), the National African American Reparations Committee (NAARC), and the Black is Back Coalition (BIBC) for Social Justice. In this primer, reparations are more than just economic assistance or compensation, but an opportunity to make a complete repair on different fronts. The document suggests that:

“Under the international concepts of ‘full reparations’ and ‘special measures,’ reparations must “wipe out all consequences’ of the harm and ‘include the full span of legislative, executive, administrative, budgetary, and regulatory instruments, at every level in the State apparatus...”

## CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE [D-TX-18]





Some of the demands or examples of reparations listed in the primer are preexisting demands outlined in the National African-American Reparations Commission's (NAARC) [10 Point Reparations Plan](#), ← which provides a concise road map for what the journey toward complete repair can and should encompass.

Under international law, 'cessation and guarantees of non-repetition are considered the reconsideration of state and federal laws that violate the rights of imprisoned or non-imprisoned Black people, with the assurance that the action cannot and will not be repeated.

The component of 'restitution' is 'the re-establishment of the victimized' point of living before the act of harm occurred. This could encompass the return of stolen land and intellectual property or the repair of damages that the criminal justice system could have caused.

Most notably, 'compensation,' which is often thought of as the only form of reparations, seeks to explore what it could look like for the infrastructure within Black communities to be developed, funding for programming, housing, education, and health care, as well as individual payments to those that have inherited injury or theft of inheritance.

About 'satisfaction,' this component pushes for the acknowledgment of and a formal apology for the institution of enslavement. In addition to a formal apology, the establishment of a permanent MAAFA/African Holocaust Institute is also demanded, in which the institute would provide public education regarding the history of enslavement, as well as highlight the role of public and private institutions that participated and sustained it.

Lastly, it examines the component of 'rehabilitation,' explained as access to legal, psychological, medical, and other care and wellness services.



Watch The Big Payback film clip from 12:37-14:11. What stuck out to you during this council meeting about reparations?

What examples from your community align with the council members' words?

A large writing area consisting of multiple horizontal lines. In the background, there is a faint, light-colored illustration of the United States Capitol building.

# SO WHAT'S THE SCENARIO?

**Directions:** To further understand what you have learned about the five guidelines needed to make a complete repair, you will have a chance to read over some scenarios that would align with the different components. Please keep in mind that these scenarios are just one of many examples and should be used as a template to highlight how reparations can operate.

## **1. Cessation and Guarantees of Non-Repetition:**

A freedom fighter in a small town outside of Detroit has recently been arrested and listed as a political prisoner. Their arrest took place at a protest against over-policing in their neighborhood.

**(1) Plans for Repair:** Community members issue a list of demands, one of which calls for the immediate release of any political prisoner that is currently being held in prison for peacefully protesting.

**2. Restitution:** Johnathan finds out that the government declared eminent domain on his grandparent's house and land in the early 1940s. Displaced to public housing, Johnathan realizes that his family's generational wealth was disrupted by the revoking of their land without compensation.

**(2) Plans for Repair:** Johnathan applies for a tax-funded reparations grant that assists with compensating his family in full with interest for their stolen land and home.

**3. Compensation:** Aaron is looking to start a local grocery co-op for members in his neighborhood, seeing that there are not many stores nearby that cater to the well-being of his community members. He has been struggling to acquire funding to finance his business and get it off the ground.

**(3) Plans for Repair:** Aaron works in cooperation with his community who are in favor of the grocery store, to create a petition to bring to the next city council meeting and present it to local representatives. The petition calls for the provision of business training and business loans to assist new business owners.

**4. Satisfaction:** Lianna, a public archivist notices enslavement records that have the name of an insurance company that exists to this day. Using her social media, she highlights the insurance company's involvement in enslavement and the way its current existence is propped up on the institution.

**(4) Plans for Repair:** Catching wind of Lianna's social media post, the insurance company's executives issue a formal apology acknowledging their involvement and set aside funds for other activists to unpack the ties between institutions and enslavement. The company's executives also set aside funds to discount their services to Black insurance holders.

**5. Rehabilitation:** Delilah's mother was denied access to cardiology services based on a test that leads to disproportionate access among Black and Latinx people known as the **HEART Score**. ← As a result, Delilah's mother suffered a cardiac arrest that left her disabled.

**(5) Plans for Repair:** The hospital pays for the rehabilitation and health insurance of Delilah's mother for life. In addition, the hospital rectifies its usage of the HEART Score to ensure race and sex are NOT factors when considering patients for cardiology services.





# ADDITIONAL PLANS FOR A FULL REPAIR!

In addition to the scenarios you have read, could you take a moment to read over some suggested actions toward reparations given by Evanston community members? Do you see any suggestions that could also benefit your community?

- Providing civic education
- The inclusion of more Black people on city boards
- Providing quality mental health care in collaboration with local organizations and nonprofits
- The creation of a homeowner's fund to be used for updating and beautifying homes
- Instituting free community college tuition
- The creation of parenting programs to assist with childcare
- Monetary assistance and business planning for new business owners
- Investing more money and resources into early childhood education programs

You can click [here](#) to learn more about the [H.R.40 Bill](#). ← It is not only an act of good faith to pass this bill but the acceptance of a future where our history can be viewed with respect and the intention to create a better future rather than contempt.

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# WHY REPARATIONS MATTER

It is no secret that the push for reparations in the United States has been a hotly debated topic for some time. In a 2021 study by the [Pew Research Center](#), a national survey was conducted between October 4-17 to measure the sentiments toward reparations and atonement for enslavement.

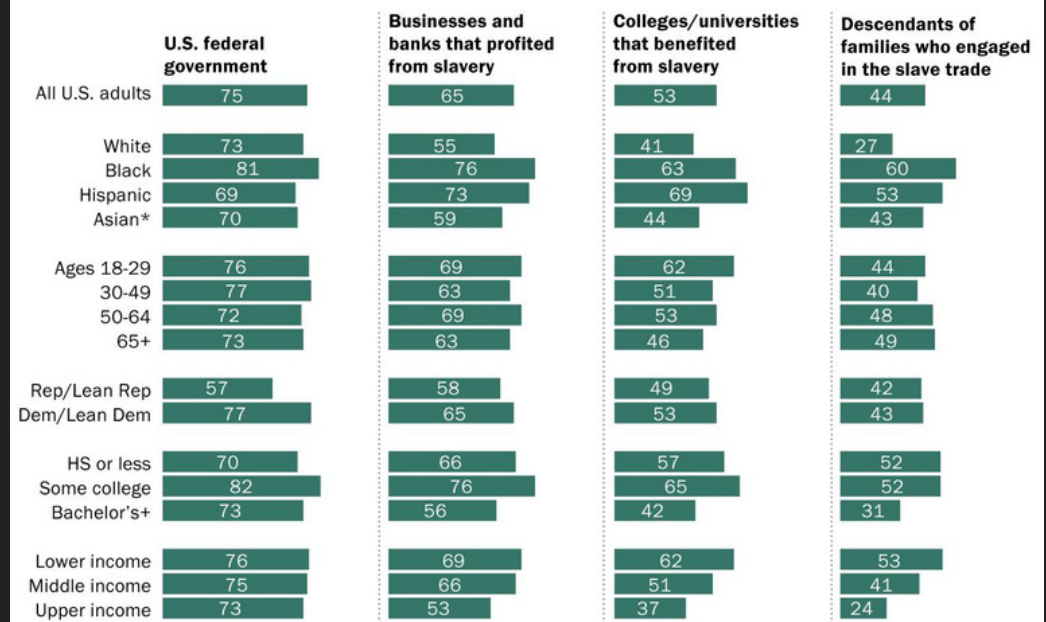
The survey was designed to capture the feelings of U.S. citizens regarding the legacy of enslavement, who is responsible for its repayment, and if this history of injustice has an impact on the quality of life for Black Americans now.

The report states:

“Views of reparations for slavery vary widely by race and ethnicity, especially between Black and White Americans. Around three-quarters of Black adults (77%) say the descendants of people enslaved in the U.S. should be repaid in some way, while 18% of White Americans say the same.”

## Three-quarters of Americans who support reparations say the federal government should be responsible for repayment

Among U.S. adults who say descendants of people enslaved in the U.S. should be repaid, % who say \_\_\_ have **all/most of the responsibility** for repayment



\* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Note: Black adults include those who say their race is Black alone and non-Hispanic; multiracial, non-Hispanic Black; or Black and Hispanic. White and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. "Some college" includes adults who have an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Family income tiers are based on adjusted 2020 earnings. Share of respondents who didn't offer a response not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 4-17, 2021.

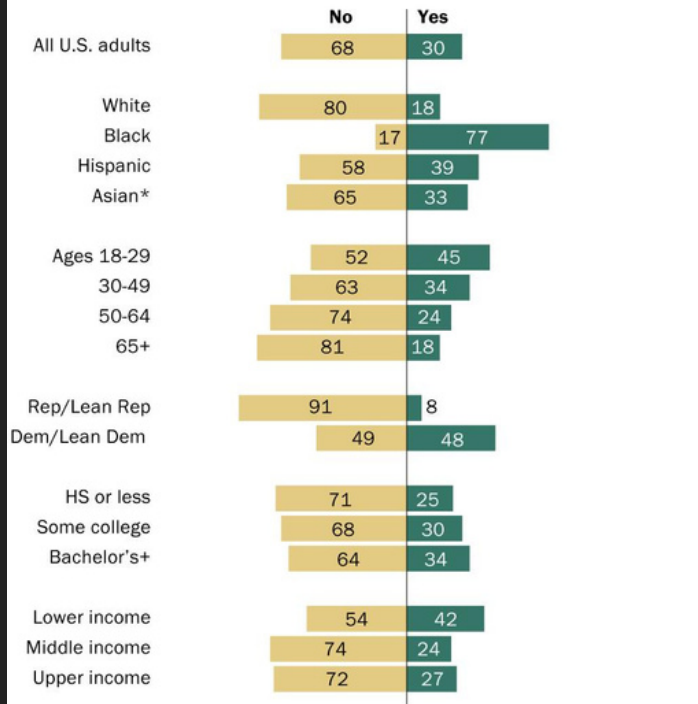
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The bar graph to the right showcases the survey's responses, including key factors like race, age group, political party association, level of education, and economic status.

The bar graphs below showcase the survey's responses, including key factors like race, age group, political party association, level of education, and economic status.

**77% of Black Americans – compared with 18% of White Americans – support reparations for descendants of enslaved people**

% of U.S. adults who say descendants of people enslaved in the U.S. should be repaid in some way, such as given land or money

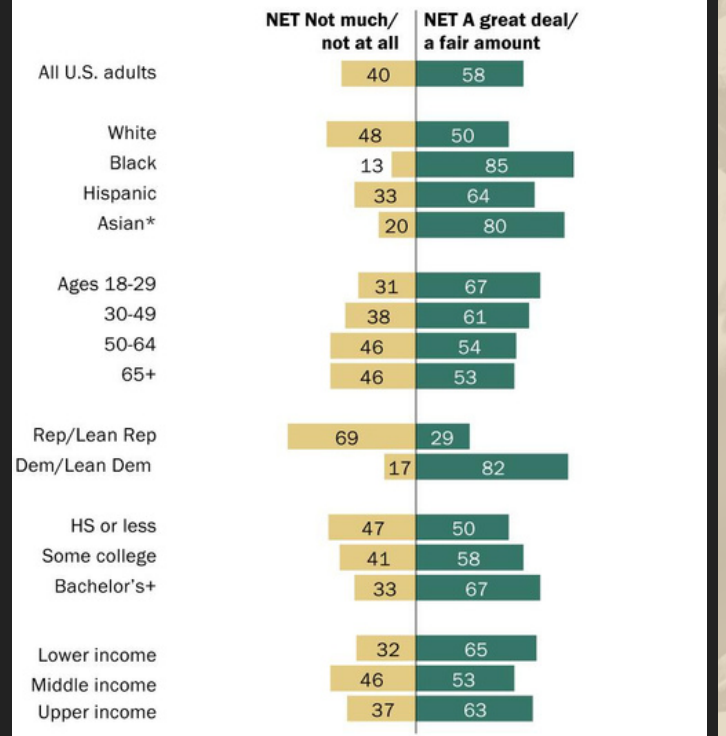


\* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only. Note: Black adults include those who say their race is Black alone and non-Hispanic; multiracial, non-Hispanic Black; or Black and Hispanic. White and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. "Some college" includes adults who have an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Family income tiers are based on adjusted 2020 earnings. Share of respondents who didn't offer a response not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 4-17, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

**Black Americans most likely to say legacy of slavery affects Black people in the U.S. at least a fair amount**

% of U.S. adults who say the legacy of slavery affects the position of Black people in American society today ...



\* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only. Note: Black adults include those who say their race is Black alone and non-Hispanic; multiracial, non-Hispanic Black; or Black and Hispanic. White and Asian respondents include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. "Some college" includes adults who have an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Family income tiers are based on adjusted 2020 earnings. Share of respondents who didn't offer a response not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 4-17, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In reviewing the Pew Research Center results and the sentiments echoed in *The Big Payback*, we can infer that the push toward reparations has a significant amount of support. However, this movement has plenty of non-supporters.

Despite this resistance, we must continue educating people on what can be achieved when the history of enslavement and all it has touched is recognized. Restitution is made, to the affected, by those who inherited it.



**WATCH THE BIG PAYBACK FILM CLIP FROM 26:00-27:40 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**



**Hecky talks about his stance on reparations and what it means from his perspective. Considering what you have seen in the film and have read throughout this discussion guide, what are your takeaways from his perspective and what do you believe influenced this?**

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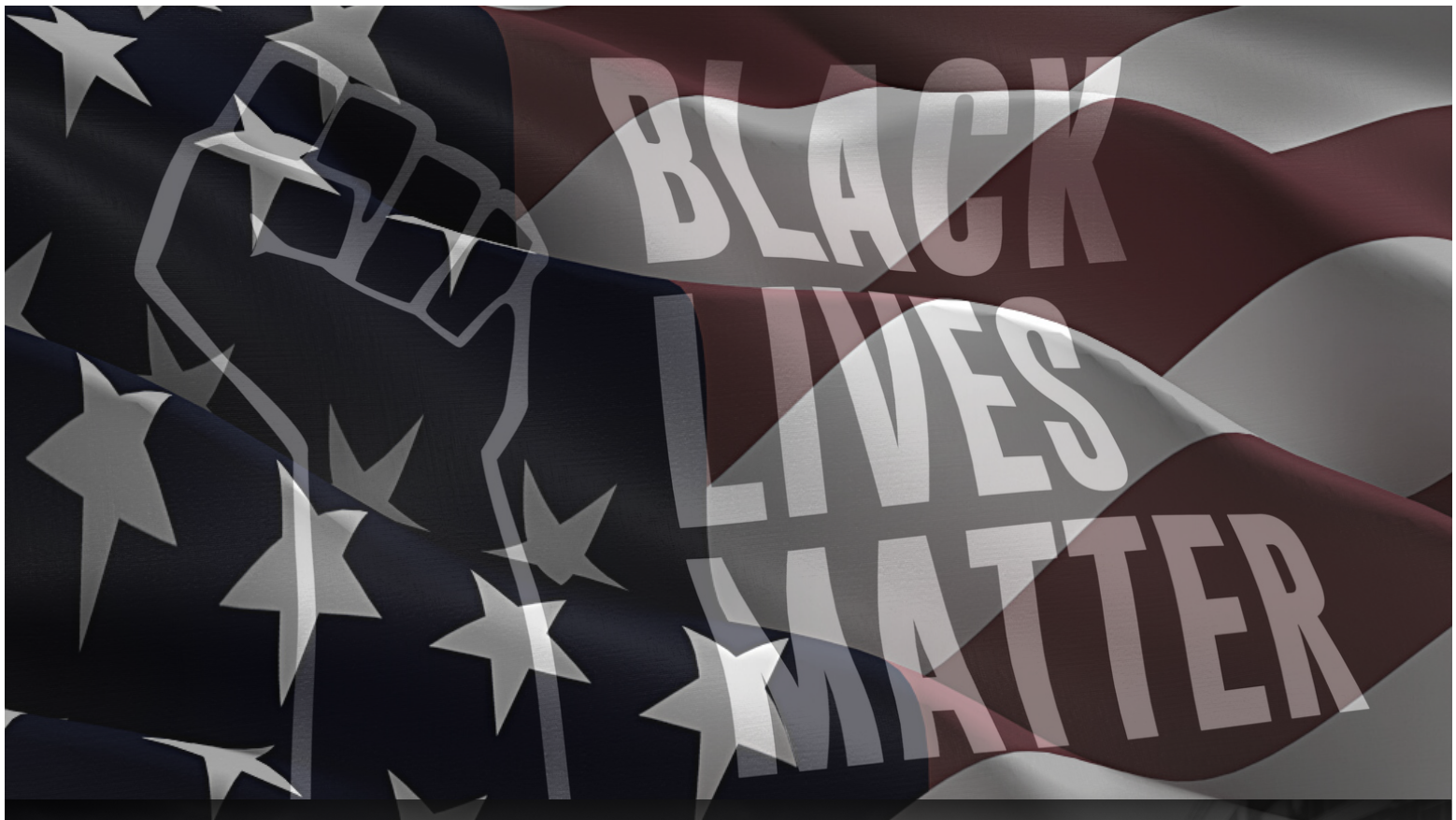
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While we have learned that the fight for reparations has been one that has lasted for centuries, it is essential to recognize how and what those attempts at repair look like in this day and age. As a result, many communities throughout the nation have gathered to try and define what reparations might look like for that particular sector and urge state and federal powers to agree.

Look at the reparation legislation passed in Evanston, Illinois, and the housing grants provided to help homeowners. Through Evanston's progress, we are shown that meaningful investments toward repair are feasible and must be made to correct the nation's past wrongs

Review the real-life case studies below to understand further what communities in Alexandria, Palm Springs, Tulsa, and Philadelphia have done or are currently doing in the fight for reparations concerning their communal needs and demands.



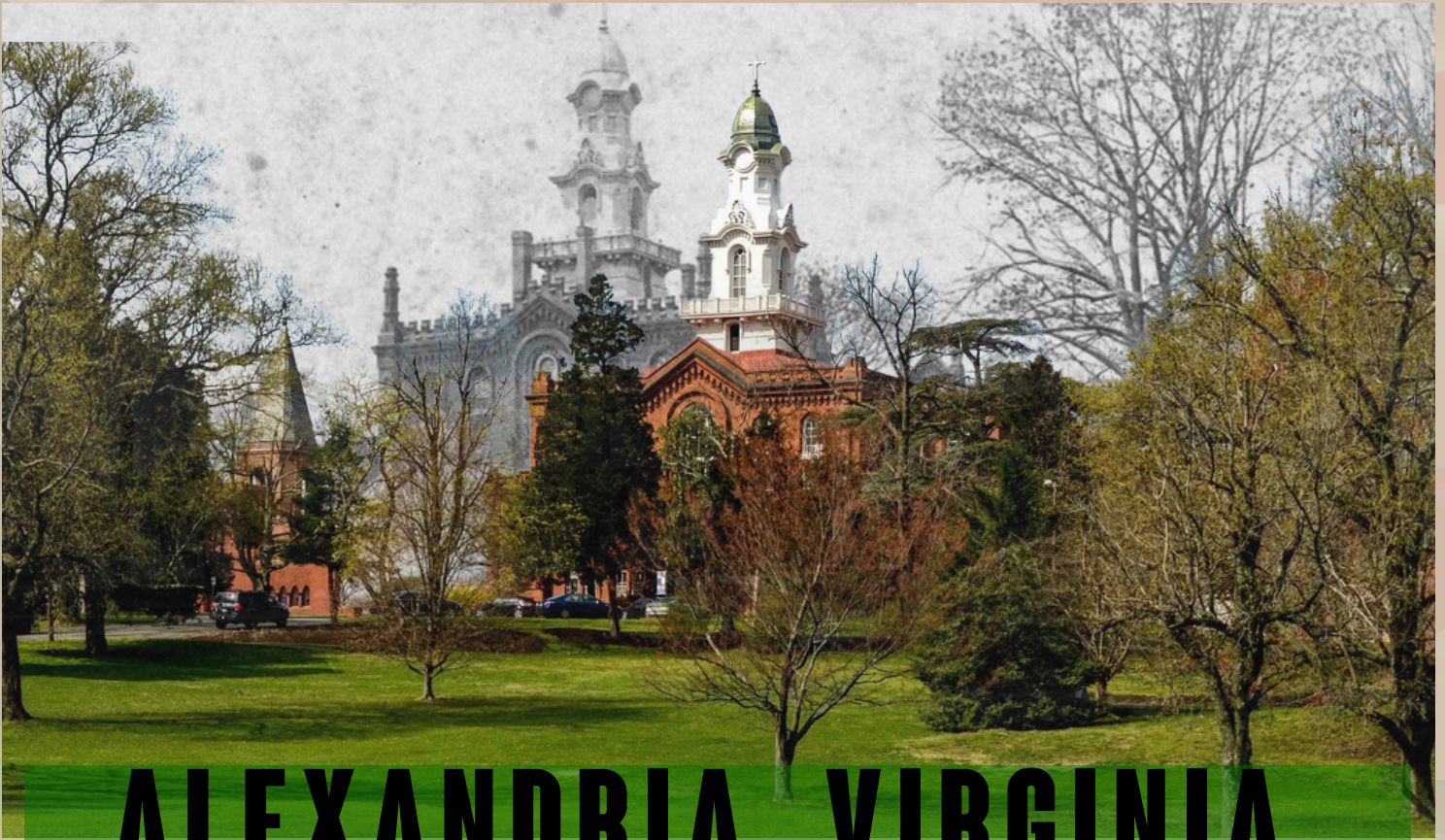
## TULSA, OKLAHOMA

In the 2001 [Tulsa Race Riot Report](#), ← The Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 cited the Tulsa Massacre as “the worst civil disturbance since the Civil War.” The commission was established in 1997 in an ongoing effort to hold the state of Oklahoma accountable for the damages endured by direct victims of the massacre and their descendants. To this day, the reparations lawsuit brought against the state of Oklahoma by the Tulsa Race Massacre survivors is awaiting approval for the following steps to discuss the future of reparations for the victims of a 102-year fight.

Click [here](#) ← to learn more about the current reparations lawsuit regarding the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921.

In what ways has the fight for reparations in Tulsa provided a landscape for other reparation movements throughout the U.S. and beyond?





# ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

In February 2021, the Virginia Theological Seminary began issuing payments to the descendants of enslaved and Black workers that performed labor there. By looking for descendants of the workers from the time of enslavement to Jim Crow segregation, Reverend Ian Markham states, “We wanted to make sure that we both not just say and articulate and speak what’s right, but also take some action – and we were committed to that from the outset.”

As it is documented, payments of \$2,100 will be given annually, with hopes of increasing with more funding provided to the seminary. Maddy McCoy, a genealogist working alongside the seminary members to try and locate descendants of the Black workers, reflects on the challenges of rolling out a program of this kind. “There is no manual we are referring to as we move through this,” says McCoy. “With that, it’s going to be a lot of ups and downs, tough decisions, and difficult conversations, but that’s what this work is.”

To learn more about the Virginia Theological Seminary Program, click [here](#). ←  
Which of the five components does this reparative action align with?



# PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

The bombing of Osage Avenue in 1985 sent a dark ripple across the nation as many people bore witness to a state-sanctioned genocide that claimed the lives of 11 people, including five children, and left 250 people displaced. The MOVE Organization, which advocated for Black liberation, found itself in several different run-ins with the police, neighbors, and military forces before the bombing.

The organization was even labeled a terrorist organization by Mayor Wilson Goode and police commissioner Gregore J. Sambor. Leading up to the historical tragedy of May 13, 1985, police had managed to secure arrest warrants for four MOVE members.

MOVE members and police officers found themselves in a standoff before commissioner Sambor ordered that two 1.5-lb. bombs be dropped on the homes as 'entry devices.' In 1996, a federal jury awarded Ramona Africa \$500,000 for the pain, suffering, and physical harm due to that act of state violence. Former neighborhood residents would receive \$12.83 million for their displacement in a 2005 civil trial brought against the city.

Most recently, in 2021, the bodily remains of one of the victims were returned to the African family, whose bones were kept at the Penn Museum. However, the return still draws suspicion from officials and community members, who are skeptical about whether all the remains have been handed over.

To learn more about the bombing of Osage Avenue, click [here](#). ←

Which of the five components does this reparative action align with?

## OTHER STORIES YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT

- Bruce Beach in California
- Rosewood Massacre of 1923
- Palm Springs Mass Eviction of 1954
- Cabrini-Green Housing Projects in Chicago
- Harvard University



**“ANY DIRECT BENEFIT TO ADDRESS THE DAMAGES TO A TARGETED COMMUNITY IS REPAIR.”**

**-FORMER ALDERWOMAN, ROBIN RUE SIMMONS.**

An article written in Open Democracy states that:

“A comprehensive reparations agenda would entail a massive transfer of wealth at an unprecedented scale, eliminate vast inequalities, rectify hundreds of years of racialization and exploitation, and perhaps most significantly, shatter the meritocratic mythology of American capitalism: that anyone can make it with enough ambition and hard work.”

As Ta-Nehisi Coates explains in [‘The Case for Reparations,’](#) ←

“The idea of reparations is frightening not simply because we might lack the ability to pay. The idea of reparations threatens something much deeper—America’s heritage, history, and standing in the world.”

By disrupting the “mythology” of American capitalism, reparations would level the field for Black and other marginalized communities. Moreover, it highlights the contributions, both forced and willing, to building this country.

When we think of the current infrastructure that this country sits on, it cannot be denied that much of it is still fueled by the stolen labor of enslaved Africans upon the stolen land of the Indigenous peoples. Infrastructure is the physical and organizational structures that contribute to society, enterprise, empire, etc. Examples of infrastructure would be the construction of roads, buildings, ports, power supplies, streets, etc.

Please take a moment to look below at current institutions and infrastructures that still generate wealth from their inception during American enslavement.

- The White House
- The U.S. Capitol Building
- Thomas Jefferson’s Estate in Monticello
- Buildings at UNC-Chapel Hill
- Wall Street
- Wells Fargo
- JP Morgan Chase
- Johns Hopkins University
- Railroads
  - Norfolk Southern
  - CSX
  - Union Pacific
  - Canadian National

You can use this as an opportunity to research some of the names listed and even be sure to research specific Infrastructure in your city, town, or community. You might be surprised at what you find.

You can learn more about Infrastructure Built by Enslaved People by clicking [here.](#) ←

Learn more about Historic Structures in America that Enslaved People Built by clicking [here.](#) ←

# GLOSSARY

2

## REPARATIONS:

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the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury

1

## REPARATIONS FOR ENSLAVEMENT:

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is the application of the concept that reparations are owed to the victims of enslavement and/or their descendants. There are concepts for reparations in legal philosophy and reparations in transitional justice.

3

## PETITION:

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a formal written request, typically signed by many people, appealing to authority concerning a particular cause.

4

## REDLINING

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refusing (a loan or insurance) to someone because they live in an area deemed to be a poor financial risk.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Feel free to tune into a podcast, read an article, or even watch interviews featuring the cast of *The Big Payback*!

[The Daily, Politics Nation with Al Sharpton on](#)

[MSNBC](#) ←

[NPR Code Switch Erika/Whitney](#) ←

[Erika Alexander on Zerlina Maxwell](#) ←

[The Big Payback Podcast](#) ←

[The Breakfast Club Interview](#) ←

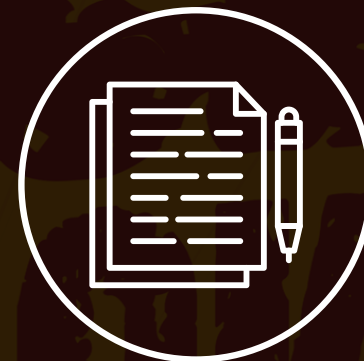
[Callie House Book](#) ←

[From Here to Equality Book](#) ←

[Black Reconstruction in America WEB DuBois](#) ←

[Origin of Everything: PBS Reparations](#) ←

[Gates' 40 Acres PBS](#) ←

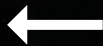




**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BIG PAYBACK OR TO WATCH THE FILM CLICK THE LINKS BELOW!**



[VISIT THE FILM WEBSITE!](#)



[CHECK YOUR LOCAL LISTINGS!](#)



TO WATCH THE BIG PAYBACK ON THE PBS VIDEO

APP CLICK THE LINK BELOW!

**i** INDEPENDENT LENS

# THE BIG PAYBACK

FEAR AND REPARATIONS IN THE AMERICAN SUBURB

WATCH ON THE PBS VIDEO APP

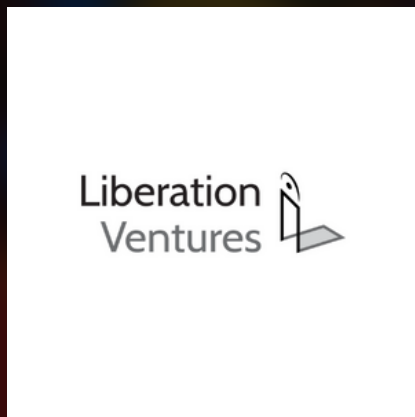
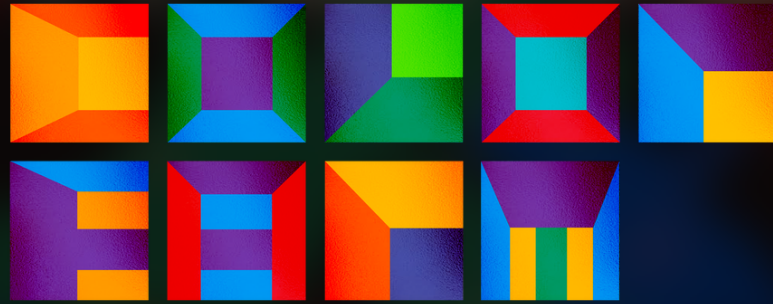
COLOR FARM MEDIA and LEVEL FORWARD Present a FERAL FILMS/REVERSAL FILMS PRODUCTION  
In Association with FORD FOUNDATION/JUST FILMS an ERIKA ALEXANDER & WHITNEY DOWD Film "THE BIG PAYBACK" Executive Producers KATY BARKSDALE JOY ANU REID JASON REID MARCO WILLIAMS DARA CANTY JEBB CANTY ADRIENNE BECKER SPRING POINT PARTNERS  
Co-Executive Producers YVONNE HUFF LEE JASON DELANE LEE BRENT ZACHERY Sound BALJE MARTIN JACOB BROWN SHULING YONG Cinematography MARGARET BYRNE KEVIN SHAW KEITH WALKER BRETT WILEY Editors MELISSA NEIDICH CHRISTOPHER ALZZA Music ADRIAN YOUNG  
Line Producer JENNIFER LATHAM Produced by BEN ARNON XAN PARKER WHITNEY DOWD ERIKA ALEXANDER Directed by ERIKA ALEXANDER & WHITNEY DOWD

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**TOMKAT MEDIA**

**NICOLE COMMISSIONG AND DARNELL**

**ARMSTRONG**

**WILLIAM F. HARNISCH FOUNDATION**

**ITVS**

**BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA**

**WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN THE MOVEMENT  
FOR REPARATIONS? WRITE A LETTER TO PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN  
USING THE ADDRESS AND WRITING TEMPLATE BELOW!**



**Return Address:**

**FPO STAMP**

Dear President Biden,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am writing you because I believe our nation must first reckon with the legacy of slavery in America in order for us to build a more just and equitable future for all Americans.

I am calling on you to use your executive authority to establish a federal commission to study the legacy and vestiges of slavery and to develop proposals for reparations. This would be the same commission provided for in the bill H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African-Americans Act. As you know, 215 members of the Congress have committed to vote yes in support of H.R. 40, but the bill remains stalled.

**President Joe Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave  
Washington, DC 20500**

You have the authority to issue an executive order to set up the same commissions provided for in H.R. 40., however, I am calling on you to act quickly so that the commission can do its work and issue its recommendations before the next Presidential elections.

Thank you,

**FPO BARCODE**