

Call for Papers

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Editors

Black Reparations: Insights from the Social Sciences

Since the failed promise of the provision of 40 acres land grants to the formerly enslaved in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, as restitution for their years of bondage, reparations for black Americans has lived off-stage from the center of American political discourse—until now. In 2019, during the Democratic Party’s primary race for the 2020 Presidential election, candidates actually invoked the term “reparations,” previously *verboten* in credible policy conversations.

Marianne Williamson went first, offering a plan with a \$500 billion expenditure package. She was followed by Julian Castro and Tom Steyer, both of whom endorsed reparations but offered no specifics about the course of action. Other candidates took the safer route of expressing some support for HR 40, legislation to establish a study commission for black reparations that had lain fallow in the U.S. House of Representatives for 30 years since it was introduced by the late Rep. John Conyers (D-Michigan) in 1989.

In 2000, a national survey conducted by University of Chicago scholars [Michael Dawson and Rovana Popoff](#), found that only 4 percent of white Americans supported reparations in the form of monetary payments. [A PRRI survey](#) in 2020 found that percentage was closer to 20. By early April 2021, a [University of Massachusetts at Amherst research team](#) reported that the share had risen to nearly 30 percent. Moreover, a number of cities and two states, California and New York, have activated initiatives to execute or develop what they call “reparations” plans.

We solicit empirically-grounded papers from scholars in all of social science disciplines, including history and public health. We encourage contributions from across the ideological spectrum, especially on such topics as i) eligibility for reparations; ii) long-term impacts of racial gaps on wealth; and iii) potential unintended consequences of a black reparations plan.

The editorial team welcomes proposals that address the following themes:

1. A number of calculations have been developed to estimate the costs of slavery, including a seemingly sensationalist estimate of \$6.2 quadrillion in today’s dollars. But is it appropriate for

the costs of slavery to be paid to living descendants of the enslaved who did not directly experience the institution? What standards and principles should dictate the compensation appropriate for the living descendants of the enslaved?

2. Who among black Americans should be eligible to receive reparations from the United States government? All self-identified blacks? Blacks who are descendants of persons enslaved in the United States? Or should black reparations apply globally to all communities of the African diaspora? Should there be a means test for receipt of reparations among members of the eligible community based upon current levels of income, wealth, or some other standard of social class? In each of these cases, what are the logistical factors involved in making reparations happen?
3. Can black reparations benefit all Americans? What are the implications, if any, for the economy-wide impacts? This contribution might examine whether anti-black racism is a deadweight loss to the economy, as studies like a 2020 Citigroup report suggest when they assert that racism costs America \$16 trillion.
4. What effect might black reparations have on the African American educational and occupational profile?
5. What effect might black reparations have on poverty and economic deprivation in the black community? Should its antipoverty impact be one of the bases for evaluation of black reparations, in the first place?
6. What are the potential non-material, psycho-emotional benefits of a black reparations program for African Americans themselves and all other Americans?
7. What is the capacity of the black reparations' movement to accomplish its aims? What are the conditions under which a black reparations plan might succeed at its projected goals? Which forms of a black reparations plan are most viable politically?
8. What is the significance and potential impact of initiatives to conduct black reparations at the local or personal level—at the state and/or municipal levels or at the individual level? Do these initiatives promote or impede the overall reparations effort?
9. What is the significance and potential impact of enactment of HR 40? How might its enactment promote or impede the black reparations effort?
10. What effects might black reparations have on those whites firmly opposed to black reparations? What types of opposition is likely to emerge from nonwhite communities, including non-white identified immigrants or other ethnic groups? What might be done in anticipation of such a reaction?
11. What is the capacity of the black reparations movement to accomplish its aims? What are the conditions under which a black reparations plan might succeed at its projected goals? Which forms of a black reparations plan might have the most wide-based political support-- from different racial and ethnic groups who may not be direct beneficiaries?
12. What can be learned from historical instances of reparations for collective victimization in the United States and/or abroad that can inform the design of a suitable black reparations plan in the United States?
13. What were the effects of 19th and 20th century government policies on the racial wealth gap? To what extent will a black-reparations plan permanently reduce the black-white wealth gap?
14. What is the relationship between black reparations and disparate health outcomes, including mental health?

The editors' introductory essay will chart the history of the reparations movement in the United States, including a critical analysis of the state of the movement in the present moment. The importance of white supremacy and the legacy of the Pro-Confederate Lost Cause Ideology as key factors shaping opposition

to reparations are central to this conversation. We will also examine the divide between Pan Africanist and black nationalist perspectives of reparations advocates laying the foundation for this important journal issue. The editors also will provide synopses and critical commentary on each of the papers included in the volume, as well as commentary on other salient issues not treated by the contributors.

Anticipated Timeline

Prospective contributors should submit a CV and an abstract (up to two pages in length, single or double spaced) of their study along with up to two pages of supporting material (e.g., tables, figures, pictures, references that don't fit on the proposal pages, etc.) no later than 5 PM EST on July 15, 2022 to:

<https://rsf.fluxx.io>

NOTE that if you wish to submit an abstract and do not yet have an account with us, it can take up to 48 hours to get credentials, so please start your application at least two days before the deadline. All submissions must be original work that has not been previously published in part or in full. Only abstracts submitted to <https://rsf.fluxx.io> will be considered. Each paper will receive a \$1,000 honorarium when the issue is published. All questions regarding this issue should be directed to Suzanne Nichols, Director of Publications, at journal@rsage.org and **not** to the email addresses of the editors of the issue.

A conference will take place at the Russell Sage Foundation in New York City on **April 21, 2023** (with a group dinner the night before). The selected contributors will gather for a one-day workshop to present draft papers (due a month prior to the conference **on 3/24/23**) and receive feedback from the other contributors and editors. Travel costs, food, and lodging for one author per paper will be covered by the foundation. Papers will be circulated before the conference. After the conference, the authors will submit their revised drafts by 7/14/23. The papers will then be sent out to three additional scholars for formal peer review. Having received feedback from reviewers and the RSF board, authors will revise their papers by 10/4/23. The full and final issue will be published in the June of 2024. Papers will be published open access on the RSF website as well as in several digital repositories, including JSTOR and UPCC/Muse.