The Politics of Expedience: Evanston, Illinois, and the Fight for Reparations

MONIQUE NEWTON AND MATTHEW D. NELSEN

In March 2021, the city council in Evanston, Illinois, began distributing reparations funds to Black residents in the form of $25,000 housing grants. In doing so, Evanston became the first city in the United States to provide publicly funded reparations to Black people for generations of racist policies, including redlining. Why did the reparations program first emerge in Evanston? This article provides an in-depth look at the politics of the policy design process and describes the unique political circumstances that allowed this historic policy to pass with near-unanimous support. As communities throughout the United States consider how to deliver reparations to Black Americans, the debate over Evanston's ordinance serves as a cautionary tale for how ambitious historic policies may become watered down when political expedience trumps the political insights of Black residents.

Keywords: reparations, urban and local politics, race, ethnicity, politics, public policy

Initiatives aimed at securing reparations for slavery date back to the American Revolution (Balfour 2023). To date, such initiatives have failed to gain substantial traction in Congress and remain controversial in the broader public (Dawson and Popoff 2004). Recent public opinion data suggest that nearly two-thirds of Americans oppose cash payments for reparations, including 90 percent of Republicans (Cornish 2021). Moreover, public policies that have sought to provide compensation to Black people affected by White violence—such as the residents of Rosewood, Florida—have avoided invoking the language of reparations given the political weight of the term (Bassett 1994; Samuels 2020). However, evidence indicates that the public and politicians alike are beginning to warm up to the idea of reparations. In April of 2021, the House Judiciary Committee advanced legislation to create a commission to study reparations for Black Americans—the same legislation introduced by the late Congressman John Conyers Jr. in every session of Congress since 1989. Concurrently, municipalities throughout the United States, including San Francisco, Asheville, Detroit, and St. Paul, have started to consider what reparations to Black people could look like at the local level (Hain

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and Mulcahy 2023). This article examines one of these cases.

In March of 2021, the city council in Evanston, Illinois—a northern Chicago suburb—overwhelmingly voted to begin distributing the first phase of a $10 million reparations fund in the form of $25,000 housing grants. The grants were earmarked for Black residents who could prove that they or their descendants were victims of redlining or other forms of housing discrimination in the city between 1919 and 1969. The ordinance allowed eligible grant recipients—referred to as Ancestors by the City of Evanston—to use the funds to pay down an existing mortgage, put toward a downpayment on a new home, or make renovations to their homes (City of Evanston, n.d.a). By enacting this ordinance, Evanston became the first city in the United States to make publicly funded reparations for past racial discrimination available to a broad subset of its Black residents. In the pursuit of tackling the city's staggering racial wealth gap, however, Evanston's reparations ordinance initially left behind some of the city's most vulnerable Black residents.

Interestingly, the political fault lines in Evanston did not fall between those who were for or against reparations, but among those who had starkly different definitions of what reparations should entail. As our interview data show, many Black residents noted that the city's housing grants discriminated against Black renters. After all, many program recipients did not own homes to renovate or have mortgages to pay down. Moreover, in a city where the median sale price for a home was $410,600 in 2022 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023), a $25,000 grant was not nearly enough to cover a downpayment for a new home. Thus the recipients who had the most to gain from a policy that sought to rectify the harm caused by redlining—and those most affected by the racial wealth gap—were initially denied access to the reparations housing grants (Felton 2023). Meanwhile, the city's White residents and predominantly Black elected officials largely supported the ordinance, expressing a sense of pride that Evanston was "the first to reparations" and, most important, that the reparations funds would be creatively levied through a municipal sales tax on recreational cannabis. We contend that these tensions represent far more than simple differences in public opinion; they reflect instead a difference in the interpretation of a policymaking process that constrained Evanston's reparations ordinance from the outset.

We argue that many of the unintended consequences of the ordinance—discrimination against Black renters, ignoring other forms of anti-Black racism leveled against current and past residents, ethical questions about partnering with the same financial institutions that sustained redlining practices, and concerns about sources of funding—could have been prevented had supporters of the initiative prioritized the voices of concerned Black residents over the politics of expedience. Put bluntly, in Evanston, doing reparations "first" trumped doing reparations effectively for all eligible Black residents. It is only through the persistent political activism of Black Evanstonians—and Black women in particular—that the city council made amendments to the ordinance that better secured the viability of the housing program.

Evanston, Illinois and the Case for Reparations

Evanston, Illinois, is a racially diverse, suburban community located immediately north of Chicago. The city is majority White (63 percent) but includes a sizable Black population (16 percent) and a growing population of Asian (9 percent) and Latinx (12 percent) residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2023). The city boasts high rates of educational attainment—68 percent of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher—and has an average household income ($87,345) that significantly outpaces both the state ($72,563) and the nation ($74,580).

The electorate in Evanston consistently provides high levels of support to the Democratic Party. In 2020, 70 percent of Evanstonians voted in the presidential election, and 90 percent of those votes went to Democrat Joe Biden (Gavin 2020). Although Evanston's municipal elections are nonpartisan, the city council—a mayor and nine aldermen representing each of the city's nine wards—tends to support policies promoted by the National Democratic Party. Evanston fits the mold of a progressive and racially

liberal city ripe for reparations policymaking that Jesse Rhodes and colleagues (2024, this issue) discuss in their study of public opinion on reparations.

The city is characterized by a dense network of local institutions, including Northwestern University, antiracist book clubs such as Dear Evanston, and interfaith racial justice networks. One of these organizations, the Shorefront Legacy Center, has played a particularly vital role in providing legal documentation regarding housing discrimination in Evanston. Since 1995, Shorefront Legacy Center—founded by Dino Robinson Jr.— has amassed an archival collection of artifacts, documents, photographs, and family archives that represent and depict the lives of Black residents on Chicago's suburban North Shore. As we discuss, this collection became incredibly important as the Evanston City Council began to consider how to approach its local reparations initiative.

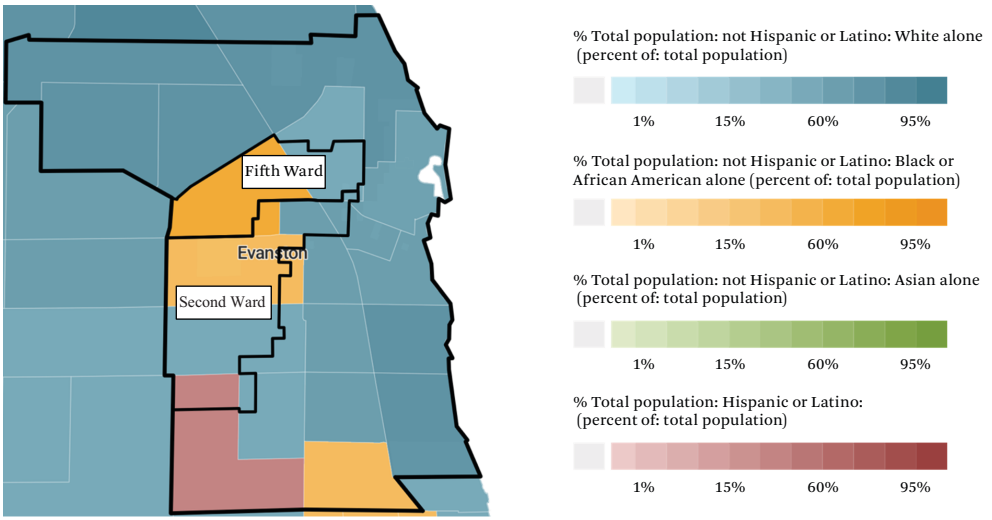
Although these attributes certainly make Evanston a unique locality in some ways, like many cities throughout the country, it is also characterized by racial segregation and socioeconomic inequality. A majority of the city's Black residents reside in the city's Fifth and Second Wards, historically low-income areas with comparatively higher crime rates than other wards in the city (see figure 1). Evanston's racial diversity, high rates of educational attainment, Democratic-leaning politics, and justice-oriented civic institutions are crucial for understanding the emergence of the city's reparations initiatives in 2019.

The Expedient Development of Evanston's Reparations Ordinance

Reparations have been discussed in Evanston for several decades. In 2002, Judge Lionel Jean-Baptiste sponsored a resolution, approved by the Evanston City Council, urging Congress to explore reparations to African Americans for the injustices suffered during and after slavery. For many residents interviewed for this study, the memory of this 2002 resolution lives on in the community and informs their contemporary understanding of what reparations should entail. Yet the resolution did not manifest in any tangible policies for Black residents, and efforts to push additional reparations ordinances through the city council came to a halt (see table 1).

After seventeen years of stagnation in the policy realm, Robin Rue Simmons—a Black councilwoman representing Evanston's pre-

Figure 1. Racial and Ethnic Breakdown of Evanston, Illinois



Source: Authors' tabulation.

Note: The map shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of Evanston by U.S. Census tract. The city's predominantly Black Second and Fifth Wards are labeled as well.

Table 1. Timeline of Evanston's Reparations Ordinance

Date	Event
June 2002	Judge Lionel Jean-Baptiste sponsors resolution, approved by city council, urging Congress to explore reparations to African Americans for injustices they suffered during and after slavery
February 2019	Robin Rue Simmons begins the push for local reparations
June 2019	Evanston City Council adopts resolution affirming the city's commitment to end structural racism and achieve racial equity
July 2019	Empowerment Commission for Reparations holds a series of community meetings that identify housing as the top concern for Black residents
September 2019	Empowerment Commission circulates memo recommending that reparations funds be used to provide rental assistance; Robin Rue Simmons introduces Reparations Ordinance
November 2019	City council passes 126-R-19 on 8-1, authorizing a $10 million reparations fund with rental assistance excluded
November 2020	Evanston City Council passes 102-O-20, amending the city code to codify Reparations Committee, which is expanded to include non-aldermanic representatives
March 2021	Evanston City Council approves the disbursement of $400,000 in housing grants
August 2021	First Reparations Committee meeting
September 2021	Applications for reparations housing program opens
January 2022	Sixteen ancestor grant recipients selected via lottery from 122 qualified applicants
March 2023	Restorative Housing Program allows Ancestors to receive $25,000 grants as cash benefit
August 2023	City announces that more than $1 million reparations funds have been dispersed
October 2023	City announces that more than $2.2 million reparations funds have been dispersed

Source: Authors' tabulation.

dominantly Black Fifth Ward—observed that the rate of Black homeownership in the city, historically among the nation's highest, was on the decline (Esposito 2021). She took her concerns to the city's Equity and Empowerment Commission and recalled that her idea for reparations was "instantly welcomed" (2021). During the summer of 2019, Simmons began attending town hall meetings in Chicago hosted by the National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC) and the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) (Franklin 2022).[1] Since 2015, NAARC and N'COBRA have facilitated town hall meetings of this kind throughout the country to build support for a ten-point program that aims to secure reparations for Black Americans (NAARC, n.d.a).

In June of 2019, Councilwoman Simmons—aided by these national reparations advocacy organizations—introduced a resolution to the Evanston City Council that would establish a reparations committee in the city (Mitchell and Malveaux 2021; Alexander and Dow 2023). Shortly after, the city council voted to establish the city's Empowerment Commission for Reparations and began hosting community meetings to explore policies that would remedy the historical and institutional racism experienced by Black residents (City of Evanston 2019). After

1. NAARC was first convened by the Institute of the Black World of the 21st Century "after Caribbean nations formed the CARICOM Reparations Commission in 2013 to demand reparations from the former colonial powers in Europe" (Franklin 2022, 623)

a series of community meetings in July of 2019, housing emerged as the community's top concern (Castro 2023a). This policy domain was particularly compelling for members of the city council given that local organizations such as the Shorefront Legacy Center had already amassed the historical documentation needed to highlight how anti-Black housing discrimination had contributed to the racial wealth gap and would allow the reparations ordinance to potentially withstand legal challenges (Franklin 2022). The city attorney, Nicholas Cummings, noted that using a portion of the city's general fund to provide reparations to a select group of residents could be seen as a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution (Castro 2022). However, the Shorefront Legacy's Center's seventy-seven-page report highlighting decades of segregationist and discriminatory city policies (Robinson and Thompson 2021), helped assuage this concern. In *City of Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co.,* the U.S. Supreme Court concluded that policies that aimed to rectify past discrimination had to be supported by a historical record demonstrating that the discrimination took place.[2] According to local officials, the priorities that emerged in public listening sessions—housing and economic development—were best supported by the Shorefront Legacy Center's report: "The strongest case for reparations . . . is in the area of housing, where there is sufficient evidence showing the City's part in housing discrimination as a result of early City zoning ordinances in place between 1919 and 1969, when the City banned housing discrimination" (quoted in Treisman 2021).

The first phase of the funds would be aimed at addressing racial inequities in housing and closing the city's racial wealth gap. Black residents who could prove that they or their direct descendants were negatively affected by redlining or other racist housing policies between 1919 and 1969 would be eligible for $25,000 housing grants that could be used to pay down an existing mortgage, renovate a home, or make a downpayment on a new property. Black residents largely supported the program (City of Evanston 2023b), but also raised three specific concerns during listening sessions hosted by the Evanston City Council and the Empowerment Commission for Reparations.

First, what about Black residents who had already left Evanston because of racial discrimination and those who arrived after 1969? For many residents, any comprehensive discussion of reparations also needed to consider the Black people who were pushed out of the city on the basis of racist policies and acknowledge that racism continued to exist after the passage of the Fair Housing Act, which ended the practice of redlining. Second, what about other forms of anti-Black racism in the city? As we show throughout this article, many Black residents noted that other policy domains, including education, might have provided a more expansive reparations policy made available to a wider subset of Black Evanstonians. Finally, regarding the reparations housing grants, what about Black renters? These individuals did not have mortgages to pay down or homes to renovate, and they were not automatically able to purchase a home, even with the program's assistance. The Empowerment Commission for Reparations found this final point particularly compelling, recommending "housing rental assistance to income-qualified, African American residents in Evanston" in a memo circulated to the mayor and city council on September 9, 2019 (City of Evanston 2019).

In November—five months after Simmons initially introduced her resolution—Evanston's city council passed 126-R-19 on an 8–1 vote, establishing a $10 million reparations fund levied from a municipal tax on the sale of recreational cannabis funds that would be made available to Black residents (City of Evanston 2019). Notably, the ordinance did not initially allow the funds to be used for rental assistance. Even though memos circulated by the Empowerment Commission suggest that allowing the funds to be used for rental assistance was considered (City of Evanston 2019), they ultimately decided against it (Castro 2023a). We discuss this point in greater detail later in the article.

In November 2020, one year after approving the authorization of the funds for the ordinance, the Evanston City Council passed 102-

2. *City of Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co.,* 488 U.S. 469 (1989).

O-20, codifying the Reparations Committee as a body within the local government to oversee the implementation of the ordinance. During this period, national reparations organizations signed off on the proposal championed by Simmons. For example, NAARC released a report "certifying the Evanston Reparations Initiative as meeting the definitions, criteria, and standards for a municipal reparatory justice initiative" (NAARC 2021).[3] Specifically, Evanston's proposed reparations housing program satisfied one of the NAARC'S ten-point program (NAARC, n.d.b).

On March 22, 2021, the city council again voted 8–1 to release the first $400,000 of the anticipated $10 million reparations fund through $25,000 housing grants. Councilwoman Cicely Fleming—another Black city councilwoman—was the lone vote against the ordinance. Fleming affirmed her support for reparations, but explained that she voted against the ordinance because it conflicted with her understanding of reparations. Fleming described the ordinance as a prime example of White paternalism: "deciding that Black folks are unable to manage their own monies" (Fleming 2021). Instead, she claimed that Black individuals should set the terms of their grievances and determine how those grievances should be addressed.

After approving the release of the funds, policy implementation developed swiftly. Many Black Evanstonians called for additional listening sessions where they could provide input and ask questions about the details of the ordinance. The first Reparations Committee meeting was held in August of 2021; one month later, Black residents were given a two-month window to apply for the $25,000 housing grants. During this period, local-level nonprofit organizations, including the Shorefront Legacy Center, worked to help applicants gather historical documents proving that they or one of their direct descendants had been affected by the city's redlining policies between 1919 and 1969.

In January 2022, the first sixteen Ancestor grant recipients were selected via lottery from 123 qualified applicants. Seventy percent of the qualified applicants were residents of Evanston's Second and Fifth Wards—the only majority Black wards in the city—and more than half of the Ancestors were over seventy. As of January of 2023, only sixteen of the initial group of 123 Ancestor applicants had received housing assistance (Felton 2023); by March 2023, seven other Ancestors had died before receiving their funds (Castro 2023a). Although the reparations debate was celebrated and quickly faded from the minds of many of the city's White residents, Black Evanstonians—many in their late seventies and early eighties—continued to show up to monthly Reparations Committee meetings to ensure that the policy covered the city's most vulnerable Black residents and that the reparations ordinance lived up to its name.

Evanston's path toward reparations is illuminating in that it presents a blueprint for other municipalities seeking to provide reparations for housing discrimination to Black residents. We argue the development of reparations policy in Evanston raises several insights that can help clarify the circumstances under which an innovative historic policy of this kind can emerge and preemptively address policy design challenges.

OUR APPROACH

We watched the debate over reparations in Evanston unfold in real time through coverage in local newspapers and observations of Evanston Reparations Committee meetings. Concurrently, we conducted fifty-six in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a racially diverse subset of Evanstonians to examine how participants came to develop their ideas about the city's reparations ordinance.[4] These individuals first learned about reparations through multiple avenues, including interfaith racial justice initiatives, educational experiences, antiracist book clubs, and parental socialization. Although the experiences of those included in our sample may not be representative of Evanstonians as a whole, the themes that emerged

3. Robin Rue Simmons was selected to serve on the NAARC. Her term began on May 21, 2021, corresponding with the end of her term on the Evanston City Council (NAARC 2021).

4. Our pre-questionnaire and interview protocol are available in the appendix.

from these in-depth conversations helped shape our understanding of the political context in the moments immediately following the historic passing of the reparations ordinance. As a long tradition in political science has demonstrated, the study of local politics enables careful attention to the dynamics of political conflicts and policy development (Dahl 2005; Berleson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954). Although such a methodological approach may not be generalizable to a broader population, our interview sample easily clears commonly accepted thresholds for saturation (Hennink and Kaiser 2022) and can help social scientists better understand themes that emerge in reparations policy debates.

We recruited interviewees using both convenience and snowball sampling techniques. (Moseley 2013, 41). Building on our personal connections to Evanston, our primary points of contact—and our initial set of interviewees—put us in touch with their friends and contacts in Evanston whom we subsequently recruited as study participants. However, to ensure that we spoke with individuals who operate within distinct social circles in the city, we never interviewed more than one person per household and never contacted more than three people recommended to us by any single point of contact. We also attended local Reparations Committee meetings and used these events to interview individuals who were directly engaging in the process. When possible, we also draw comparisons between our findings and a survey of 3,500 Evanstonians conducted by Northwestern University's Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy between February and June 2023 to alleviate concerns that our small number of participants enrolled in our qualitative study may not be representative of the city as a whole (City of Evanston 2023b).

Because our interview questions address issues of race and collective identity, each interview was conducted by a facilitator who shared the racial identity of the participant in order to avoid interviewer effects (Mosley 2013). Participants first filled out a pre-questionnaire. The form collected demographic characteristics of the sample, determined who had attended Reparations Committee meetings, and directly measured support for reparations for slavery and Evanston's reparations ordinance. Collecting this information also allowed us to analyze interview responses across various demographic characteristics, such as race, gender, age, income, partisanship, homeownership, and whether respondents attended a reparations meeting.

The participants we interviewed ranged in age from eighteen to eighty-seven (μ=50) and just over half—55 percent—were women. We focused primarily on Black and White residents because they are the two largest racial groups in Evanston, accounting for 80 percent of the city's population. However, we also interviewed eight Asian and eight Latinx residents to better understand how other racially marginalized groups responded to a reparations policy aimed at addressing anti-Black inequality specifically. Table 2 provides a breakdown of our sample by race, ethnicity, and gender.

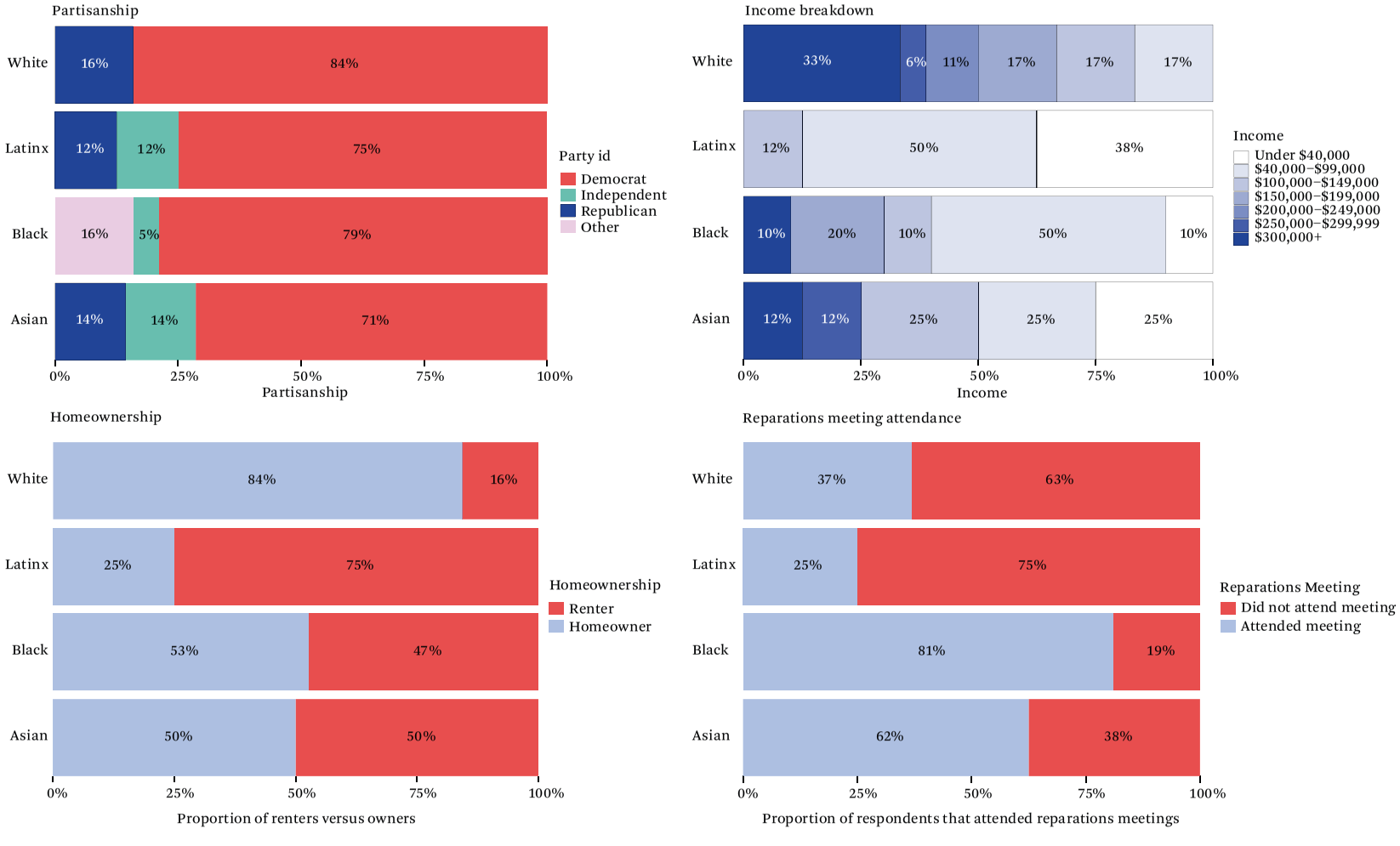
Even though the interviewees all reside in the same suburban community, they provide a glimpse into a diverse set of perspectives and experiences that help contextualize the emergence of Evanston's reparations debate. Figure 2 summarizes four characteristics of the sample, disaggregated by race and ethnicity: partisanship, income, homeownership status, and reparations meeting attendance. Seventy-five percent identify as Democrats. This is not particularly surprising given that Evanstonians

Table 2. Sample by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

	Asian	Black	Latinx	White	Total
Man	*N* = 2	*N* = 9	*N* = 3	*N* = 10	*N* = 24
Woman	*N* = 6	*N* = 12	*N* = 4	*N* = 9	*N* = 31
Nonbinary	*N* = 0	*N* = 0	*N* = 1	*N* = 0	*N* = 1
Total	*N* = 8	*N* = 21	*N* = 8	*N* = 19	*N* = 56

Source: Authors' tabulation.

Figure 2. Partisanship, Income, Homeownership, and Meeting Attendance by Race and Ethnicity



Source: Authors' tabulation.

overwhelmingly support Democratic Party candidates (Gavin 2020). The sample also includes the perspectives of a racially diverse cohort of Republicans, Independents, and Black residents who do not affiliate with any political party.

The sample is also socioeconomically diverse. The average household income is between $100,000 and $149,000 per year, well above the city's average (U.S. Census Bureau 2023). That said, a number of the people interviewed fall on the lower end of the income distribution. Notably, more than half of the Asian, Black, and Latinx interviewees reported annual household incomes of less than $100,000 per year. Consistent with city-level trends, White respondents are the most financially well off, with 33 percent reporting annual household incomes of more than $300,000 per year.

Nearly 60 percent of the residents interviewed own their home. This is an important factor to consider given that Evanston's reparations ordinance was designed primarily to help Black homeowners. Even though 84 percent of the White residents interviewed own their homes, just over half of Asian and Black respondents do and just 25 percent of the Latinos.

Relatedly, we also wanted to gain a sense of how involved the interviewees were in the city's reparations conversation. Although 55 percent of those interviewed reported that they had attended a reparations meeting, this figure is largely driven by Black residents. Specifically, 81 percent of the Black people interviewed reported having attended one of the city's reparations meetings, a figure that aligns with our own observations of these events.

The individuals interviewed overwhelmingly supported Evanston's reparations ordinance. Figure 3 demonstrates that most of the White Evanstonians in the sample supported the city's reparations ordinance (84 percent) and reparations for slavery more broadly (79 percent). Asian and Latinx residents reported similar rates of support, though external survey data suggest that this support may be slightly inflated due to the concentration of young Asians and Latinxs in our sample (City of Evanston 2023b). Contrastingly, Black residents are split over whether to support or oppose the local reparations ordinance while simultaneously reporting unanimous support for reparations for slavery (see also Dawson and Popoff 2004). In fact, Black residents reported lower levels of support for Evanston's reparations ordinance than White respondents, a finding mirrored in a recent survey of 3,500 Evanstonians (City of Evanston 2023b).[5]

Difference in Support for Evanston's Reparations Ordinance

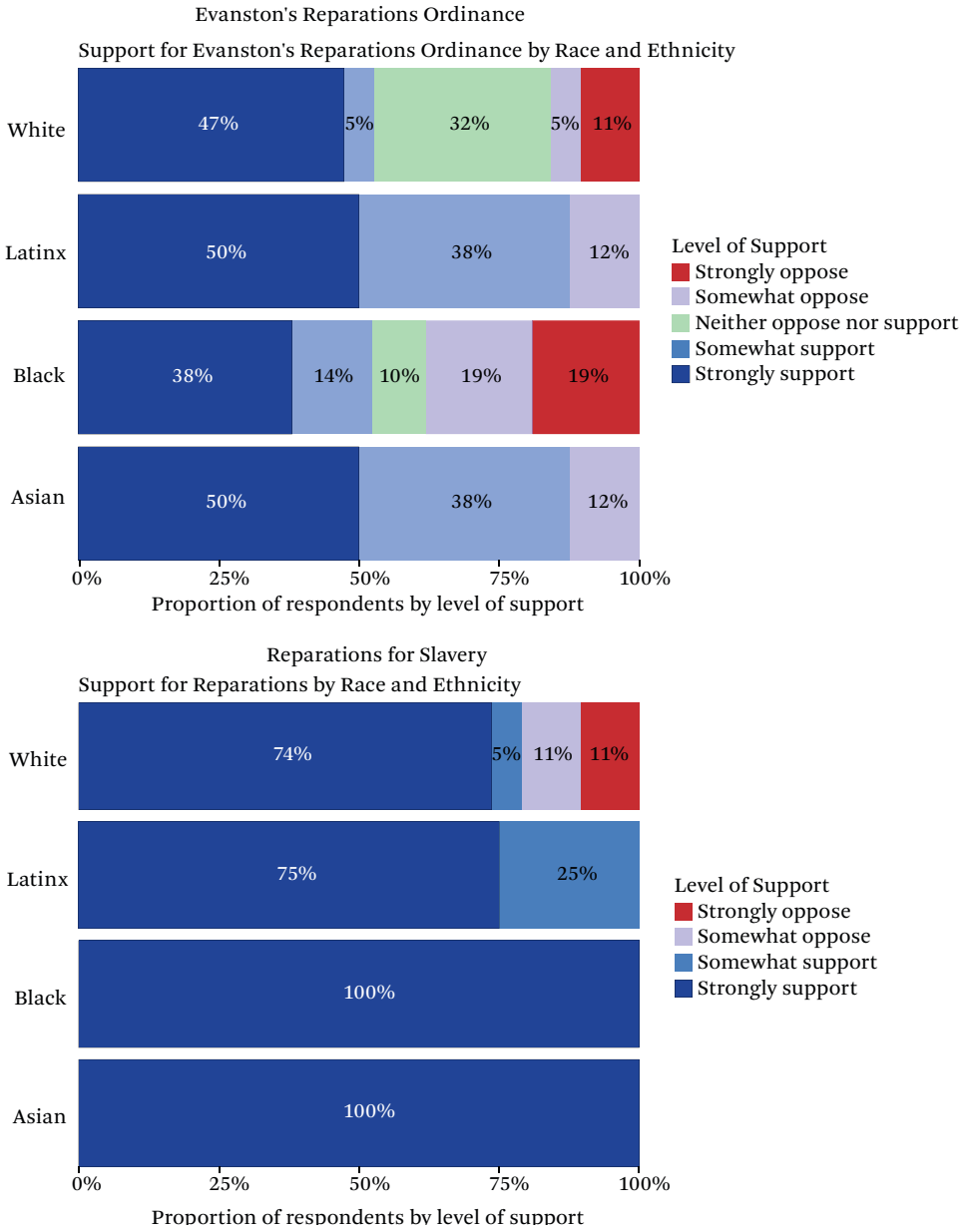
What accounts for this difference in support for Evanston's reparations ordinance? We argue that it is due to competing expectations for what reparations should entail. Black Americans are early claimants of reparations in the United States (Darity and Mullen 2022), and this historically grounded sentiment was prevalent among our respondents. Michael, a fifty-nine-year-old Black resident, characterized reparations this way:

> You know, there was a promise of forty acres and a mule . . . And our government reneged on that promise, as it reneged on other promises to other groups. And so we never received any kind of compensation. We never received any, any thought toward the psychological damage or the trauma that comes from the condition of releasing an enslaved people into a world of so-called freedom without any kind of support without any compensation. And so I [support the] push for federal reparations.

Arlene, a seventy-four-year-old Black woman, shared Michael's view on reparations, linking the need for monetary compensation to the unpaid labor of her ancestors. However, she also presented a much broader conception of reparations—one that includes both mone-

5. In our sample, 52 percent of Black participants support the city's reparations ordinance. In a survey of 3,500 Evanstonians, 64 percent of Black residents support the initiative. Interestingly, both our interviews and this supplementary data tell a similar story: White residents are more supportive of the ordinance than Black residents.

Figure 3. Support for Reparations Among Interview Participants



Source: Authors' tabulation.

tary compensation and social spending in areas such as education and health care:

> Reparations is the U.S. government making me whole, which means on the first level, I expect to be monetarily remunerated for all the suffering that my ancestors did for all the unpaid wages that they worked for and were never paid. And then beyond that, there are other levels. I want to make sure that [there are] assurances that this will never happen to us again and that I will decide how I will be paid. And I expect some of that would be in monetary forms. And I would accept some level of bonds or whatever. I expect they will end up apologizing. And I'm trying to think

> there's at least four areas that need to be fulfilled [including] the monetary, the bonds, education, and health care.

Michael's and Arlene's understandings of reparations are representative of the Black Evanstonians we interviewed. They support multifaceted reparations programs that include cash payments and social spending that aim to multiple manifestations of racial inequality in the United States.

For White residents of Evanston, the reparations ordinance represents a renewed commitment to historic ideals laid out in the city charter. George, an eighty-year-old, retired, White educator who lived in Evanston for more than fifty years, noted that Evanston's town charter explicitly mentions racial and gender equality.

> I think about all of these men, these original founders of Evanston. They put in that charter freedom and equality of opportunity regardless of race or sex. Whoa, 1855. That's just, whoa. So the ideals of this town were established very early and they've always remained. I think, generally, if you live in Evanston, you sort of embrace that. Now the realities. You constantly have that tension as you do with the reparations bill between the good heartedness to say yes, there are wrongs that were, especially with housing that should be redressed. But there's also the idealism that's been at work through these various organizations and individuals throughout our history. It has a long history of trying hard to make things equal.

Contrastingly, the objections of the 16 percent of White respondents in our sample who outwardly opposed the ordinance were not grounded in conflicting definitions about what reparations should entail or about implementation, but about racial and economic conservatism. These individuals mentioned the policy would place an additional tax burden on residents, that it was not their responsibility to atone for past racial discrimination, and that Black Americans had already received a sufficient apology. For example, Mary, a seventy-four-year-old resident, explained it this way:

> Reparations means raising our taxes and giving that money specifically to Black people who are in need, or not in need, that I don't understand completely. But giving that money to them just because they're Black and because maybe two generations ago their parents were slaves, I think that's nonsense. We've already apologized and dealt with that. What about the Native Americans and any other group that was treated unfairly? That's a part of history. That's all over the world. People have been persecuted all over the world. . . . It's just a fact of history that people have been oppressed and we have to move on. Why should I, who worked hard in my business, give my money to people that had been, you know, oppressed? Sorry. That's a part of life.

Black Evanstonians, meanwhile, were hesitant to characterize the housing grants as a reparations program. Toni, a fifty-two-year-old Black woman, highlighted this point, noting that the strongest supporter of Evanston's reparations ordinance—Fifth Ward Councilwoman Robin Rue Simmons—originally discussed reparations in terms of cash payments before ultimately promoting a housing program: "There was a time where I did support Evanston reparations at the beginning because Robin Rue Simmons was talking about direct cash payments then she said what are some other thoughts or ideas and housing did come up but no one discussed what that looked like. And in terms of reparations for Black people, land was stolen you know. Land was stolen so land should be given back to them."

In Toni's view, reparations are about returning assets that were stolen and allowing Black people to spend the money in any way they choose. Others presented a view of reparations consisting of ongoing contributions rather than a one-time housing grant. Cherie, a seventy-two-year-old Black woman and lifelong resident of Evanston, emphasized that reparations should be focused on investing in the futures of young Black people:

> Keep giving. Make it something that is ongoing for the generations that come along. And that could be scholarships. Programs in the

> sciences, in the arts, that are set up for these generations to come. For the kids to help give them something to build on since they are the ones that had a lot taken away from them. [The city] kept them from being what it was possible for them to be if they had treated [us] fairly in the past. So yeah. When you give somebody $25,000 that doesn't come close to reparations, and then when you tell them what they have to do with it. That's a grant. That is definitely not reparations.

Cherie thought beyond housing when considering what reparations should entail. She characterized Evanston's reparations ordinance as a grant, a one-time payment with strict contingencies for how the fund can be spent. Although White residents frequently affirmed that the city's Black residents should ultimately decide on the form that reparations should take, they consistently expressed strong support for the ordinance, noting the pride that they felt when they heard the ordinance had passed. Brooke, a fifty-seven-year-old White woman, told us this: "So, the vote was eight to one, right? So, I was proud to live in a place where the only vote against it was that it didn't go far enough. I was super proud of that. I was just super proud that like, 'Okay, we're unified in doing something and yeah, we disagree about the best way to go about it,' but how cool is that? And pride is definitely what I felt."

Asian and Latinx residents across partisan identities were largely supportive (88 percent) of the reparations ordinance even though they would not be direct beneficiaries. The Latinx people we interviewed echoed the concerns of many Black residents, suggesting that reparations should consist of both individual, monetary funds but also investment in specific neighborhoods in Evanston. Serena, a twenty-four-year-old Latina, noted that she supported education-focused reparations initiatives that aimed to open an elementary school in the 5th Ward, a predominantly Black part of town: "I know [Black residents] are looking into building a school here just because of how much more accessible it could be to families that live around here. I feel like some people would prefer that over only a couple of people getting those funds and receiving those reparations." Asian Americans, meanwhile, discussed their support for Evanston's reparations ordinance in light of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided $20,000 cash payments and a formal apology to the survivors of Japanese internment camps during World War II. Hana, a seventy-nine-year-old Japanese American, framed her support for Evanston's reparations ordinance this way: "I support reparations. . . . I've been a recipient of reparations because I'm of Japanese ancestry and I was born in the concentration camp during World War II. My whole family was incarcerated in 1943 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They lost everything. They are from the San Joaquin Valley in California. We were placed in Arkansas, and I was born in the camp."

To understand how Black Evanstonians developed such starkly different perceptions of the city's reparations ordinance, it is important to consider the unique political circumstances that allowed the policy to emerge. As this article shows, White residents were quick to celebrate a rather expedient policy win that reaffirmed the city's progressive values. Meanwhile, Black residents were left to sort through the pieces of a policy that initially left many of the city's most vulnerable Black residents behind.

The Politics of Reparations Policymaking in Evanston

An in-depth look at Evanston's policy design process sheds light on the stark racial divides discussed. When we move beyond a simple timeline of events to consider the broader, on-the-ground politics at play, we can better understand the challenges that initially threatened the viability of the nation's first publicly funded reparations initiative (Patashnik and Zelizer 2013; Patashnik 2008). To do this, we pay close attention to the perspectives of the city's Black residents who felt that Evanston's reparations policy initially missed the mark and deepened their sense of distrust toward local government (Michener, SoRelle, and Thurston 2022). We contend that the comparatively higher rates of White support for Evanston's reparations ordinance highlight a cycle of racialized policy feedback whereby racial identity served as an important lens through which res-

idents came to either laud or resent the decision making of local officials (Michener 2019; Rosenthal 2021). Specifically, although Asian, Latinx, and White residents largely supported the ordinance on symbolic grounds (see figure 3), Black residents expressed frustration that a policy bearing the name of reparations appeared to be set up for failure from the outset. It is only because of the persistent political activism of Black residents—and Black women in particular—that the city council amended the ordinance to better secure the viability of the program.

Window of Opportunity: COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, and the Legacy of Redlining

Evanston's reparations ordinance originated before the major political events that came to define 2020 (see table 1). However, exogenous shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic—a public health crisis that disproportionally affected African Americans—and a massive wave of Black Lives Matter protests following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery contributed to a unique set of circumstances that allowed policymakers such as Robin Rue Simmons to convincingly make the case for swift approval of the reparations ordinance (Reyes 2020). During the early months of 2020, Simmons acknowledged that she wanted the ordinance to pass within the calendar year and that she was unwilling to compromise on its format, which would have slowed down the approval process: "Learning that local government is most responsive and we're more nimble and we can make impact quicker than the federal government, and thinking this is a local matter. And I pushed it relentlessly. I was very, very stern in wanting it to happen in *this calendar year*, being the 400th year of Black resilience. That was important to me. So *I was not willing to compromise on any other format to get to this victory. Time is of the essence*" (quoted in Alexander and Dow 2023, emphasis added).

The multidimensional calls for racial justice that characterized the politics of 2020 represent important crises (Kingdon 1984) that interrupted the policy design process. These events created a sense that swift actions needed to be taken within a narrow window of opportunity, leading to the prioritization of expedience over design. This expedience, while well-intentioned, contributed to a policy that left many questions about eligibility, funding, and implementation unanswered and threatened the very viability of the policy (Patashnik and Zelizer 2013; Patashnik 2008). These themes emerged in our conversations with residents as well.

Many White residents largely supported Councilwoman Simmons's push to pass the reparations ordinance because it reaffirmed Evanston's long-standing commitment to racial justice. In fact, 53 percent of the White residents interviewed reported that the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black Americans, as well as the racial justice protests that occurred in the spring and summer of 2020, made expedient local action on reparations an imperative. Amy, a forty-five-year-old White woman, linked her push for reparations to the murder of George Floyd explicitly:

> I got involved in this during the pandemic period, but . . . I would peg it, not surprisingly . . . on the post–George Floyd period. I was looking for something I could be involved in that would be constructively aimed at racial justice. So at that time, everything was on Zoom. So I was in Zoom meetings held by the reparation subcommittee of the Evanston City Council . . . and there were all these questions about "what role is there for non-Black residents," but I knew it was important for us to join together in this discussion as a community.

White residents, including Amy, celebrated when the city council approved the disbursement of the first $400,000 in reparations funds in March 2021. In fact, when we asked respondents to explain what they felt when they heard the reparations ordinance had passed, 25 percent of White respondents reported feeling a sense of pride in their community. Dave, a seventy-two-year-old White respondent, went so far as to say that the city should change their "Welcome to Evanston" signs to read "Evanston: First to Reparations."

Notably, the Black residents we interviewed did not share this sense of pride. Rodney, a

twenty-eight-year-old Black man, reflected on Judge Lionel Jean-Baptiste's 2002 reparations resolution, which he recalled from his childhood (see table 1). He frames his frustrations from a historical perspective, asking how, after twenty years of community discussions about reparations, Evanston's city council arrived at policy that left so many questions about eligibility, funding, and implementation: "There's this dude, as a judge, his name is Lionel John Baptist. And he got something passed when I was little about a reparations bill . . . And so it's just crazy that . . . all these years later, there's still so many questions. There's so much stuff not planned. And so many just, you know, faulty parts of the process."

In Rodney's mind, when Evanston finally arrived at the decision to pursue reparations, questions about eligibility should have been addressed and disbursement procedures streamlined. As discussed, Evanston consistently elects Democrats who espouse their commitments to racial equity while on the city council. Thus, in Evanston, it was not a matter of whether a reparations ordinance had enough votes to get passed but of whether policymakers had the patience to get the design of a groundbreaking reparations ordinance right.

COVID-19 and the high-profile police killing of George Floyd pushed policymakers to act before addressing essential questions raised by some Black residents about eligibility and implementation. These questions were particularly important to address, even if more time was needed to establish the details. Recall that the ordinance initially allowed eligible grant recipients—referred to as Ancestors by the City of Evanston—to use the funds to pay down an existing mortgage, put toward a down payment on a new home, or make renovations to their homes (City of Evanston, n.d.a). In hindsight, the developers of the reparations ordinance used homeownership as an eligibility criterion for Black residents within a context that put significant constraints on the ability of these same residents to become homeowners in the first place. This suggests some degree of shortsightedness during the policy design process.

Discriminatory housing policies such as redlining are particularly nefarious because of their crucial role in perpetuating the generational racial wealth gap. Black people were denied access to mortgages, credit, and insurance, which undermined their ability to purchase homes and build wealth (Thurston 2018; Rothstein 2017). Yet Black renters in Evanston—arguably those most affected by the city's redlining policies—were less likely than Black homeowners to be able to claim their reparations funds (Castro 2023a). As stated, many of these individuals did not have homes to renovate or mortgages to pay down partially because of discriminatory housing policies. Moreover, the housing grants were not substantial enough to provide most Ancestors with the necessary funds to be able to purchase a home in Evanston's competitive housing market.

Black Evanston residents were quick to highlight that elders in the community who were not homeowners would be unable to use the reparations program housing grants. These concerns continued to be raised by Black residents at Reparations Committee meetings into the early months of 2023 (City of Evanston 2023c). For example, Donna, a thirty-year-old Black resident of Evanston's Fifth Ward, shared this concern: "When you dig into some of the things like the way that this housing program is structured, some of the people who are directly impacted by redlining can't even access this housing program. I'm thinking about the elders in the community who were affected, some of them are not homeowners. So they can't even use this stuff, right? Because it's only for homeowners."

As discussed, memos circulated by the Empowerment Commission suggest that members of the city council considered allowing Black residents to use the funds for rental assistance during the initial stages of the ordinance's development (City of Evanston 2019). Yet the policy adopted in early 2021 did not allow the funds to be used this way. Notably, "the reparations committee and subcommittee never asked the city to research the legality of using reparations funding for rental assistance" nor did they provide evidence to suggest that rental assistance would fail to achieve a primary goal of the program: building the wealth of Black residents (Castro 2023a). Many Black residents shared not only their concerns about eligibility but also their doubts that the

ordinance—levied from a municipal sales tax on recreational cannabis sales—would be adequately funded to ensure its survival.

Tax Revenue: Cannabis Sales as a Source of Funding

In January 2020, the State of Illinois legalized recreational cannabis, creating a unique funding stream for the Evanston reparations ordinance. The emergence of this policy alongside Evanston's reparations ordinance can be viewed as a lateral effect—when one policy's development is shaped by a seemingly unrelated one (Mettler 2016, 374). The decision to use municipal tax revenue from recreational cannabis sales was critical in garnering support for the passing of the ordinance (Armus 2019). The newly minted 2020 Illinois cannabis tax allowed the city's policymakers and White residents to support the reparations ordinance without fear that they would have to pay for it through an increase in individual property or sales taxes.

At the time that the measure passed, the funding stream for the reparations program committed the first $10 million levied through a 3 percent municipal sales tax on recreational cannabis sales (City of Evanston, n.d.a). At the time, it was hailed by major national news outlets as an "innovative solution to funding reparations" (Fies 2020). However, Black residents were highly skeptical of this approach, questioning whether it would be able to adequately fund a $10 million reparations program on recreational cannabis sales alone. Moreover, they questioned the optics of asking Black patrons of Evanston's cannabis dispensary to pay a tax that would essentially fund their own reparations. For example, Dorothy, a sixty-year-old Black woman expressed her displeasure with this approach:

> Part of reparations is saying, look at this, this is how much money was taken outta the Black stock. This is how much damage and then having a systematic way to pay it back and not just by donations, but by resources. So instead of saying, well, we hope more people smoke weed this year, because then we'll be able to pay back the reparations. It should be, you know, treating it the way that they treat their pension fund obligations. It's okay. We know we can't pay it all back, but we are dedicating a certain percentage of the Evanston budget.

White Democrats, however, strongly supported this revenue source. Brooke, a fifty-seven-year-old White woman, shared her view: "I also thought the fact that it was being paid for with cannabis proceeds was just genius. I thought that was great both because of the historic oppression in the Black community like over prosecution for small time drug offenses, which has hurt the Black community, and because it's this brand-new source of revenue. So, you don't have to take it away from something else. Let's use this."

Brooke's response provides a historical justification to frame her support for using a tax on recreational cannabis sales to fund reparations, but it is also important that such a tax ensured that many White residents would not have to foot the bill through, say, a property tax increase. In fact, half of the White residents we interviewed—including Brooke—claimed that the city's high taxes had inflicted harm on them:

> I mean the only way that I see the city inflicting harm on me is just that my taxes are really high and, I mean, they're really high, and I don't know what they are in neighboring communities. You probably know this better than I do, or you will by the time this is all over, but it just seems like unbelievably high and I don't know how that's sustainable. And we're doing okay financially, we're going to be okay, we're not going to have to leave Evanston because we can't afford to pay our taxes. But that's because we have extra income.

A handful of White residents voiced a more critical view. Some noted that any reparations ordinance should be funded in a way that chips away at the generational wealth gap rather than rely on revenue generated from municipal cannabis sales. For example, Beth, a forty-five-year-old White resident, called on the city's White residents to voluntarily give up 10 percent of their annual income to fund the ordinance through the Evanston Community Fund but ac-

knowledged that this solution alone was not enough to sustain the policy (Evanston Community Fund, n.d.).

Other White residents echoed the concerns of Black Evanstonians, noting that a municipal tax on recreational cannabis sold from a single dispensary in the city would never cover the $10 million commitment. For most White residents, however, the tax provided a way for them to distance themselves from the reparations fund financially while providing full support for the ordinance in the wake of major political events in 2020 that elevated the salience of racial inequality in the United States for many White Americans.

Black Political Activism and the Expansion of Evanston's Reparations Ordinance

Two detrimental elements of policy design—preemptively resolved through the persistent activism of Black residents—threatened to undermine the ordinance: inadequate funding sources and overly strict eligibility criteria that restricted reparations funds from making it into the hands of the city's Black residents. Since the release of the first $400,000 of the reparations housing grants in March of 2021, multiple funding issues have arisen. Regarding the municipal tax on recreational cannabis, the city based its funding model on the assumption that three dispensaries would open in Evanston by the time the ordinance was approved. However, as of March 2023, only one had opened, significantly decreasing the expected tax revenue (City of Evanston 2023c). Just as any Black residents had feared, the reparations program was underfunded even before all the eligible housing grant recipients, or Ancestors, could claim their funds.

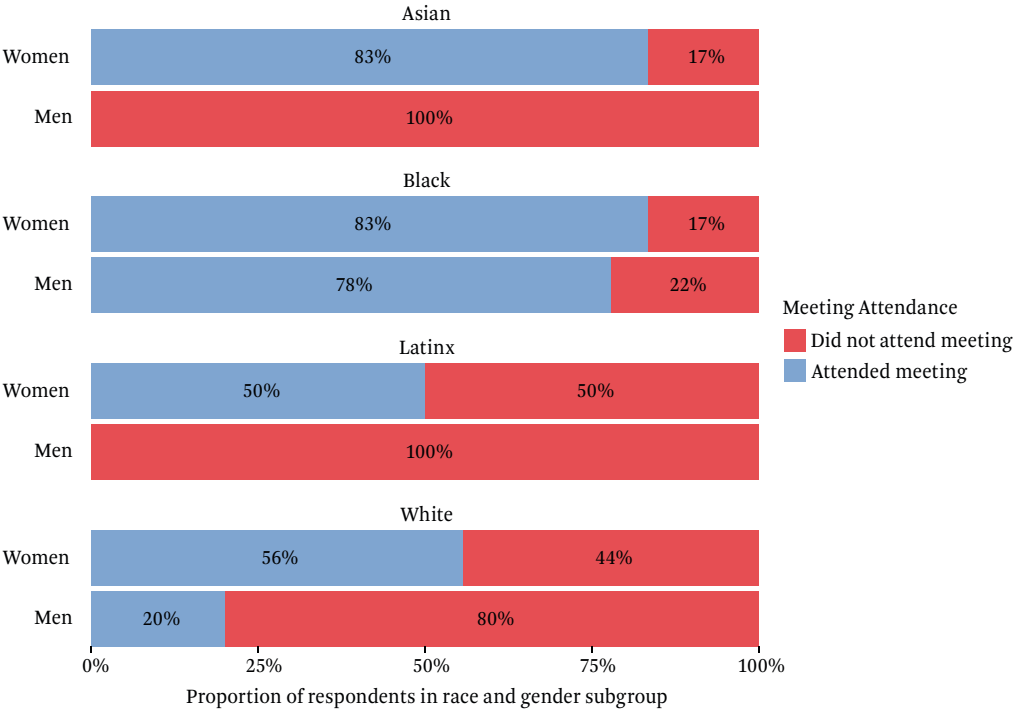
To rectify this funding discrepancy, the Evanston City Council voted in December of 2022 to set aside an additional $10 million over ten years from a tax on real estate sales in the city over $1.5 million. Policymakers hope this revision can help account for the funding shortfall resulting from the lack of dispensaries (City of Evanston 2023c). Additionally, funds from private donations, primarily from local churches and synagogues, are now available to supplement the fund.

In addition to the shifting nature of the funding source of the reparation ordinance, the Reparations Committee has also faced significant logistical challenges resulting from overly strict eligibility criteria that threatened the viability of the program. As of March 2023, seven prospective Ancestor grant recipients had died while waiting to be selected for the housing grants (Castro 2023a). Before their deaths, many of these individuals could not complete the necessary paperwork to pass the reparations housing grant to their children and were unable to claim the funds in the form of cash payments or rental assistance (City of Evanston 2023c). An additional 106 Black residents were still waiting for their housing grant selection as of March 2023. Many of these individuals were over seventy and unable to claim the funds because they were not homeowners.

Since the approval of the release of the first $400,000 for the ordinance in March of 2021, Black residents have been leading the fight to call out the flaws of the ordinance, yielding a better and more inclusive policy as a result. After passing the historic reparations ordinance, many White Evanston residents and Evanston Black elites, feeling a sense of pride about the city's commitment to racial justice, largely believed that their reparations work was finished. Conversely, for many Black residents, the work had just begun.

The Reparations Committee, created in November 2020, has served as the primary vehicle for Black residents to voice concerns to key stakeholders regarding the reparations housing ordinance. The mayor appoints Reparations Committee members, and being an Evanston resident is the only qualification to serve. Former Councilwoman Robin Rue Simmons spearheads the committee, which currently includes three Evanston councilmembers and four Black Evanston residents. The committee has met monthly in person and by Zoom since August 2021. Every Reparations Committee meeting agenda since its inception includes a public comment item that reserves time for neighborhood residents to voice their opinion about the ordinance and offer feedback to the committee. During this portion of the meeting, residents can relay their concerns about the policy directly to the Evanston government's

Figure 4. Meeting Attendance by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender



Source: Authors' tabulation.

legislative decision-making body that oversees the reparations ordinance's implementation.

Concerns over the details of the policy design frequently emerged during public comment at local Reparations Committee meetings and fostered high rates of Black political participation, particularly among women who often took off work or braved winter snowstorms to attend the weekday morning reparations meetings (see also Nuamah 2021). As demonstrated in figure 4, among the individuals we interviewed, Black women were the most likely to report having attended a reparations meeting. This finding is consistent with our observations of these meetings.

During these public comments, faulty aspects of the policy design—including the precarity of the funding source, the growing length of the approved applicant waitlist, the slow speed at which housing repairs are being completed, and the conundrum of how to provide housing grants to residents who do not own houses—are called out directly in a political arena where those with decision-making power cannot hide. These public comments have effectively pressured Reparations Committee members, including former Councilwoman Robin Rue Simmons, to improve the policy's reach and implementation.

The persistence attendance of Black Evanstonians at the monthly Reparations Committee meetings—coupled with more critical coverage of the ordinance in local and national media— has paid off immensely. In early March 2023, the Evanston City Council voted to allow eligible residents to claim their reparations funds in the form cash payments (City of Evanston 2023a). Although it remains unclear whether these cash payments will be tax exempt, are tied to housing, or represent an entirely different reparations policy (Castro 2023d), the new availability of cash payments is a substantial victory for Black Evanstonians, who have been championing direct cash payments as a form of reparations from the beginning. As of October 2023, the City of Evanston has paid roughly $2.2 million to qualified Ancestor recipients and is preparing for the next

round of $25,000 payments to direct beneficiaries (Williamson 2023). This substantial shift in policy is the direct result of the local political organizing of Black residents who preemptively called out the underdeveloped policy design that initially threatened the viability of the nation's first publicly funded reparations ordinance.

CONCLUSION

The call for Black reparations frequently identifies the U.S. federal government as a primary perpetrator of slavery and suggests that financial investments at the federal level are needed to eliminate the nation's racial wealth gap (Balfour 2023, 296, 300). However, Evanston's ordinance represents a departure from this traditional thinking around reparations: the ordinance focuses on housing discrimination and places the responsibility for mitigating past harm on local government.

At a moment when municipalities across the United States are developing similar reparations initiatives (Hain and Mulcahy 2023), we argue that an in-depth look at Evanston's push for reparations in 2019 and the politics of reparations policymaking helps us better understand how best to deliver reparations to Black people across the United States. Our analysis suggests that the voices of Black residents should guide local conversations about what reparations are, who should benefit, and how to allocate and distribute the funds. This finding is consistent with that of Elizabeth Davies and her colleagues (2024, this issue) in their study of Chicago, both cases highlighting the importance of involving the victimized party early in the design and conceptualization of a reparations program. Moreover, although policymakers are right to leverage the increased salience of structural racism and the persistence of the racial wealth gap within the public discourse about reparations, the politics of expedience should not trump effective policy design. As demonstrated in this article, many of Evanston's implementation challenges could have been addressed sooner had policymakers slowed down and centered the concerns of Black residents.

There is no question that national momentum continues to build around what Evanston has been able to achieve. The historic passage of Evanston's reparations ordinance has garnered worldwide acclaim and praise for the city and its major political stakeholders. Former Councilwoman Robin Rue Simmons now sits on NAARC and has started a nonprofit organization, FirstRepair, dedicated to assisting other municipalities with the design and implementation of reparations programs of their own. The services of FirstRepair include "sharing best practices, creating tools, and developing a viable model to advance local reparations policy" (FirstRepair, n.d.). Until federal reparations legislation is passed, smaller municipalities will continue to look to Evanston—as well as the national organizations touting the success of this case—as a model for how other cities can pass reparations policies of their own.

As the nation explores how to secure reparations at multiple levels of government, we argue that the interests of Black Americans must be at the core of policy design and the implementation processes. Surveys of local residents, regularly scheduled virtual and in-person town hall meetings, individual and household interviews, and a reparations census are but a handful of tools multiple levels of government can use to prioritize Black opinion throughout the creation of reparations initiatives. After all, the much-needed repair and restorative justice that reparations initiatives aspire to achieve are only possible if we commit ourselves to centering the political concerns and voices of all Black people.

APPENDIX

Pre-Questionnaire

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Date: _____ Interview ID: _____
Interviewee Name: _____Interviewer: _____
Location of interview (Address): _____
Time of the Interview _____

Respondent Socio-Demographic Information:

1. What is your gender?
   Woman ☐ Man ☐ I identify differently _____
2. Which race-ethnicity do you consider yourself? Check all that apply.
   - ☐ African American or Black
   - ☐ Native American
   - ☐ Asian or Asian American
   - ☐ Biracial
   - ☐ Hispanic or Latino/Latina
   - ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
   - ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
   - ☐ White
3. If you had to pick just one, which category do you consider yourself?
   - ☐ African American or Black
   - ☐ Native American
   - ☐ Asian or Asian American
   - ☐ Biracial
   - ☐ Hispanic or Latino/Latina
   - ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
   - ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
   - ☐ White
4. What is your **household's** combined annual income? When we say household, we mean you and others with whom you generally live and share most expenses.
   - ☐ Under $40,0000
   - ☐ $40,000–$99,000
   - ☐ $100,000–$149,000
   - ☐ $150,000–$199,000
   - ☐ $200,000–$249,000
   - ☐ $250,000–$299,999
   - ☐ $300,000+
5. If you were asked to use one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong in?
   - ☐ Lower class
   - ☐ Working class
   - ☐ Middle class
   - ☐ Upper-middle class
   - ☐ Upper class

6. What Zip Code do you live in? _____
7. What ward do you live in? _____
8. What is the nearest intersection to where you live? _____
9. What Zip Code did you grow up in? _____
10. Are you a homeowner? No ☐ Yes ☐
11. Did your parents own their home in Evanston? No ☐ Yes ☐
12. What Evanston ward did your parents live in Evanston? _____

Education

13. Did you go to public school in Evanston? No ☐ Yes ☐
14. Did you attend all of elementary and high school in Evanston? No ☐ Yes ☐
15. If yes, where did you go to school in the city? _____
    _____
16. If no, where did you go to school? (City, State, and Zip Code)_____
17. What degrees have you successfully completed? Please list the institution where you completed the degree.
    - ☐ Bachelor's degree_____
    - ☐ Master's degree_____
    - ☐ Doctorate_____

News Consumption and Political Interest

18. How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics?
    - ☐ Never
    - ☐ Some of the time
    - ☐ About half the time
    - ☐ Most of the time
    - ☐ Always
19. Thinking about your local community, how interested are you in local community politics and local community affairs?
    - ☐ Not interested
    - ☐ Somewhat interested
    - ☐ Very interested
20. How interested are you in national politics and national affairs?
    - ☐ Not interested
    - ☐ Somewhat interested
    - ☐ Very interested
21. Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How interested were you in the 2020 campaign?
    - ☐ Not interested
    - ☐ Somewhat interested
    - ☐ Very interested

(*continued*)

22. During a typical week, how many days do you watch, read, or listen to news on the Internet, not including sports?
- ☐ None
- ☐ One day
- ☐ Two days
- ☐ Three days
- ☐ Four days
- ☐ Five days
- ☐ Six days
- ☐ Seven days

23. Where do you usually get news about national politics?_____

24. Where do you usually get news about local politics?_____

Reparations

25. On Thursday, January 13, the City of Evanston's Reparations Committee approved 122 applicants qualifying as Ancestors for the City's Local Reparations Restorative Housing Program. An Ancestor in this program is defined as an African American or Black individual, at least eighteen years old at the time, who was an Evanston resident between 1919 and 1969.

    The first sixteen applicants will be eligible initially to participate in the Restorative Housing Program, which will provide grants of up to $25,000 to purchase a home, home improvement or mortgage assistance. How much do you oppose or support this program?
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Neither oppose nor support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Strongly support

26. Broadly speaking, how much do you disagree or agree that the government should make amends for past wrongs by paying money to or developing policies that help the African American descendants of enslaved people?
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Neither oppose nor support
- ☐ Somewhat support
- ☐ Strongly support

Spirituality and Ideology

27. Do you attend church, synagogue, or other religious services? No ☐ Yes ☐
    If yes, where do you attend these services? _____

28. When it comes to politics, would you describe yourself as:
- ☐ Very liberal
- ☐ Somewhat liberal
- ☐ Closer to liberals
- ☐ Neither liberal nor conservative
- ☐ Closer to conseervatives
- ☐ Somewhat conservative
- ☐ Very conservative
- ☐ Other

29. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or other?
    - ☐ Strong Democrat
    - ☐ Not so strong Democrats
    - ☐ Independent leaning Democrat
    - ☐ Independent
    - ☐ Independent leaning Republican
    - ☐ Not so strong Republican
    - ☐ Strong Republican
    - ☐ Other

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to an interview with me. I'm looking forward to learning more about your experiences in Evanston as well as your views about the reparations bill that recently passed. For this reason, I will be very interested in your individual experiences. You are the expert here, and I am the learner. The interview will take between 45–60 minutes and responses from the 40 individuals included in this study will be used to help us better understand how individuals are thinking about reparations and how they came to develop their opinions on this topic. If you don't like one of my questions, you do not have to answer. Do you have any questions before we get started? (Answer questions if they come up) Ok, great, let's get started. I will start the recording now.

Note: All subpoints (■) are follow-up questions that can be asked if the primary question does not illicit a rich response. Given the semi-structured nature of the protocol, the interviewer will invoke these questions as they see fit.

Evanston (10 Minutes)

RQ: What is it like to live in Evanston Illinois, the first city in the nation to pass a reparations bill?

- What is it like to live in Evanston?
  - How long have you lived here?
  - What brought you to Evanston originally?
- What do you like most about living in Evanston?
- What are some of the challenges facing your community?
  - **Probe:** Do issues related to race and racism represent significant community challenges?
- In your experience, is Evanston a community where everyone is a full and equal citizen?

Reparations (10 Minutes)

RQ: How are Evanstonians conceptualizing reparations? How are residents reacting to the passage of the reparations bill?

- What does reparations mean to you?
- What do you think the reparations bill does?
- With this definition in mind, do you think Evanston's reparations bill truly qualifies as reparations?
- What did you feel when you found out the reparations bill had passed?
- Do you feel that legislation of this kind is possible in other contexts or is Evanston unique in this regard?
  - **Probe [If yes]:** Where might those places be?

(*continued*)

Political Learning (10 Minutes)
RQ: To what extent are views on reparations shaped by political learning? Has the reparations bill been a source of political learning among residents?

- When did you first become aware of race and racism?
- Where did you develop your ideas about reparations?
  - **Probe:** Did you develop your ideas about reparations prior to the reparations debate in Evanston?
- Has Evanston's reparations bill changed how you think about Evanston's identity or history?

Trauma (10 Minutes)
RQ: How does trauma affect political participation? How do prior experiences with trauma by the state impact local political participation?

- Do you believe the Evanston government has inflicted harm on the Black community in Evanston?
  - **Probe: [If yes]:** In what way?
  - **Probe: [If no]:** In what way?
- Are the effects of government decisions in the past still felt by current Black Evanstonians today?
- What does the term trauma mean to you?
  - **Probe:** How would you define a traumatic experience?
  - **Probe:** Have you experienced trauma on behalf of Evanston's government?
  - **Probe:** Do you think your parents have experienced trauma?

Political Participation (5 Minutes)

- How involved would you say you are in Evanston politics?
- Has your involvement in Evanston politics increased, decreased, or stayed the same, since the emergence of the reparations bill?

Partisanship (10 Minutes)
RQ: To what extent are views on reparations shaped by partisanship? Has the reparations bill challenged or reaffirmed residents' partisan identity?

- I see on your pre-questionnaire that you identify as a [Democrat/Independent/Republican]. To what extent do you feel like your party identity shapes how you've come to think about reparations?
- Do you think your stance on reparations is consistent with other [Democrats/Republicans/Independents] in Evanston?
- Do you think your stance on reparations is consistent with other [Democrats/Republicans/Independents] **nationally?**

That brings us to the end of the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you think I should know in order to understand your experiences in Evanston or how you feel about the reparations bill? Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today.

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