

# Reparations

by

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Since its beginning, America has abused **ALL** ethnic groups in some form or another. The abuse has come in many forms, from illegally taking property from people to enslaving them. To correct these injustices, government, religious organizations, universities and corporations often look at using some form of reparation.

**reparation:** the making of amends for a wrong one has done;  
something done or given as amends or satisfaction;  
measures to redress violations of human rights

Reparations provide a range of material and symbolic benefits to victims or their families as well as affected communities. There are five recognized forms of reparation:

- restitution,
- compensation,
- rehabilitation,
- satisfaction, and
- guarantees of non-repetition.

The first case of reparation in the US involved the rights of enslaved people in Massachusetts in 1773. The defendant was found liable and was required to pay for damages and costs. According to a University of Massachusetts – Amherst study (March, 2023), since the 1773 case, there have been an additional 78 reparation actions that have taken place in the United States. While the majority of the actions were federal, there were some at the state and institutional levels. .

In addition to the many actions taken, the victims and injustices included:

<b>Victims</b>	<b>Injustices</b>
Native Americans	Illegal land seizures Fraud and treaty violation
African Americans	Slavery
Chinese Americans*	Restrictive housing covenants Economic disparity Social disparity
Japanese Americans	Illegal internment Illegal deportation

	Forced labor (slavery) violation of the 5 <sup>th</sup> amendment
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\* Although reparations to Chinese Americans have not taken place yet, there is discussion among 70+ Asian American organizations to seek redress for past harms. The harms include a multitude of human rights violations.

Prior to 2008, the federal government and several states made reparations to the victims listed above (Chinese Americans excepted). With regard to the Native American reparations, the settlements went to various Native American tribes (communities) and not to individuals. The reparations to Japanese Americans, on the other hand, went directly to those individuals who were interred or deported, not to descendants or other family members.

It is important to note that, in the US history of reparations, “payments,” in whatever form – cash, land, apologies, etc., were made to communities (tribes), or survivors, BUT not to family members and/or descendants.

For several decades many African Americans have been calling for reparations for slavery. Last January, Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced S.40 to establish a commission to consider reparation proposals for African American descendants of slavery.

It is important to note that in 2008 [House Resolution 194](#) and [Senate Concurrent Resolution 26](#) made a formal apology to the African American community for "centuries of brutal dehumanization and injustices." While these resolutions are a form of reparation, many Black organizations such as the NAACP and African Americans, even though they are several generations beyond their enslaved ancestors, would rather have financial reparations rather than an apology.

Today the push for reparations continues with a California “Reparations Task Force” recommending cash payments which could reach as high as \$1.2 million for a single recipient. According to CNN, the state’s Black population includes more than 2.5 million people. Problematic with such stupid recommendation is that California already has a \$32 billion deficit. So where will the money come from?

While African Americans continue focusing on their diatribe of slavery, they forget many historical facts. **Fact** – African Negroes sold their own people into slavery. **Fact** – most “slave owners” took good care of their slaves. Yes there were punishments and no payment for work done, but that was also common in many areas of the country. **Fact** – there were also “white” slaves (indentured servants) who often had more deplorable living conditions than their Southern counterparts.

There is no doubt that slavery in the United States is a deplorable stain on our history. However, slavery continues on the US Black Market. While the term slavery is being used as a trigger word for the reparations movement, other, less emotional words are being used to “support” the reparation cause. For example, through its website, the ACLU urges people to support HR.40 and reparations for slavery by stating, “No amount of material resources or monetary compensation can ever be sufficient restitution for the spiritual, mental, cultural and physical damage inflicted on African Americans ripped from their families and nations to labor for the enrichment of the United States.” The key words/phrases include:

- spiritual intolerance
- mental health
- Cultural displacement
- physical injuries
- ripped from their families
- Wide wealth gap
- housing discrimination
- lower income
- asset accumulation
- social connectedness
- unfair income gap

Between 35 to 50 percent of African Americans has no idea whether their ancestors were slaves or not. The inability for accurate, historical ancestry research/data does not adequately support any financial reparations legislation. Essentially the 2008 apologies should be sufficient.

While the focus in recent times has been on reparations for Black slavery, reparations cases can be made for many other people and groups. While the law prohibits discrimination based on national origin, race, color, religion, disability, sex, familial status, birthplace, ancestry, culture or language, systemic discrimination and treatment continues throughout all of society. The purpose of these laws is to prevent people from having “equal opportunity” with regard to education, employment, housing, etc. (Dept of Justice).

The problem though is that the laws do not address social impact of the discriminatory items, nor do they address the psychological impact on individuals and other aspects of stereotyping people.

### **Discriminated Groups**

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Women  
New Englanders and Southerners  
People from various countries  
Short people  
“Bubbas,” “Hillbillies,” etc.

## Blond people

Members in all of these groups have been “damaged” in the same ways as African Americans claim. Should they not also receive reparations to the same degrees as being discussed and acted upon today?

The pros and cons the Constitutional Rights Foundation state in their article, “Reparations for Slavery Reading,” applies to ALL groups. If the concept of reparations should also apply for all other groups that have been discriminated against and wronged.

As previously mentioned, the history of financial or physical reparation has gone to communities and/or survivors, but not to descendents. It is enough that Americans have apologized for a history that was fraught with slavery up until 1865 when the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. The last person who claimed to be a slave was Peter Mills, who died in 1972 at the age of 111. Given that a generation is 20 to 30 years, and that the last child of a slave was born in 1932, the median age for the majority of African Americans today is 35 – at least 3 to 4 generations ago.

Instead of fighting for any physical reparations, African American would do well to simply ask for acknowledgement/apology from all states that had slaves in them, and follow the following two quotes. This would better serve the American public and Blacks specifically.

**“Do not get others to do what you can do yourself”**  
*Booker T. Washington*

**“Pull Yourself Up By Your Bootstraps”**  
To improve one’s situation through hard work and self-determination, rather than getting assistance from someone else.