

## Support Congresswoman Bush's Reparations Now Resolution!

It is an unassailable truth that for a significant portion of American history, the federal government formally sanctioned the kidnapping and trafficking of human beings, created and maintained a violent racial hierarchy, embedded slavery and economic exploitation into the fabric of society, and emboldened white supremacy with legal, social, and economic tools of control.

The enslavement of Black people and the country's commitment to using unflinching violence and oppression created an endless supply of labor-enriched white slave owners and their descendants, fueled the country's economy while suppressing wealth-building for enslaved Black people, and post-emancipation, left newly freed Black people with zero wealth and landless, with a lack of education, poor health, and severed family and homeland ties. Moreover, laws that governed slavery were retooled into Black Codes to control free Black people, thereby establishing a criminal legal system that sanctified the continuation of slavery by another name.

The effects of slavery and its various evolutions live on to this day. Black people are often funneled into some of the most difficult jobs with lower wages, and continue to be targets of wage and land theft, exploitation, and deprivation of fundamental human rights. The \$14 trillion<sup>1</sup> racial wealth gap is a direct legacy of U.S. chattel slavery and the continued displacement, exploitation, and sanctioned theft of formerly enslaved people and their descendants. In addition to severe economic damage, which extends beyond the racial wealth gap, psychological, political, and cultural damages have hindered Black people's mobility.

It is time for our government to formally apologize for the state-sanctioned institution of chattel slavery and subsequent anti-Black institutions, laws and practices, and enact a comprehensive and holistic reparations program.

In partnership and solidarity with key groups and advocates in the reparations movement, Congresswoman Cori Bush is introducing a resolution that does the following:

- Recognizes the federal government's responsibility to provide reparations in all necessary forms, including financial compensation, to rectify ongoing harms resulting from violations by the U.S. government to Black people's human right to self-determination and freedom from discrimination, in addition to other necessary remedies;
- Supports the enactment of other vital reparatory justice legislation, such as H.R. 40, H.Con.Res.19, and resolutions apologizing for slavery without any limiting clauses;
- Acknowledges the significance of and momentum brought by legacy organizations as well as additional grassroots and national organizations leading the modern-day reparations movement;
- Encourages the creation of local, state, and federal initiatives to identify sources of reparations demands arising from chattel slavery and its longstanding impact on Black people; and
- Honors the lives and legacies of those named and unnamed whose lives were stolen by the institution of chattel slavery and other forms of state-sanctioned violence in the United States.

The United States cannot genuinely reckon with the legacy of its enslavement of Black people unless it rectifies the material inequalities that legacy has created. Join this resolution to express your support for a comprehensive and holistic reparations program that begins to address the atrocities committed by our government against Black people.

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<sup>1</sup> The approximately 40 million Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the United States constitute about 12 percent of the nation's population but own less than 2 percent of the nation's wealth. The estimated average black-white wealth gap exceeds \$900,000 per household and there are over 15 million Black households. The estimated loss of Black wealth caused by enslavement thus equals approximately \$14 trillion. This figure should be considered a baseline; when accounting for the unfulfilled federal promise to compensate freed Black people with "40 acres and a mule," the estimated wealth loss from Black families exceeds \$16 trillion. And when factoring in the total hours of unpaid slave labor between 1619 and 1865, the estimate exceeds \$97 trillion. Moreover, the damage experienced by Black people stemming from enslavement and its evolutions is not confined solely to economics and/or the racial wealth gap. See William A. Darity Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen, FROM HERE TO EQUALITY: REPARATIONS FOR BLACK AMERICANS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (2020); Dr. Regina S. Baker and Dr. Fenaba R. Addo, *Barriers to Racial Wealth Equality*, 48 ABA HUM. RTS. MAG. 2 (Jan, 6, 2023), [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human\\_rights\\_magazine\\_home/wealth-disparities-in-civil-rights/barriers-to-racial-wealth-equality/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/wealth-disparities-in-civil-rights/barriers-to-racial-wealth-equality/); William A. Darity Jr., *The True Cost of Closing the Racial Wealth Gap*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 30, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/business/racial-wealth-gap.html>; William A. Darity Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen, *Resurrecting the Promise of 40 Acres: The Imperative of Reparations for Black Americans*, ROOSEVELT INST. (June 2020), [https://rooseveltinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RI\\_Report\\_ResurrectingthePromiseof40Acres\\_202005.pdf](https://rooseveltinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RI_Report_ResurrectingthePromiseof40Acres_202005.pdf); Jason Hickel, *Enough of aid – let's talk reparations*, THE GUARDIAN (Nov. 27, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/nov/27/enough-of-aid-lets-talk-reparations>.