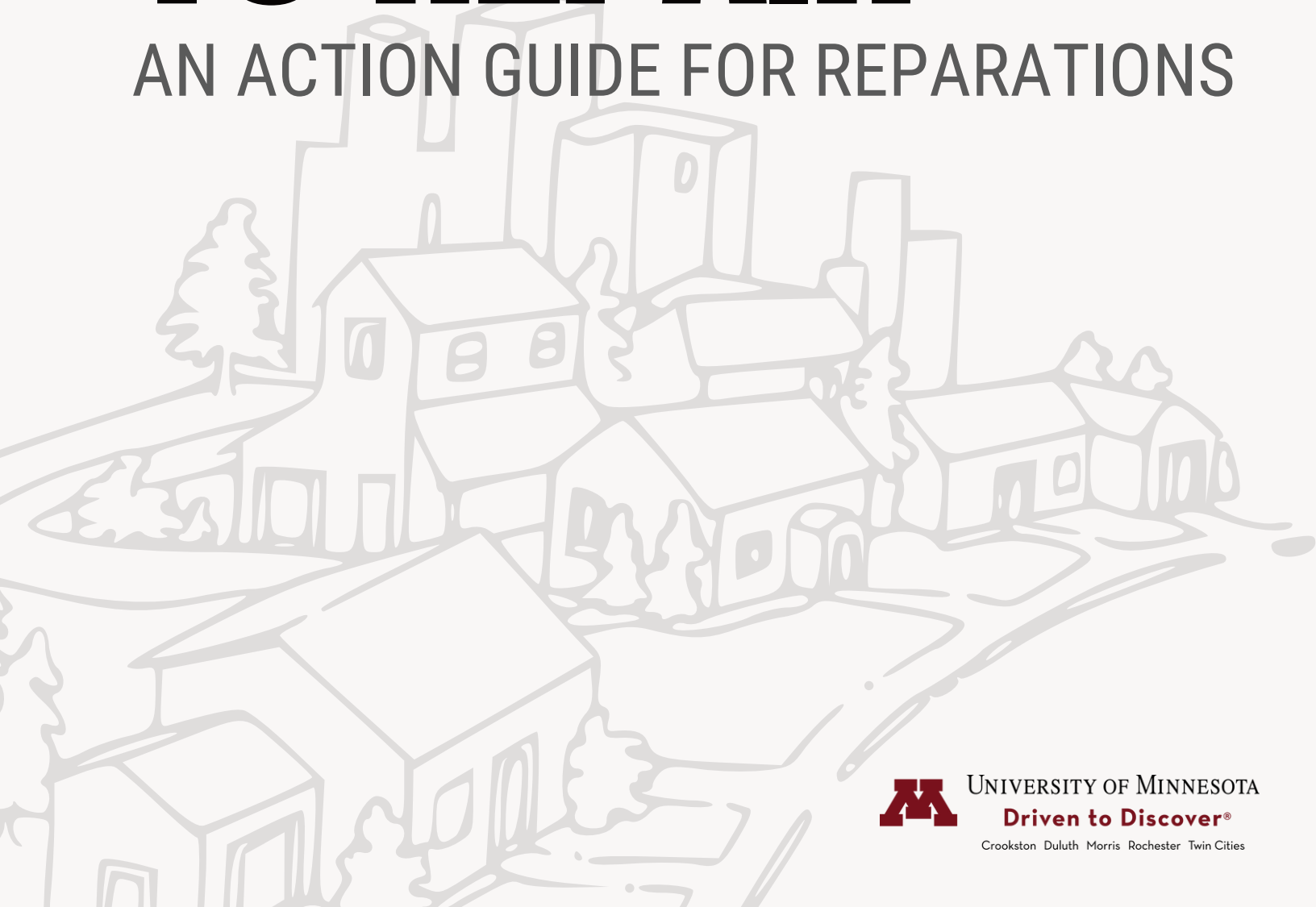


FROM RECOGNITION TO REPAIR

AN ACTION GUIDE FOR REPARATIONS



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to Discover®

Crookston Duluth Morris Rochester Twin Cities

ABOUT MAPPING PREJUDICE

Mapping Prejudice identifies and maps racial covenants, clauses that were inserted into property deeds to keep people who were not White from buying or occupying homes.

From our base in the University of Minnesota Libraries, our interdisciplinary team collaborates with community members to expose the history of structural racism and support the work of reparations.

Learn more at our website: mappingprejudice.umn.edu

This guide was made in collaboration with graduate students from the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Reparations Now | 1

What are Reparations? | 2

History of Harm & Reparations | 3-4

Take Action | 6

Appendix A: Modern Reparative Policies in the U.S. | 10

Appendix B: What's Happening Locally? | 13

Appendix C: Template Letters | 15

REPARATIONS NOW



An America that looks away is ignoring not just the sins of the past but the sins of the present and certain sins of the future. -- Ta-Nehisi Coates



Our nation uniquely promises equality of citizenship in our Constitution. It is with this spirit – and a moral obligation to right past wrongs – that we, as citizens, should demand justice for all.

Reparations will begin a process of healing from a history of harm caused by the enslavement, segregation, and discrimination of Black Americans.

This legacy of injustice has left Black descendants of slaves worse off than they would have been had their ancestors not been enslaved and denied the rights of citizenship after emancipation.

As a society we have never repaired these harms of our past. Our inaction has compounded racial inequities over time, and the cumulative effect of exclusion and extraction of wealth in Black communities endures.

Today, wealth gaps include economic, educational, and environmental disparities between our Black and White population.¹

Reparations made today would provide Black communities with a share of the national wealth they would have gained if they had equal citizenship and opportunity throughout our nation’s history. Reparations will repair and close gaps in racial inequalities.

If you support racial equality, support the work of reparations.

Through this guide, we hope you will learn about the history of harms against Black Americans and begin to envision what reparations and reparative policies could look like.

Let’s get started!

WHITE FAMILIES HOLD
10 TIMES
MORE WEALTH
THAN BLACK FAMILIES²

THE GAP IN
HOMEOWNERSHIP
RATES IS HIGHER
NOW THAN IN 1960.³

72%
OF WHITE PEOPLE OWN HOMES

42%
OF BLACK PEOPLE OWN HOMES

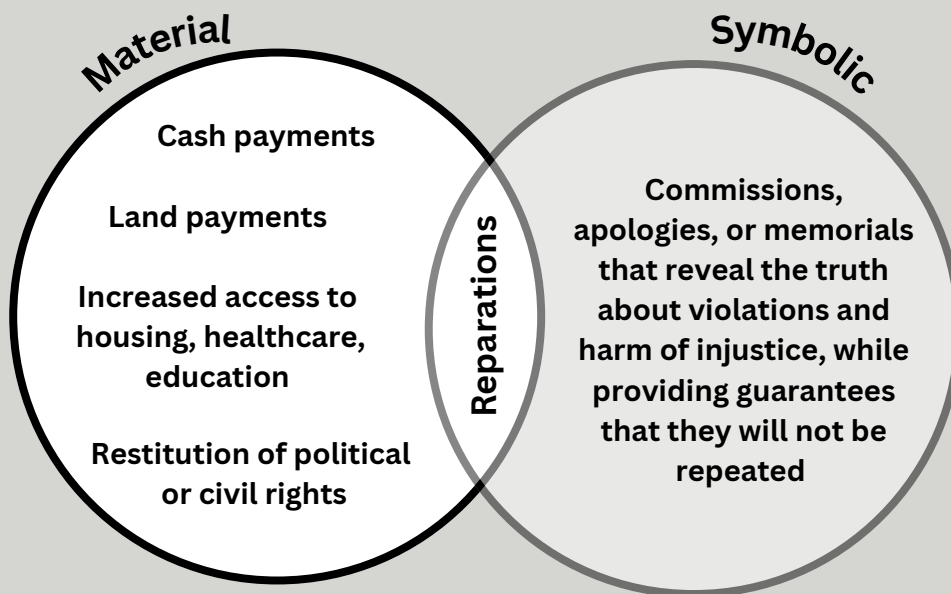
A TYPICAL WHITE
HOME IS WORTH
\$230,000
A TYPICAL BLACK
HOME IS WORTH
\$150,000⁴

WHAT ARE REPARATIONS?

Reparations offer remedy and repair to victims for past harms.

There are legal definitions of reparations defined by the United Nations and international law, and there are philosophical concepts of distributive justice for injustices of society. Both offer a framework for us to think about reparations as policy in America.

For the purpose of this guide, we will focus on the concept of reparative justice (reparations), that make amends for past wrongs. The repair can be **material** or **symbolic**,⁵ but the most effective reparations policy would have elements of both.



ARC Model

Acknowledgement

Redress

Closure

United Nations Conceptualization

Restitution

Compensation

Rehabilitation

Satisfaction

Guarantees of non-repetition

Reparations are...

- Best defined by those harmed
- Targeted compensation to a specific individual or group (including descendants) that has been unjustly harmed
- Apologies, memorials or commemorations for acknowledgment of the injustice
- Repairing the systems and/or stopping the actions that have caused the injustice

Reparations aren't...

- Buying from Black-owned businesses
- Solely donating to Black-led organizations or institutions
- Local reparative or compensation programs
- Universal programs designed to reduce wealth disparities like baby bonds or Universal Basic Income

However, these programs are valuable because they provide material and financial support.

What do reparations hope to accomplish?

Reparations paid today would be used to eliminate the racial wealth gap. Material reparations would provide the Black descendants of slaves to share in the national wealth and income they would have had if their ancestors were not enslaved and enjoyed all the rights of citizenship.⁶

Who would pay?

Reparations are societal debts that are paid by the United States federal government whose policies enshrined slavery, segregation and discrimination into law. The federal government is culpable for reparations, has the resources for payment and ability for systemic change.⁷

What about local or state efforts to enact "reparations"?

Reparative and compensation programs are policies initiated by local or state governments meant to address racial disparities, but they ARE NOT reparations proper. They are still an important course of action we can and should take to address harms perpetrated by these governments and provide material support to those affected.

HISTORY OF HARM

From America's colonial beginnings to the present moment, this nation has perpetuated significant harms against people of color, including the genocide of Indigenous Americans and the enslavement of Africans.

After Emancipation, federal, state and local discriminatory policies sought to deny equal opportunity for Black Americans in employment, education, housing and criminal justice. These explicitly racist laws and guidelines further blocked Black people from attaining and holding wealth for generations but also deprived them of the basic tenets of citizenship.

Later, throughout the 20th century, all levels of government enacted and enforced anti-Black legislation that directly resulted in restricting economic and social mobility. Government programs designed to uplift and financially stabilize citizens consistently excluded Black people. Property wealth within the Black community was taken, sometimes through legal schemes, sometimes violently.

While many of these policies have formally ended, we have only included starting dates because their legacies of injustice live on. These harmful policies – layered on the foundation of enslavement – worked together to marginalize, control and extract wealth from Black people. Because we, as a nation, have never repaired these injustices, their detrimental effects have been replicated and compounded over time.

Mass incarceration
Homeownership gaps
Income inequality

PRESENT

Police violence
Housing Discrimination
Wealth inequality

MASS INCARCERATION (1980s)

More than 2 million Black Americans are currently under control of the criminal justice system.⁸ Incarceration concentrated in communities of color breaks up families, weakens communities, and devastates economic power.⁹ Mass imprisonment in America has had little effect on crime.¹⁰

PREDATORY LENDING (1968)

Predatory loans carry high interest rates, fees and unreasonable payment requirements, and they often target Black people and other minorities who do not qualify for traditional loans. Predatory lending led to the 2008 financial crisis, resulting in the foreclosure and loss of homes for millions of borrowers.¹¹

URBAN RENEWAL (1949)

After "white flight" to the suburbs, disinvested urban areas experienced property blight and increased poverty. Through Urban Renewal, federal policymakers sought to draw the White middle class back to the urban core with reinvestment in housing and private development. Swaths of homes and neighborhoods were razed for new development.

CONTRACT DEEDS FOR HOUSING (1950s)

After WWII, White land speculators took advantage of the nation's housing boom by buying houses and then "reselling" them to Black residents at wildly marked-up rates. But these Black residents did not actually own the deed to their homes and gained no equity through their payments. This scheme cheated thousands of people out of millions of dollars in wealth gained through home equity.¹²

HIGHWAY POLICY (1950s)

In the 1950s and '60s, federal highway construction across the country displaced millions of people and destroyed many Black neighborhoods and businesses. In several cities, planners used highway construction as a tool to segregate, split and destroy vibrant Black neighborhoods.¹³

USDA & BLACK FARMERS (1930s)

Many Black farmers lost their land through intimidation and legal schemes. By the 1950s, the United States Department of Agriculture weaponized its loan program against Black farmers, refusing loans and enacting policies to dispossess them from their land. From 1920-75, the number of Black-owned farms dropped 95%.¹⁴ Today, Black people represent 1% of rural landowners.¹⁵

FHA MORTGAGE LOANS (1934)

From 1934-1962, 98% of Federal Housing Authority home loans went to White homebuyers in America.¹⁶ To get the best rating for FHA mortgages, homes were required to have racial covenants.¹⁷

G.I. BILL (1940s)

The U.S. enacted a G.I. Bill to fund college education, housing and unemployment insurance for WWII veterans. The federal program was enforced by state and local authorities, who consistently denied Black veterans their rightful benefits to maintain a racially unequal social and economic system.

SOCIAL SECURITY (1930s)

The Social Security Act provides economic social insurance through continuing income for retired citizens over 65. However, domestic workers and farm laborers are excluded from receiving benefits. The omission of these professions affects 60% of the Black workforce across the country and 75% of the southern workforce.¹⁸

RACIAL COVENANTS (1900s)

Beginning at the turn of the century, racial covenants became an effective practice to maintain racial housing segregation throughout the country. These private agreements were written into property deeds to prohibit the home or land from being sold to Black people and other minorities.

REDLINING (1930s)

The Federal Housing Administration and real estate industry drew maps that graded areas based on their potential risk in mortgage lending. Black and racially changing neighborhoods were ranked as the highest risk and outlined in red. By using these maps, the FHA made it clear where and to whom they were willing to make home loans.

BLACK CODES (1865)

After the Civil War, Southern states of the former Confederacy enacted a series of laws called "Black Codes" to severely restrict newly freed Black Americans' freedom of movement, employment and property ownership, while criminalizing unemployment.

WHITECAPPING (1865)

From Emancipation into the 20th century, the violent removal of Black residents from their farmland and homes by armed, local Whites — known as whitecapping — was widespread and resulted in the loss of untold intergenerational wealth. Examples include race massacres in Rosewood, Florida, and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

JIM CROW ERA (1870s)

Jim Crow was a system of laws that governed segregation of the races throughout the country. It was underscored by the belief of White superiority and Black second-class citizenship.

SLAVERY (1619-1865)

In 1619, the first enslaved Africans were brought to America's shores. Over the next 250 years, nearly 10 million men, women and children were held captive and forced into labor.¹⁹ After the Civil War ended in 1865, 4 million 'freedmen' were granted citizenship and equal rights with the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution.

PAST ATTEMPTS & EXAMPLES OF REPARATIONS

The call for reparations is not new, nor is it unprecedented. Despite centuries of demands and organizing, the United States government has never paid enslaved people or their descendants for their labor. In several cases in the 20th century, Americans received apologies and compensation for past injustices. These case studies in reparative policy have ranged from the federal and state to municipal levels in offering redress.

Recently, there have been local and state initiatives to enact reparations and reparative housing policies too. You can learn more about these efforts in Appendix A.



Reparations for Slavery – The first attempt at reparations policy was proposed by Black abolitionists and ministers and issued by General William T. Sherman in January 1865.²⁰ The order, approved by President Lincoln, took 400,000 acres of confiscated Confederate land and redistributed it in 40 acre parcels to 40,000 newly freed Black slaves and war refugees. Over objections within his administration, President Johnson rescinded the program in the fall of 1865 and returned the land to the former Confederates. By some estimates, the value of that land would be worth \$640 billion today.²¹



Indian Claims Commission – After World War II, Congress enacted the Indian Claims Commission compensating federally recognized tribes for land taken by the United States. The Commission did not allow tribes to control the money that was paid to them and placed the sums in trust accounts. For tribal nations, the results of this reparative policy were very disappointing and when the Commission ended in 1978, only \$1.3 billion dollars had been paid (less than \$1,000 to each Native person).²²



Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act – In 1948, Congress passed the Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act, which provided compensation for lost and stolen property during Japanese American internment amid World War II. Forty years later, Congress voted to apologize for Japanese internment and pay for lost civil rights and freedom. Each survivor was awarded \$20,000.²³



Rosewood, Florida – In 1994, Florida became the first state to pass a reparations law. It acknowledged that they failed to stop a racist White mob from destroying the Black town of Rosewood in 1923. At least six residents died. Survivors received \$3,333.²⁴

TAKE ACTION

SUPPORT REPARATIONS!

No one person can do everything. Here are a few ways to support federal reparations and local reparative programs. Find your way to contribute!

DONATE YOUR TIME & MONEY

One of the most immediate ways you can support reparative efforts is by supporting organizations that are advocating for reparations or working to correct housing injustices. You can find a list of local organizations in Appendix B. Seek out and support these organizations through monetary donations, volunteering your own time, becoming a member, or sharing their work with others to raise awareness.

EXPLORE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD'S HISTORY

Every community has its own unique racial history. This must be understood before local reparations can take place.²⁵ It's important to understand what has happened in a community's past, including who has moved in and out of the neighborhood or city and why, as well as the prevalence of racial covenants and discriminatory laws or practices that have taken place. Talk to your neighbors to understand their own experiences and perceptions of the neighborhood. Data, historical archives and more can be located at local libraries, municipal and county clerk or courts, and public health and housing departments.

LEARN MORE ABOUT REPARATIONS

Many organizations -- Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), NAACP, National African-American Reparations Commission (NAARC), National Coalition of Blacks for Reparation in America (N'COBRA), Coming to the Table (CTTT), W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT), National Urban League, and Reparations 4 Slavery (R4S) -- are actively engaged in reparations work. Many of them have also put together guidebooks and toolkits for racial healing and reparation efforts. Check them out!

ORGANIZE FOR REPARATIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

In neighborhoods where racial covenants, redlining, and other forms of housing injustice have taken place, it is important to organize with community members. Together, communities are able to form a group effort to renounce these practices and correct their local history of injustice. These coalitions can work together to appeal to local governments, organize local events to celebrate black cultures, and structure discussion opportunities to help educate other neighbors.

But first, you must develop community relationships and create space for healing.

DEVELOP COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

It's essential to develop relationships in your community – even with people who have differing opinions and perspectives – to accomplish reparative action.²⁶ Community building can be harbored by hosting or attending community events that connect people. This often entails cross-sectional engagement, such as connecting the elderly with the youth or the affluent with the less-affluent. Generating these relationships amongst those who would not otherwise connect is an essential step before the community is able to respectfully commit to community discussions and healing practices

CREATE SPACE FOR HEALING

In order to move forward from racist histories towards a just and equitable future, major efforts in healing these damages must take place.²⁷ As seen throughout communities, racial injustices leave deep wounds that cannot truly heal if they are not fully addressed. Healing needs to be sought to overcome the grief, trauma, and disparities that have come as a result of housing injustice.

- Healing sessions bring together community members to share and support one another through their experiences.
- Remembrance and healing ceremonies can provide the opportunity to gather and mourn the pain of a racial history and provide the space to honor those who have been marginalized as a result.



HOST A DISCUSSION GROUP WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY & NEIGHBORS

A key role in repairing housing injustice is educating and engaging with those in the neighborhoods where these practices have manifested. Throughout these discussions, it is important to develop a code of conduct and a standard of respect so that all members feel they have been heard. Below are some discussion activities we suggest for housing injustice.

ACTIVITY 1

Four Corners Exercise from M4BL on pg. 44²⁸

Participants will share their opinions on several questions. They will use phrases like “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” to respond to the following statements:

- Reparations is making people who had nothing to do with slavery pay for something that happened centuries ago.
- Reparations can be achieved through “investment in disadvantaged communities” or “free education and health care for all.”
- Reparations should only be given for slavery.
- An apology from the United States to Black people would satisfy our demand for reparations.

ACTIVITY 2

Community Discussion Questions from TRHT on pg. 23²⁹

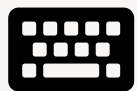
- What are the current realities of your community and how did you get here?
- What are the key leverage points for change in your community?
- Who are the key stakeholders and beneficiaries not at the table?
- What specific actions can be taken to achieve your vision of a community without racism?
- What is the vision of your community after racial hierarchy is jettisoned?

ADVOCATE FOR LOCAL, STATE & FEDERAL REPARATIVE POLICIES

Since 1989, legislation has been introduced in Congress to form a reparations commission to study the impacts of slavery and racist policies and generate reparations proposals. In 2021, for the first time, the bill passed in committee.

City officials are playing an increasingly large role in advancing racial and economic justice, too. Mayors Organized for Reparations and Equity (MORE) is a coalition of U.S. mayors who believe local governments should pave the way for racial and economic justice.³⁰ Councils can also issue apologies to marginalized groups and implement committees to examine the city's role in housing disparities, engage with the community, and identify restorative solutions.

Connect with your representatives to encourage them to pursue reparations and reparative policies!



WRITE AN EMAIL OR LETTER TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

Letter-writing is one of the most effective and direct ways to contact your elected officials. Find your elected officials here: [usa.gov/elected-officials](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials). Below are tips from The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Working America on how to construct your letter. Check out Appendix C for a template and a sample letter to the City of Minneapolis.

- **Keep it brief** – Letters should be limited to one issue and one page. Don't exceed more than three points.³¹ A concise letter is more likely to be read by an aide and forwarded to the official.³²
- **Get personal** – Identify yourself as the official's constituent and tell them why this issue matters to you and your community, including any personal stories about how it has affected you or those around you.³³ Personal narratives have been proven to have some of the largest persuasive power when it comes to influencing policy.³⁴
- **Be specific** – Ask your elected official to take concrete action on the issue you have presented.³⁵ If there is a specific piece of legislation or an example of what you are advocating for, it is helpful to identify it by listing the name of the bill (e.g. H.R. X or S. X) or refer them to the specific initiative (such as National African-American Reparations Commission's 10-Point Reparation Program or Mayor Elorza's Truth-Telling Reconciliation and Municipal Reparations Process).³⁶
- **Request a follow-up** – As you close out your letter, request a return call, information on the elected official's stance on the issue, or how the official plans to address the issue during their time in office.³⁷ Remember, their job is to represent you as a constituent of their district. Hold them accountable to taking action, starting with a response to your outreach.

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF MODERN REPARATIVE POLICIES & PROPOSALS

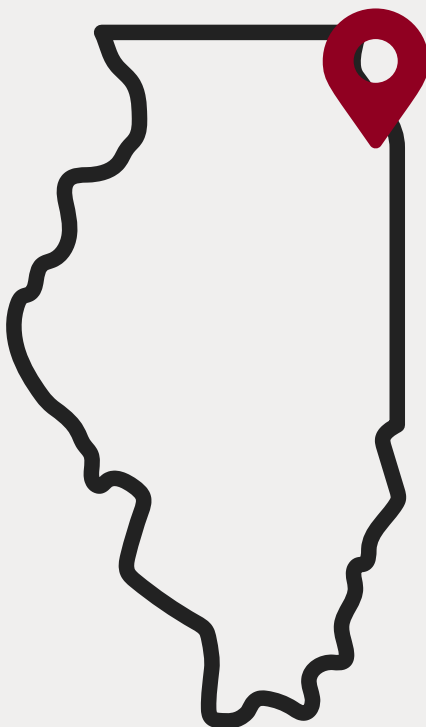
Since 1989, legislation has been introduced in Congress to form a commission. In 2021, for the first time, the bill passed in committee.³⁸

Few places have passed reparative policies or programs for racist housing practices, like discrimination and displacement. A growing number of cities, towns, and states have formed – or are considering forming – commissions and task forces to study the effects of slavery and racist policies and consider reparations proposals.

Though they don't specifically address housing policies, some states, including Oregon,³⁹ have introduced legislation to provide direct payments to descendants of enslaved people. Chicago, IL was the first city to provide reparations for racially-motivated police violence. We can look to these examples as a blueprint for reparative policies in our communities.

Illinois

EVANSTON



In 2021, Evanston, a suburb north of Chicago, enacted what its leaders describe as reparations.⁴⁰ The city agreed to allocate \$10 million over the next 10 years in housing assistance payments to qualifying descendants of Black Evanston residents who experienced housing discrimination.

The plan was borne out of an Equity and Empowerment Commission and feedback from community members about what reparations should look like. Housing and economic development were key priorities. The payments seek to provide restorative relief for the City's past zoning ordinances that discriminated against Black people from 1919 to 1969.

Some have called the program a "noble start," while others have criticized it for being simply symbolic and having little impact.⁴¹ Only 16 Black residents of more than 15,000 in Evanston, were eligible in the first phase.

California



SANTA MONICA

Santa Monica implemented its “Right to Return” pilot program in 2022 to bring families who were forcibly displaced by eminent domain in the 1950s and 1960s back to the city.⁴² Formerly displaced residents and their descendants will be designated high priority for affordable housing, so long as they meet income requirements for placement.

The pilot will accept 100 applications to start. More than 2,000 families – many of whom are people of color – were displaced by the construction of a freeway and civic center in the Pico neighborhood and Belmar Triangle.

BERKELEY

“Equitable Black Berkeley” is a collaboration between the City of Berkeley and Healthy Black Families, a local nonprofit, to repair a long history of displacement and disinvestment.⁴³

The project could produce 4,000 new affordable housing units, with priority going to people who were displaced by urban renewal and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) projects. Households must prove they have lived in Berkeley and meet income requirements.

The project has engaged residents throughout the planning process and provided leadership and participatory action research opportunities. Its facilitators emphasize the need goes beyond housing to provide other economic and social supports to rebuild the city’s social ecosystem.

MANHATTAN BEACH

A beachfront property purchased by Black Manhattan Beach residents Charles and Willa Bruce in 1912 was seized by the government following the protests and petitioning of White local and adjacent landowners.⁴⁴ The government justified this form of state-sanctioned racism by categorizing it as eminent domain, a law that gives the government the power to seize private property without required consent from the owners.

Although compensation is a term of eminent domain, the Bruces’ were wrongfully compensated five times less than what the property was worth.⁴⁵

In 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom signed a bill to restore the land back to the descendants of the Bruce family in an effort to rectify the racially targeted eminent domain abuse.

California (continued)

In June 2022, California's new Reparations Task Force⁴⁶ released preliminary recommendations in a 500-page report,⁴⁷ a first of its kind. The commission's chair said "it is my hope that people in California and across the United States utilize this report as an educational and organizing tool, as this interim report exceeds expectations in substantiating the claim for reparations for the African American/American Freedmen community on the municipal, state and federal level."

It recommends that the state provide funding and technical assistance to Black-led and Black community-based land trusts to support wealth building and affordable housing; compensate individuals forcibly removed from their homes due to state action like park construction, highway construction, and urban renewal; and much more.

Other Proposals

The National African-American Reparations Commission (NAARC) has proposed its own blueprint for reparations: the Preliminary 10 Point Reparations Program.⁴⁸ Among its demands, it calls for "substantial tracts" of public land to be transferred to the National Reparations Trust Authority for the creation of institutions and enterprises that benefit people of African descent. It also urges funding of an African American Housing and Finance Authority to plan and construct "holistic and sustainable villages" with affordable housing and services, and provide grants and loans for affordable housing.

Reparations Commissions

Asheville, NC;⁴⁹ Amherst, Massachusetts;⁵⁰ Providence, Rhode Island;⁵¹ Iowa City, Iowa,⁵² and other cities have created reparations commissions to study harmful policies and craft reparative proposals.

Maryland;⁵³ Detroit, Michigan; Cleveland, Ohio; Newark, New Jersey; New York City, New York;⁵⁴ the District of Columbia are considering bills to establish commissions.

APPENDIX B: WHAT'S HAPPENING LOCALLY?

Minnesota



In Minnesota, policymakers and advocates are beginning to explore reparations and reparative policies. The state legislature has introduced a bill that would begin developing reparations proposals.

House Bill 3850 and its companion bill SF 3950 were introduced in the state legislature in Spring 2022 to establish the Minnesota Migration Act and appropriate money to study and develop reparations proposals for descendants of enslaved people.⁵⁵

St. Paul

The City of Saint Paul created a permanent commission – the Saint Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission – in 2021.⁵⁶ The commission will recommend actions to create generational wealth for the descendants of people who were enslaved and to boost both opportunity and economic mobility for Black residents. The commission was encouraged to prioritize people who were impacted by construction of Interstate 94 through the Rondo neighborhood in the 1950s. Some of suggested actions include: targeted school loans, down-payment assistance funds, direct cash payments, housing, education, health, and business opportunities. The funding sources they identified were sales taxes, land sale proceeds, and philanthropic donations.⁵⁷ Lastly, the commission will work alongside the city council and mayor on how to incorporate and bring reparations to the city.

Local Organizations

These local organizations support reparations and/or reparative programs. Each group approaches the work differently. Do your research to learn more about their efforts.



The Alliance is focused on strategic campaigns around the intersection of racial justice, economic justice, environmental justice, and health equity.⁵⁸ The organization supports and leads numerous initiatives that are centered around equity for communities of color.



AREA 1946 supports reparations legislation and micro-reparations, and is working to close the housing gap in the Twin Cities. It raises awareness about racial covenants too.⁵⁹



The Minnesota Council of Churches launched a 10-year plan to provide trainings on diversity, equity, and inclusion, while also pursuing reparations from the harm caused by structural racism.⁶⁰ It is engaged in advocacy for reparations and seeks to renew communities with strong relationships and just public policy.



The Ride4reparations is helping to heal racial inequity by raising awareness of how slavery made America a prosperous and powerful country, and giving donations to agencies whose purpose is to uplift the Black community.⁶¹ The organization uses cycling as an activity to engage people in conversation about the history of discrimination and the need for reparations.



Reconnect Rondo is a nonprofit organization working to reconnect the Rondo neighborhood via a land bridge that is meant to create a cap over Interstate 94, between Chatsworth Street and Grotto Street. The land bridge would be a way to right past wrongs by reweaving the community through shared history and creating an equitable future for the community. The land bridge would bring 470-570 new housing units; 1,300-1870 new permanent and construction-related jobs; 87,750-108,000 square feet for retail & office space; 29,250-36,000 square feet for nonprofit & institutional use; and increase city revenue between \$3.8 million to 4.2 million annually.⁶²

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE LETTERS

LETTER TEMPLATE FOR THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

The Honorable (First name) (Last name)
(Office Address)
(City, State, Zip)
RE: (State the topic or include the bill number)

Dear (Office title) (Last name),

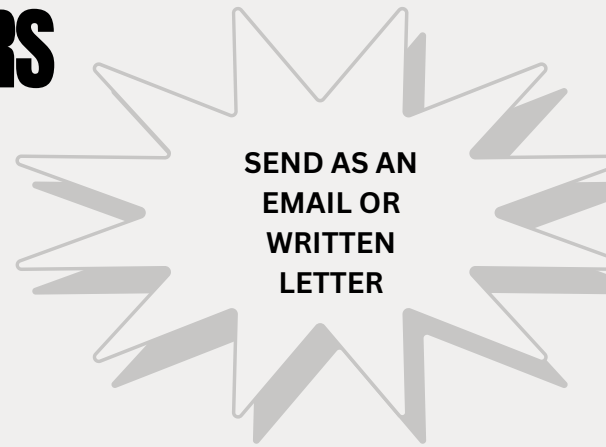
My name is (your first and last name), and I am a constituent who resides in your district of (city/district number/state).

(Specify your ask of them. Be direct! Explain what you are asking for and list the bill number or action you are referring to. Include several of your strongest points as clearly and concisely as possible.)

(Include a personal story. Be sure to include why this issue is important to you, how the issue affects you, and the impact you have seen it have on those around you.)

(End with how you want the official to vote or act on the issue. Ask for a response to hold them accountable to reacting to your call to action.)

Sincerely,
INCLUDE YOUR SIGNATURE
(Your name)
(Home address)
(City, State, Zip)



SAMPLE LETTER FOR THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

The Honorable Mayor Frey
350 S. Fifth St., Room 331
Minneapolis, MN 55415
RE: Minneapolis Reparations Commission

Dear Mayor Frey,

My name is (your first and last name), and I am a constituent who resides in the city of Minneapolis.

I am writing to you today to call for the city to apologize for the role it has played in institutional and structural racism experienced by its residents. Additionally, I ask for the creation of a reparations commission to study the harm done by decades of discrimination against people of color within Minneapolis and to make recommendations to the city on how to repair the damage caused by this systemic racism.

Racial inequality in Minneapolis is among the worst in the nation, as the economic divide between black and white families is higher in Minnesota than most states across the nation. Systemic racism continues to haunt the city, despite its raw exposure over the past few years following the murder of George Floyd and the Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately impacting people of color.

I call on you and the City Council to condemn systemic racism and issue an apology on behalf of the City of Minneapolis for the racist practices it has perpetrated on its residents. I also call for the implementation of a reparations commission to study the city's racist history and recommend reparative action.

Sincerely,
INCLUDE YOUR SIGNATURE
(Your name)
(Home address)
(City, State, Zip)

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