
REPARATIONS

A Basis Explored

Presented To
THE RLJ COMPANIES

By
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April 4, 2019

Every effort was made to identify and utilize the most current and relevant information. When data and analysis conflicted, the more recent information was used to prepare this examination. Data and content provided by the US Census Bureau was generally limited to the last Census in 2010. However, other supplemental compilations covered periods, such as 2013-2016. That notwithstanding, I endeavored to cross check references and computations with different sources on the same or similar topics to determine veracity and continuity of the information. - EB

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Executive Summary

Reparations for Slavery – \$350,767 for Every Black Person in America

Reparations for African-Americans has been a subject that has been bandied-about by politicians for at least the past three decades. No president from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama, or presidential candidate has offered unequivocal support of reparation in its pure form – cash payments – except Dennis Kucinich. In the 2008 election cycle, in the first DNC-sanctioned presidential debate, July 23, 2007, in Charleston, South Carolina, Kucinich rendered a full-throated, unambiguous endorsement of reparations to African-Americans stating, “The Bible says we must be, and shall be repairers of the breach, and a breach has occurred, we have to acknowledge that. It’s a breach that has resulted in inequalities for opportunities for education, for healthcare, for housing, for employment, and so we must be mindful of that.”

With the slate of presidential candidates vying for the 2020 Democratic nomination, and a number of them being minorities, racial and gender, the reparations question is again front-and-center in the national discussion. Although law makers from both sides of the aisle will acknowledge the ills and generational devastation exacted upon African-Americans as a result of slavery, Jim Crow, de jure segregation, systemic and institutional racism and government condoned civil rights violations; they historically have rejected the idea of reparations in the form of cash payments to individual African-Americans for those atrocities. Interestingly, however, US political figures, have justified a basis for payment of reparations to other ethnic groups.

The precedent for cash payments of reparations has been established. Under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, signed into law by Ronald Reagan, Japanese persons illegally held in internment camps during World War II, received a written apology from President George Bush, and cash reparations of \$20,000. World War II lasted for six only years. With 174 years of slavery, African-Americans were held captive for 29 periods of six years. That would make \$580,000 an equivalent payment.

Although the United States had no culpability in the Holocaust, US lawmakers, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are on record for enthusiastically supporting reparations for Jews; even to the extent of suing France’s national railway company SNCF, for reparations for their participation in transporting Jews from France to concentration camps in Germany. In March 2011, Bernie Sanders and 18 bipartisan senators co-sponsored the Holocaust Rail Justice Act, in support of their efforts for Jews’ reparations. In 2014 France agreed to send \$60 million to the US for American Holocaust survivors and victim’s families. Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) credited the bill for helping make payments possible.

Why can’t African-Americans receive such support and recognition of their undeniable contribution to the building of America? Why do legislators act as if supporting reparations for African-Americans is the proverbial “third rail?” Why does white America believe that, with 174 years of slavery, 75 years of Jim Crow, ongoing systemic and institutional racism that blocks access to all facets of demonstrated progress, would not affect African-Americans, nor require redress? Why does the median income of an African-American household lag by more than 59% of a white household? Why do 37% of white Americans have college degrees, while only 23% of African-Americans, thereby creating greater opportunity for higher income? Why is African-American median savings 84.5% less than that of white household savings? Why is the African-American homeownership rate 41.9%; while white household homeownership rests at 71%? A 29 percentage-point disparity representing \$121,400 – 56.3% less.

African-Americans are no less intelligent than whites. We are no less creative. We are no less clever than our white counterparts. Our work ethic is on par, and I might even say stronger, as we must perform twice as good to get half the accolades. There is no “benefit-of-a-doubt” given to African-Americans. Everything received is **earned**. We know the stories of what happened to early African-American inventors, scientists, entertainers, and entrepreneurs; and let us not forget the conspiracy by Tulsa city government with whites to incite a race riot, as a ruse for the sanctioned, wholesale murder of African-Americans and systemic annihilation of Black Wall Street, in the 1921 massacre.

The only plausible explanation is the starting position in the race, and the lead shoes African-Americans have been forced to wear. Whites have an inherent head start, as well as the wind at their backs, through the privileges afforded by **not** being black.

The purpose of reparations is restitution, “punitive damages” for slavery and institutionalized racism, and to close the wealth gap.

Of the ten elements affecting net worth, four described elements make the most significant contribution to family wealth: income, education, savings, and homeownership. These are indicators of wealth. African-Americans have struggled under the weight of formalized systemic and institutional racism from 1619 until 1965; and de facto racism until this present day. African-Americans are the only demographic that is worse off today than in 2000. African-Americans’ primary residence, if they have one, represents the majority of their wealth. With opportunity and access to acquisition and accumulation of other assets, white household median net worth rests at \$171,000, compared to African-Americans’ net worth of \$17,600. A \$153,000 gap in median net wealth.

An October 3, 2017 Washington Post analysis concluded “White families have nearly 10 times the net wealth of black families. And the gap is growing. Moreover, 1 in 7 white families are now millionaires. For black families, it’s 1 in 50.” Why is that?

The new slate of Democratic presidential candidates have publicly opposed the historical trend against reparations, and endorsed the idea, in principle. Most agreeing to “study the idea” or “have a conversation.” Although the specifics remain vague at this time; what appears to be a commonality is an attempt to provide recompense through “block” programs. H.R.40 – Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act (Introduced 1/3/17), sponsored by former Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI), is beginning to receive some new attention. In March 2018, Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) assumed first sponsorship.

Many believe that reparations paid to African-Americans should be on an individual basis. Africans and their descendants should be compensated for the immeasurable contribution made to the building of the United States, its communities, businesses, and ability to become an international hegemon. Africans and their lineal descendants should receive reparations from the United States government for 174 years of enslavement, 75 years of Jim Crow, ongoing systemic racism, and the collateral generational damage such has caused. Moreover, facilitation of restitution for slavery and its vestiges would fulfill the promise made by General William Sherman. When Sherman liberated the American South, he promised that the land confiscated during the Civil War would be given to the former slaves. That never happened. *Justice delayed, is justice denied.*

A de facto second-class citizenship has thwarted prosperity of African-Americans as a people. The long-term effects of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and systemic and institutional racism has created a chasmic disparity in net worth between blacks and whites in America – a wealth gap. Payment of reparations to African-Americans would serve as a tangible apology for the institution of slavery and its vestiges, recompense for slave labor performed, and provide capital resources that would close the accumulated wealth gap between African-Americans and White-Americans.

Payment of reparations is not a new phenomenon. Reparations to African-Americans would be consistent with precedent treatment of other ethnic groups who have been mistreated, marginalized and/or subjected to injustices exacted or condoned by the United States Government.

Through analysis of the four indicators of net wealth, we believe the one-time reparation payment that would provide recompense to African-Americans is \$350,767.

The accumulated disparity in the four most critical elements of wealth: income, education, savings, and homeownership; totaling accumulated net wealth, identify a wealth gap of \$350,767 per individual African-American. Payment of cumulative reparations to all 42,020,743 Census-identified African-Americans totals \$14 Trillion, 739 Billion, 489 Million, 959 Thousand, 881.

The constant debate that allows for people like Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY), to continue to “kick the can” vacillates around emphasizing the nuance in identifying who should, and who shouldn’t be entitled to reparations. Actually, the calculation isn’t difficult. If you are among the 42 million persons who identify as African-American, then you qualify. I agree, all may not be a direct descendant of an African slave; however, if you can be identified as being black – you have suffered the effects of slavery and its aftermath.

Following, I present my research that attempts to identify and present relevant empirical analysis that sustained my hypothesis: “African-Americans are owed reparations by the United States of America.”

Foundation

Africans brought to America in 1619 endured the ravages of slavery until the enactment of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery in December 1865. For 174 years, African-Americans suffered through lives as chattel of white slaveowners. Slaveowners who, espousing property ownership rights; were free to beat and kill the African slaves, separate families, selling off children, rape the women, and emasculate the men.

The enslavement of Africans brought to America have provided the foundation of the economic system upon which the United States was built and thrived. Individual families, big business, and the country prospered, building immense wealth, at the hands and by the blood of African slaves. With the free slave labor of thousands of slaves, farming proliferated throughout the southern United States; and millions of dollars were generated in revenue and government trade and taxes – prosperity for which neither the original Africans, nor their descendants have ever been compensated.

Following the formal end of slavery in 1865, the vestiges of the institution supervened. Through the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow laws, disenfranchisement, subjugation, and terrorization continued to be inflicted upon the freed slaves. While the Klan terrorized African-Americans through rape, arson, lynching, and bombings; Jim Crow created a system of state and local laws that mandated de jure segregation in all public facilities in southern states; instituting a “separate but equal” status for the new African-Americans. Low wage employment, sub-standard housing, dilapidated education facilities with raggedy outdated resources made living and thriving as an African-American anything but equal. These abject conditions wrought psychological torture, creating and perpetuating a permanent second-class citizenship status for African-Americans that persisted for three generations – from 1890 through 1965.

Argument

Africans and their descendants should be compensated for the immeasurable contribution made to the building of the United States, its communities, businesses, and ability to become an international hegemon. Africans and their lineal descendants should receive reparations from the United States government for 174 years of enslavement, 75 years of Jim Crow, ongoing systemic racism, and the collateral generational damage such has caused. Moreover, facilitation of restitution for slavery and its vestiges would fulfill the promise made by General William Sherman. When he liberated the American South, he promised that the land confiscated during the Civil War would be given to the former slaves. *Justice delayed, is justice denied.*

Purpose

The basis for reparations is twofold: 1. Restitution for slavery, its aftermath and its intentional infliction of pain, suffering, and destruction of family generational continuity and opportunity; and 2. To provide some measure of recompense that makes a substantive quantifiable effort at creating a mechanism that addresses the economic disparities between average black and white households' income, wealth, and financial status – to close the wealth gap.

Indicators of Disparity Identified

Dinks Finance lists ten factors that “meaningfully affect net worth.”¹ Several of these factors are more anecdotal than empirical, without the benefit of means testing through national statistical sampling. Choosing not to have children, one of the ten factors listed that increases net worth, is virtually impossible to validate. However, other factors such as budgeting (income management), education, savings, and homeownership are tracked by governmental and quasigovernmental agencies, and social organizations. Therefore, provide credible resources for identifying the indicators of disparity and quantifying their effects on the African-American community.

Wealth in the United States can be synthesized and represented by strength in four interrelated indicators of financial viability: income, education, savings and real estate (homeownership). A comparison of African-American’s financial viability reflects a tremendous disparity when compared to that of their white counterparts.

Unless otherwise stipulated, statistical data referenced herein, *Income*, was sourced from the United States Census Bureau, “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017,” compiled by Peter G. Peterson Foundation (PGPF), Sep 13, 2018.

Income

Reference data indicates that households whose heads were classified as White had median incomes that were 11.03% higher than the national median; while households headed by people classified as African-American had median incomes that were 34.4% lower than the national median, and a disturbing 59.07% less than White headed households. From 2016 to 2017, all demographic populations, Asian, White, and Hispanic, experienced an increase in median household incomes, while African-Americans’ income decreased by \$82.

Race/Ethnicity of Household Head	2016 Median Household Income (2017 Dollars)	2017 Median Household Income (2017 Dollars)
All races/ethnicities	\$60,309	\$61,372
White, not Hispanic	\$66,440	\$68,145
Black	\$40,340	\$40,258

Household income is the most critical factor; as income has a direct bearing and correlation on ability to save and purchase permanent housing – all facets of wealth. Additionally, income disparity disproportionately collaterally affects an African-American’s ability to thrive with affordable effective healthcare, nutritious and substantive meals, and quality education for their children. An inability to provide these fundamental but critical elements of a quality life, destines the African-American family to being locked into a vicious cycle; whereby the gap between the White class, benefitting from white privilege, and African-Americans subject to institutional slavery and systemic racism, are barred from the benefits of full and gainful employment.

The 2017 income disparity (which has increased each year), between median African-American and median White households is \$27,887 – \$40,258 vs. \$68,145.

Education

Education is a key component of income. Lack of access to quality elementary and higher education as a result of economics remains a predominant and critical factor in perpetuating the income disparity. In this country, education remains the predominant pathway to better careers (versus jobs), with higher incomes and corresponding benefits. The necessity to work two or more low wage jobs to survive, has a deleterious effect on the family; as doing so impinges on quality time to spend with children. Bruce Weinberg, professor of economics at The Ohio State University, co-authored a study published in the *Journal of Labor Economics*; finding that, “The time parents spend with their children has a powerful effect on their educational achievement.”²

Median household income varies based on the educational attainment of the household head. Households led by an individual with a bachelor’s degree or above have incomes that are considerably higher than the national median. Households led by an individual with less than a high school diploma earn less than half of the national median.³

Educational Attainment of Household Head	2016 Median Household Income (2017 Dollars)	2017 Median Household Income (2017 Dollars)
All education levels	\$60,309	\$61,372
Less than high school	\$28,000	\$28,512
High school or equivalent	\$42,800	\$44,104
Some college	\$55,835	\$57,200
Bachelor’s degree or higher	\$95,212	\$98,038

Being unavailable for oversight, homework assistance, and general parenting responsibilities (quality time), has been proven to negatively affect children living under such conditions and circumstances. In addition to the parent’s education “It is also about the time that parents spend with their children,” says Weinberg. The parents’ inability to fully engage their children propagates a cycle of underperformance that is perpetuated from generation to generation. Citing other studies, Weinberg proffers, “Highly educated parents tend to spend more time with their children. Our results may suggest one reason why they do: it has a strong impact on academic success.” The inevitable conclusion to be drawn is that for those with inferior education, hence income, wealth development is inherently perpetually thwarted for all generations.

Slavery followed by Jim Crow and segregation, institutional and systemic racism, and lack of access to higher education has not only historically contributed to deprivation of wealth accumulation for African-Americans; but remains the principle source facilitating the disparity between the two populations, as vestiges of these impediments remain in force today. Income has a direct correlation with the ability to save.

Savings

“Unsurprisingly, the median size of household savings account balances was most heavily influenced by income. American households with more income turned out to have much larger savings account balances compared to households in lower income groups.”⁴ With median incomes of African-Americans lagging at 59.07% of their White-American counterparts, the ability to effectuate family savings is reduced, correspondingly. Income retained after living expenses is available for savings, investment, and creation of generational wealth. Institutional racism has historically precluded African-Americans from access to higher paying jobs – thereby, limiting discretionary use of income.

Data reported through 2016 shows American savings account balances have substantially increased over the review period, 2001 through 2016. The median balances have increased each three-year period, except for the period 2007-2010 (during the economic meltdown). However, by 2013 there was a 96.6% recovery of pre-meltdown savings balances. In their survey, the Federal Reserve submits \$7,000 as the 2016 median American household savings account balance. This amount is far less than the average of \$30,600 which is skewed by high-income outliers with large deposits.

Although the median American household savings is listed at \$7,000, that number is significantly influenced by household income. Households with incomes of \$25,000-\$44,900 post median savings of \$1,965; while those households with incomes between \$45,000-\$69,999 saved \$4,265 – a 217% increase in savings, generated by a 35.7% increase in median income.

With median African-American household incomes between \$25,000-\$44,900, and White households between \$45,000-\$69,999; the impact on savings is clear. Excluding all other races and ethnicities, contrasting savings of African-Americans and White-Americans, across all income levels, African-Americans post median savings of \$1,500 compared to the median savings of White-Americans at \$9,700.⁵ African-Americans' savings resides at an abysmal 78.6% less than the \$7,000 median American household savings; while White savings of \$9,700 is 38.6% greater than the national median.

The breadth of the savings disparity between African-Americans and Whites is a chasmic and catastrophic 647.7% – \$1,500 vs. \$9,700.

Homeownership (Real Estate)

Federal Survey of Consumer Finances and calculations by The National Association of Home Builders, reports that homeownership has been and continues to be an important driver of wealth creation for US households, with owner-occupied housing accounting for approximately a quarter (25%) of the total household assets in 2016.⁶ According to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2012-2016), the national African-American household homeownership rate was 41.9%; while white household homeownership rested 29 percentage points higher, at 71%, during the same period.

The preponderance of African-American homeownership remains in southern cities, where home values are among the lower end of the spectrum. Between 2010 and 2013, inflation-adjusted median home values fell by 4.6% for white households and 18.4 percent for African-American households.⁷ That notwithstanding, real estate, even during cyclical downturns, remains a steadfast investment and significant factor in creating net worth and wealth.

The median net worth of all Americans is \$80,039. The median net worth excluding [home] equity is \$25,116 – which means equity is 68.62% of total net worth.⁸ Thereby pegging homeownership's cash contribution to median net worth at \$54,923 – 218.68% greater than non-homeowner net worth, nationally.

The disparity in African-American homeownership, which represents 25% of household assets (and 68.62% of net worth), is directly correlated to the white wealth gap. The economic and financial benefits of homeownership have been uneven across demographic groups. Homeownership rates vary greatly by race, ethnicity, and educational achievement. These demographics provide a basis as to the reason why African-American family average wealth lagged at 15% of white family wealth in 2016.⁹ In its February 28, 2019 analysis, Zillow reports that the median home value in the United States is \$226,300, which is up 7.2% over the past year; a further rise of 5.1% is predicted within the next year.¹⁰ African-Americans with lower median values will recognize lower appreciation.

Conclusion

The September 27, 2017 report by the Federal Reserve, for the period 2013-2016¹¹ differs slightly in analysis and outcome, but still validates the undeniable breadth and depth of the economic disparity in the critical financial elements that define net worth and wealth in America. These disparities though reflected in current economic conditions of African-Americans, are the manifestation of centuries of subjugation and disparate treatment. The trauma of living in a persistently hostile environment is tantamount to war zone conditions, resulting in post-traumatic stress. Feelings of hopelessness, despair, lack of access to opportunity and inability to create a level-playing-field has daunted the African-American spirit; thereby creating a willingness to accept relegation to second-class citizenship status.

White America proffers that “slavery is over, African-Americans have equal opportunity as whites.” However, African Americans are the only racial group in the U.S. still making less than they did in 2000. African Americans are the only racial group the Census Bureau identifies that has been “left behind.” White, Asian and Hispanic households have all seen at least modest income gains since 2000.¹² African-Americans have a harder time becoming employed. A National Bureau of Economic Research study found that, “Black Americans have struggled for years to move up the economic ladder. They have a harder time finding jobs. Merely having an ‘African-American sounding name’ makes an employer less likely to hire someone.”¹³

As slaves, African-Americans have built the infrastructure and economic foundation of the United States. African-Americans have endured the degradation, terror, and consequence of varying degrees of hostility, intimidation, torture, and terrorization since slavery, through Jim Crow, segregation, and institutional racism. Despite these opposing forces, individual African-Americans have prospered. However, statistics validate, that as a people, African-Americans continue to lag Whites and even Hispanics, in every socio-economic indicator of financial progress and stability.

In order to provide some measure of recompense for the accumulated ills historically and continuously perpetrated against African-Americans; the United States Government should be directed to pay reparations to each and every person in this country identifying as African-American, in whole, or in combination with another race – all 42,020,743.¹⁴

Payment of reparations will have a tremendous positive effect on African-Americans’ psychological and emotional condition. Doing so will finally be a tangible and substantial acknowledgement, and apology for the institution of slavery and its aftermath, including government condoned and supported civil rights violations. Reparations will allow for African-Americans to buy bootstraps, by which they can lift themselves, irrespective of any federal or state government sponsored social programs.

Payment of reparations to African-Americans would be consistent with precedent treatment of other ethnic groups who have been mistreated, marginalized and/or subjected to perceived injustices exacted by the United States Government. Moreover, payment of reparations would be the appropriate, correct, and morally just thing to do.

Methodology and Formula

Below are the components of financial status that create family and generational wealth; as well, indicators of the wealth gap between African-Americans and the whites.

Income: The Income wealth indicator, is the foundation of all financial progress and stability, African-Americans, as a result of conditions, have a median household income **\$27,887** less than whites.

Education: Persons holding a bachelor's degree or higher earn \$54,028 more annually, than a person with a high school diploma. The average cost of tuition for a public university bachelor's degree is \$9,970 per year (excluding other costs), totaling **\$39,880**.

Savings: The difference between median African-American and median white annual savings is **\$8,200** (\$9,700-\$1,500).

Homeownership/Real Estate: Primary residence real estate is a significant part of the net wealth equation. Mean net housing wealth (the value of the home, less any debts on the home) among white homeowners is \$215,800, but only \$94,400 among African-Americans.¹⁵ The net wealth homeownership gap is **\$121,400** in accessible cash through equity appreciation.

Net Worth: Although the wealth indicators above are individual components of net wealth, existing total accumulated net worth should be taken into consideration when identifying elements of disparity for inclusion into the reparation calculation. The above indicators; income, education, savings, and homeownership, are all static, representing a snapshot of a current time period. However, the statement of net worth represents a current snapshot of accumulated wealth over several years. Therefore, the benefits afforded by white privilege would be encompassed in a white family's net wealth; which would represent not only the four indicators above, but also inheritances, equity and financial instrument investments, retirement savings, business ownership, and investment property.

In 2016, white families had the highest level of both median and mean family wealth: \$171,000 and \$933,700, respectively. Black families have considerably less wealth than white families. Black families' median and mean net worth is less than 15 percent that of white families, at \$17,600 and \$138,200.¹⁶ The gap in the median net wealth between African-Americans and white families is **\$153,400**.

Reparations Components & Calculation

Income	\$ 27,887
Education	\$ 39,880
Savings	\$ 8,200
Homeownership	\$121,400
Net Worth	<u>\$153,400</u>
Total Individual Reparations	<u>\$350,767</u>

Total Cumulative Reparations payable by the United States to all 42,020,743 identified African-Americans: **\$14,739,489,959,881** (\$14 Trillion, 739 Billion, 489 Million, 959 Thousand, 881).

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