

# Is now the time for reparations for african americans

[History](#), [African American](#)



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The idea of reparations stems from the argument that African Americans should receive compensation for their unpaid labor, captivity, and the ongoing discriminations. Slavery did provide the means for whites to build wealth, income, and status while African Americans have continued to struggle. The oppression of segregation and the lack of rights made it impossible for African Americans to have any political and economic power to change their position.

African Americans were unable to vote and use the power government to better their situation, like the Irish immigrants did in New York, until the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 and that only allowed free black men to vote. The reparations for African Americans debate has caused more disagreements than affirmative action has. On one side people believe that reparations are not relevant because it is so strenuous to identify the victims of slavery or punish those who committed the crime especially when they may be no longer around.

They also think that reparations would have a negative effect on future racial grievances and the U. S. treasury. On the other side it has been argued that reparations are necessary to reach an economically equal society and reparations is the correct way of dealing with past wrong doings and the current racial inequalities in the United States. Robert L. Allen is in favor of reparations for African Americans. He believes that the problems that African Americans currently face are acquiring property, income and accumulating wealth and that these are a direct result of slavery and segregation.

Allen says that reparations can be the start of redistribution of wealth in America so the economic equality between blacks and whites can be less dramatic. African Americans have been fighting for reparations as early as 1854. The reparations were asking for “ redress of our grievances for the unparalleled wrongs, undisguised impositions, and unmitigated oppression which blacks have suffered at the hands of American people. ” An anti-slave activist, Sojourner Truth, campaigned to receive free public land for former slaves after the Civil War. In the 1890s, Callie House filed a lawsuit for reparations.

A pastor of Third Baptist Church in San Francisco, named Reverend Amos Brown, asked for reparations by way of tax credits and tuition for higher education. In its program for establishing a separate state the Nation of Islam demanded reparations stating that “ former slave masters are obligated to provide mineral rich and fertile land. ” Reparations were also desired by the Black Panther Party in their Ten Point Program. Pointing out in Point Number Three that forty acres and two mules was promised one hundred years ago and would like to receive payment in cash to distribute among the community.

In 1969, in New York City, former SNCC leader James Forman presented a Black Manifesto to Riverside Church requesting five hundred million dollars in reparations from white Christian Churches and Jewish synagogues. Forman wrote in *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* that reparations that were being asked were not only monetary but were also for revolutionary action toward the attitude of white America towards Blacks. The money would be

used to help black farmers, businesses, community organization and research on black economic development.

In 1968 the Republic of New Africa was founded to establish an independent Black Republic in the southern states with the largest African American population. In 1972 the Republic of New Africa developed an Anti-Depression Program that asked for three hundred billion dollars in reparations to establish self-sustaining communities as a part of an independent black nation. The Republic of New Africa stated that with reparations it is common that one nation pay another to compensate for damage caused by unjust acts of war and that is what has happened to the African nation in America.

The programs did make much progress but drew attention in good and bad ways. I believe that African Americans should get reparations but the attitudes of the ones that oppressed them have been to dismiss or undermined them and not show any blame. The National Black Political Convention supported reparations, stating that the poverty of black communities is traceable to slavery and the discrimination that blacks have faced in America. That wealth, power, and capitalism of America was built off of the exploitation of black people. A white law professor names Boris Bitker wrote a book called The Case for Black Reparations in 1973.

Instead of demanding reparations based on the injustice of slavery, Bitker argued to seek reparations for “ injuries caused by a system of legally imposed segregation that violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. ” That segregation and the Jim Crow laws founded in 1954 were unconstitutional and therefore subject to redress. Economists,

following the lead of Robert S. Browne, produced work on the economics of slavery, the present value of past labor performed by slaves, the value of black labor since emancipation and racial disparities in distribution of wealth.

From a political economic standpoint Robert Allen believes the process of underdevelopment of the African American community and the role of the state are vital in understanding the quest for reparations. The author of *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, Manning Marable, argued that capitalism is the root cause of the underdevelopment of black America, while the wealth from slave labor has increased the development of North America economically and politically.

He wrote in his book that capitalist development has occurred because of black exploitation and African Americans have never been equal in the American Social Contract because the system exists to under develop Black people. This is true but that is are more opportunities for African Americans to pull themselves out of poverty but that doesn't mean that it is correct to leave large communities in that situation.

The underdeveloped African American community was established by the restriction of black labor in slavery and underclass work, the restriction and twisted development of African American business and home ownership, the regressive political leadership, destruction of black education, racist violence, and the incarceration of black youth. As Marable also stated in his book and had support from many others, that the role of the state played an important part in the black communities' underdevelopment. The state was directly

involved in taking the value from black workers and blocked the capital accumulation by Black people.

Laws establishing that black labor could be abused without compensation or punishment have been passed since the earliest colonial period. Slavery existed in the Virginia colonies in the 1640s and it became institutionalized by 1660s. P401 Edward Fagan, a New York Lawyer, started a campaign against companies that he thinks have profited from slavery. He is targeting at least 60 companies some which are Lehman Brothers, New York Life, Aetna, Liggett, and Norfolk Southern. He is filing suits on behalf of all descendants of slaves in America and the defendants are the legal successors of entities that existed and profited during slavery.

Economists plead ill gotten gain in the trillions that is asked for but Fagan expects the settlement to be in the tens of billions. Along with a black activist by the name of Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, Mr. Fagan bases his plan on two main things, lobbying the government to pay its share and for a few companies to grow tired of the lawsuits and pay off. Congress made payouts in the sum of one point six billion dollars to eighty thousand Japanese-Americans were placed in camps during the Second World War. The German government also made reparations to Israel for its role in the Holocaust. Mr.

Fagan and other lawyers sued German companies on behalf of former slave laborers. Two of the suits were dismissed as a matter of foreign policy but New York regulators along with hundreds of local authorities threatened Deutsche Bank and other businesses to regulatory sanctions. The firms and

the German government created a fund of five point two billion dollars which is being disbursed. The case may be undermined by the money because every dollar that should have been paid to slaves one hundred and fifty years ago can be worth anywhere from six thousand dollars to four hundred thousand dollars.

It is also hard to assess the profits that the banks and insurers received from slavery. To overtake these obstacles Mr. Fagan thinks that public opinion can play in his favor, if there are boycotts, shareholder lawsuits, and local politicians willing to hold hearings and study the impact of slavery in their jurisdiction. The challengers of reparations for African Americans typically do not accept the connection between America's racist past and the underdeveloped black communities.

They also think that the current generation of African Americans doesn't hold them accountable. There has been so much time that has passed since slavery and there is still so much animosity on both sides that I don't believe that the conflict will never go away. The opponents of reparations actually think that the overall view of white Americans is that they no longer identify themselves the racist past of the United States. Reparation in the United States for African American slavery is a controversy that is surrounded by resistance. Word Count: 1527