Reparations Explained Summary*

Informational Resources Included in this Summary. Many of the statements in this summary are direct quotes from the following sources and should be cited accordingly.

- Darity and Mullen. (2020). From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the 21st Century. Chapel Hill. North Carolina Press
- *From Here to Equality' Author Makes A Case, And A Plan, For Reparations*, June 17, 2020. NPR https://www.npr.org/2020/06/17/879041052/william-darity-jr-discusses-reparations-racial-equality-in-his-new-book).
- *Why We Need Reparations for Black Americans* by Rashawn Ray and Andre Perry. April 2020. Brookings Institute. Policy 2020 file:///C:/Users/Mary%20Secret/Documents/RACE%20ACTIVITY/reparations/Brookings%20Institute%20brief%20on%20reparations.pdf.
- *What is Owed* by Nikole Hannah-Jones. NY Times Magazine June 30, 2020 https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/24/magazine/reparations-slavery.html.

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FROM HERE TO EQUALITY.

Introductions Chapter

Reparations are a program of acknowledgement, redress, and closure (ARC) for a grievous injustice.

- Acknowledgement involves recognition and admission of the wrong by the perpetrators or beneficiaries of the injustice. For African Americans this is a forma apology and a committed for redress on the part of the American people as a whole – a national act of declaration that a wrong has been committed and a recognition of such from those who benefitted from the injustices
- Redress (Restitution is considered the appropriate form of redress)
    - Restitution restores survivors to the condition before the injustice. Because this is impossible at this point in time, restitution moves the descendants toward a more equitable position equal to the status they would have been able to achieve if the injustice had not occurred.
    - Restitution for African Americans would eliminate racial disparities in wealth income education health sentencing and incarcerations, political participation, and subsequent opportunities to engage in American political and social life.
- Closure involves mutual reconciliation between African Americans and the beneficiaries of slavery, legal segregation, and ongoing discrimination toward blacks.
- The objective of reparations is to "redress the socioeconomic inequalities associated with race" (P.240).

Chapters 1 goes into great detail about the **history** of the black reparations movement

- Rosewood (Tulsa) reparations -- $150,00 to each person in the community who could document their residence in the community in 1923 and a total of $500, 000 for descendants

- Pigford vs Glickman class action lawsuit (1997) of black farmers against US Department of Agriculture; awarded $1.25 billion; in 2003 13,000 affected farmers were approved to receive cash or credit up to $50,000
- Brown vs Board of Education (Virginia Prince Edward County) Education Scholarship Fund..
- Slavery/Jim Crow apologies by several state legislatures 2007 - 2008
- Us House of Representatives and Senate formal apology June 2009
- H.R. 40 Commission to study reparations

Chapter 2 offers an analysis of black vs white **comparison of wealth accumulation**

- Wealth is the best single indicator of the cumulative impact of white racism over time
- Blacks cannot close the racial wealth gap by independent or autonomous action
- Intergenerational transmission and inheritances are the primary sources for sustained wealth building in this country.

Chapters 3 – 11 offer the **arguments for reparations** that have been summarized by Darity interviews and others (see below):

- Detailed accounting of beneficiaries of slavery and Jim Crow that go beyond just the southern plantations and describes how white individuals and all parts of the American economy in all geographic areas benefited from 'day 1',
- detailed history of slavery, Civil War, Jim Crow, including the missed opportunities through the years to make reparations and correct the injustices
- 53,000 blacks were murdered by whites from 1864 to 1895 alone to intimidate and prevent blacks from rights to vote, to be educated, to own land and other economic opportunities, etc
- The Black Codes controlled every aspect of black life to stop blacks from gaining any advantage or equality "in the eyes of many whites, advantages of blacks meant a loss of advantage for whites"
- 'dismemory' .. organized and systematic efforts to manipulate and distort nation's history, i.e. the Lost Cause, promotion of flawed science and beliefs about inferiority of black people
- Reparations have been paid to other survivor groups (i.e. Japanese Americans interred during WWII; holocaust victims

Chapter 12: **Critiques of Reparations and Responses**

- *Slavery was too long ago*
    - Many black Americans are only three generations removed from slavery
    - Slavery's aftermath is responsible for significant and injurious long-term repercussions that contribute to racial inequality, producing even more devasting and direct effects on the status of black people today
    - Legal segregation did not end until 50 years ago; baby boomers are the living victims of Jim Crow
    - The failure to pay a debt in a timely fashion does not extinguish the debt
- *Black reparations would create more animosity between blacks and white*
    - The discussion about and the advocacy for reparations, at the congressional level, will help white Americans come to terms with its false beliefs about 'black behavior', dismiss the sanitized version of the nation's history, and accept responsibility for the damages inflicted on blacks.
- *Reparations should come from African countries that sold Africans into slavery*
    - It was the demand for enslaved labor that generated the African slave trade; Africans faced with hard choice between sell or be sold

    - Africa did not have anything to do with the severe and damaging impact of Jim Crow on black economic and other well-being
- *Groups who bear no responsibility for slavery will be required to foot the bill, especially immigrant groups who were not here during the slavery period*
    - Voluntary immigrants chose to migrate to a country with this history of slavery; what appeals to many immigrants is the degree of economic development in this country that was created by the exploitation of black labor during and after slavery
    - Immigrants have benefitted from Jim Crow
    - Reparations is not individual or social group specific; it is a nation debt that recognizes the need for national redemption. All members of this nation have an obligation to contribute to the payment of the national debt.
- *White America paid the debt of slavery by the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation*
    - The dissolution of an unjust system does not account for the harms done by the injustice; the debt incurred by years of unremunerated labor, economic subjugation and deprivation of rights is not wiped out by ending the injustice
    - A war did not need to be fought to eliminate slavery; the south could have agreed to ending slavery but chose not to do so, even with the promise of the compensated payment (i.e. the government would pay slave holders for the value of the slaves.. the government would 'buy' the freedom slaves)
    - Blacks also suffered during the War.. 10% of Union soldiers were black, 1/3 of them dying
- *Blacks have received reparations in the form of welfare money and other social programs*
    - Initial social safety net programs (Social Security, GI Bill, Housing Aid) were structured to **exclude** blacks from these benefits, adding further economic disadvantage
    - Many programs are 'means tested'.. only families or individuals living in poverty are eligible; these programs are not intended to and do not compensate blacks for prior injustices
- *Blacks have already received reparations from Affirmative Action*
    - Affirmative action is an anti-discriminatory measure, opens the door for qualified applicants but does not guarantee equal treatment
    - Stopping one type of unjust practice does not compensate for the injustice
- *Why should Blacks receive reparations when other groups also have claims*
    - Reparations for blacks does not deny the right of other groups to pursue justice
    - Why should blacks have to wait for their debt to be paid until other groups exercise their claims
- *Other reparations for Japanese Americans and Holocaust victims were made to direct victims and/or immediate families*
    - Any society can delay the provision of reparations until all direct victims have died; delay does not forgive the debt
    - The shackles of history are long-standing and must be removed
    - German government made reparations to the state of Israel
    - US government made payments to holocaust victims despite the fact that the US was not the perpetrator of the holocaust
- *Reparations demean the memory of victims who cannot speak for themselves*
    - Victims of Jim Crow and continued discrimination still speak for themselves
    - Many blacks were involved in the formulation of Sherman's Special Field Orders No. 15 in 865 to provide 40 acres along the Southern cost to each ex-slave family (the order was overturned by President Andrew Johnson)
    - Several freedman conventions immediately after the Civil War where blacks asked for various types of restitution… these requests were never fulfilled

- *Dwelling on slavery and pursuing reparations provides crippling psychology of victimization among blacks*
    - Racism, not reparations, cripples Black Americans
    - The denial of wealth is not a psychological phenomenon
    - Victims of trauma have healthier outcomes when their trauma is acknowledged
- *Today's blacks are better off having enslaved ancestors than being in Africa*
    - Overlooks the intergenerational harms due to slavery and Jim Crow
    - Ancestors did not come to US by choice
    - Avoids the real issue that black citizens of today experience unequal and inequitable lives vis a vis white citizen
- *Black reparations ignores the plight of poor white*
    - Critical differences between white and black poverty
    - Lower income whites are also beneficiaries of racial privilege
    - Median net worth of whites in bottom 20 percent of national income is higher than median new work of all black Americans

Chapter 13: Program for Black Reparations

- The Federal Government bears responsibility for sanctioning, maintaining, and enabling slavery, legal segregation and continued racial inequality
    - Lawsuits brought against corporations, colleges, etc are unlikely to succeed because slavery was legal at the time they engaged in the practice
    - Lawsuits against the US government in post-Civil Rights would need to prove that agencies knowingly and intentionally did not enforce the law
    - Courts do not have the capacity to enforce legal mandates
- Criteria for eligibility
    - One ancestor who was enslaved
    - Self-identified as 'black' 12 years prior to enactment of the reparations law
- How much should be paid—
    - many possible calculations
        - Slave exploitation: value of what was produced by slave labor minus slave maintenance; relies on inaccurate estimate of market wage during time of slavery; does not account for accurate time periods of economic exploitation
        - As per confederate estimates, value of slaves in the south in 1860 was 4 billion dollars compounded to 2019 = $2 trillion to $42.2. trillion (per 4, and 6% interest); figuring 40 million black Americans in the US today, per capita amounts would be from $50,000, or $232,500, or 1,050,000 depending on interest rate calculation (5, 5, or 6)
        - Based on land calculation as promised 40 acres at 2019 rates = 671 billion, 2.9 trillion, 12.6 trillion) = average $392,500 per person
        - Based on wealth gap, total reparations bill would be $ 7.95 trillion translates to $240,000 per black individual for shortfall between white and black wealth
    - Darity's proposal to mobilize national resources to eradicate the racial wealth gap = "portfolio of reparations"
        - Based on wealth gap, on ongoing shortfalls in wealth for blacks vis a vis whites
        - Direct payment to individuals, possibly allocated over a period of time
        - Could also take the form of an establishment of a trust fund for eligible blacks to apply for grants for various asset-building projects, incuding home ownership,

education, start-up funds for self-employment, or vouchers for purchase of financial assets
    - Establish a reparations supervisory board elected by those eligible to receive reparations
    - Establish a National Reparations Board for day to day management to work closely with GAO.

- Where would the money come from
    - Total national income
    - Reparations superfund which includes government funding plus contributions made by organizations and corporations that benefitted from exploitation of black labor
    - Federal Reserve mandate

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***From Here to Equality' Author Makes A Case, And A Plan, For Reparations*, June 17, 2020. NPR**

- While support for education and entrepreneurial activity should be part of any reparations plan, **"the preponderance" of funds must go to individual recipients**. And they must go in such a way that we in fact eliminate the racial wealth gap". That's the big objective of the reparations project.
- The starting point is the failure to provide the formerly enslaved with the 40-acre land grants that they were promised. At the same time, substantial allocations of land were being made to white Americans.

  And then subsequently, over the course of the next 80 years or so, there was a series of white massacres that took place across the United States, where black communities that had begun to develop some degree of prosperity and independence were literally destroyed.

  And the black codes created restrictions on the authority that individual black folks had over their family life. But it also created restrictions on their employment opportunities and their capacity to exercise agency over the types of jobs that they took.

And then in the 20th century, there was a sustained pattern of discrimination in access to home ownership on the part of blacks, starting with the existence of restrictive covenants, following through with redlining and the accompanying predatory lending practices that were associated with obtaining home mortgages. So, we have a set of public policies that lie at the heart of the creation of this gaping wealth gap.

- **And this means, in turn, that we need new public policy to reverse those conditions**.
- We propose that there are **two criteria for eligibility**. The first is what we refer to as a lineage standard. An individual would have to demonstrate that they have at least one ancestor who was enslaved in the United States. And then the second is an identity standard. An individual would have to demonstrate that for at least 12 years before the enactment of a reparations program, the individual would've had to have self-identified as black, Negro or African American.

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***Why We Need Reparations for Black Americans* by Rashawn Ray and Andre Perry. April 2020. Brookings Institute. Policy 2020**

Given the lingering legacy of slavery on the racial wealth gap, the monetary value we know that was placed on enslaved Blacks, the fact that other groups have received reparations, and the fact that Blacks were originally awarded reparations only to have them rescinded provide overwhelming evidence that it is time to pay reparations to the descendants of enslaved Blacks.

Making the American Dream an equitable reality demands the same U.S. government that denied wealth to Blacks restore that deferred wealth through reparations to their descendants in the form of individual cash payments in the amount that will close the Black-white racial wealth divide.

Reparations—a system of redress for egregious injustices—

- reparations should come in the form of wealth-building opportunities that address racial disparities in education, housing, and business ownership.
- the racial wealth gap did not result from a lack of labor. Rather, it came from a lack of financial capital
- Slavery, Jim Crow segregation, anti-Black practices like redlining, and other discriminatory public policies in criminal justice and education have robbed Black Americans of the opportunities to build wealth (defined as assets minus debt) afforded to their white peers.

This package should include individual and collective public benefits that simultaneously builds wealth and eliminates debt among Black citizens.

- Provides example of Maryland Harriet Tubman Community Reinvestment Act –

Establishing the Maryland Reparations Commission; providing for the composition, staffing, chair and vice chair, and terms of the members of the Commission; providing that the purpose of the Commission is to develop and administer a program for the provision of compensatory benefits to the descendants of individuals enslaved in the State; providing that any individual whose ancestors were enslaved in the State is eligible to receive benefits administered by the Commission; etc.

Any applicant determined by the commission to be descended from individuals enslaved in the State must be paid a cash sum determined by the commission. In calculating the sum, the commission must consider the length and conditions of the enslavement of the individual(s) from whom the applicant is descended. The commission must also reimburse an eligible applicant for any tuition payment the applicant makes to any institution of higher education in the State.

1. Individual payments for descendants of enslaved Black Americans
2. College tuition to 4-year or 2-year colleges and universities for descendants of enslaved Black Americans Universities including Georgetown and Princeton are aiming to atone for the fact that the sale of slaves helped to fortify their university endowments and establish them as elite institutions of higher education on a global scale. Descendants of the slaves sold by Georgetown and Princeton are now entitled to full rights and benefits bestowed by those universities to obtain degrees across the higher education pipeline. Other universities, along with the federal government, should follow suit.
3. Student loan forgiveness for descendants of enslaved Black Americans
4. Down payment grants and housing revitalization grants for descendants of enslaved Black Americans
5. Business grants for business starting up, business expansion to hire more employees, or purchasing property for descendants of enslaved Black Americans

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What is Owed **by Nikole Hannah-Jones. NY Times Magazine June 30, 2020 According to Nicole Hannah-Jones (cite article)**

- The prosperity of this country is inextricably linked with the forced labor of the ancestors of 40 million black Americans just as it is linked to the stolen land of the country's indigenous people.
- Slavery and the 100-year period of racial apartheid and racial terrorism known as Jim Crow were, above all else, systems of economic exploitation.
- Wealth, not income, is the means to security in America. Wealth — assets and investments minus debt — is what enables you to buy homes in safer neighborhoods with better amenities and better-funded schools. It is what enables you to send your children to college without saddling them with tens of thousands of dollars of debt and what provides you money to put a down payment on a house. It is what prevents family emergencies or unexpected job losses from turning into catastrophes that leave you homeless and destitute. It is what ensures what every parent wants — that your children will have fewer struggles than you did. Wealth is security and peace of mind. It's not incidental that wealthier people are healthier and live longer. Wealth is, as a recent Yale study states, "the most consequential index of economic well-being" for most Americans. But wealth is not something people create solely by themselves; it is accumulated across generations.

- it is white Americans' centuries-long economic head start that most effectively maintains racial caste today.

- You do not have to have laws forcing segregated housing and schools if white Americans, using their generational wealth and higher incomes, can simply buy their way into expensive enclaves with exclusive public schools that are out of the price range of most black Americans.

- Negro poverty is not white poverty. … These differences are not racial differences. They are solely and simply the consequence of ancient brutality, past injustice and present prejudice. They are anguishing to observe. For the Negro they are a constant reminder of oppression. For the white they are a constant reminder of guilt. But they must be faced, and they must be dealt with, and they must be overcome; if we are ever to reach the time when the only difference between Negroes and whites is the color of their skin."

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- To summarize, none of the actions we are told black people must take if they want to “lift themselves” out of poverty and gain financial stability — not marrying, not getting educated, not saving more, not owning a home — can mitigate 400 years of racialized plundering. Wealth begets wealth, and white Americans have had centuries of government assistance to accumulate wealth, while the government has for the vast history of this country worked against black Americans doing the same.

- Reparations are not about punishing white Americans, and white Americans are not the ones who would pay for them. It does not matter if your ancestors engaged in slavery or if you just immigrated here two weeks ago. Reparations are a societal obligation in a nation where our Constitution sanctioned slavery, Congress passed laws protecting it and our federal government initiated, condoned and practiced legal racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans until half a century ago. And so it is the federal government that pays.

- The real challenge is convincing enough Americans that the centuries-long forced economic disadvantage of black Americans should be remedied, that restitution is owed to people who have never had an equal chance to take advantage of the bounty they played such a significant part in creating.

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* Summary compiled by Mary Secret for CTTT Reparations Circle
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