

NEBRASKA TAXPAYERS FOR FREEDOM ISSUE PAPER: REPARATIONS WOULD BANKRUPT THE NATION.

BACKGROUND. Calls are growing from leftist politicians, academics, and economists for monetary reparations to an estimated 40 million African Americans. Past congressional bills have failed, but there appears stronger support in 2023 for legislation to pass both Houses of Congress.

THE BILL. Socialist Democrat Cong. Cori Bush (MO.) introduced **HR 414**, named Reparations Now, arguing that it is time for the federal government to formally apologize for slavery and enact a comprehensive and expensive reparations program. Her bill is in the House Judiciary Committee. Supported by leftist groups and advocates in the reparation movement, she seeks in her bill to force the government to pay financial reparations to slave descendants. It encourages local and state initiatives to pay like reparations. Her bill demands \$14 trillion in taxpayer dollars from the federal government for its supposed role in the enslavement and exploitation of Blacks. The resolution states that the country has a moral and legal obligation to provide reparations for the enslavement of Africans and its lasting harm inflicted on the lives of millions of Black Americans. Co-sponsor Cong. Rashida Tlaib (Mich.) believes reparations mean a more equitable distribution of resources (socialism). Bills to form reparations commissions have appeared in Congress every session since 1989, but the issue has drawn renewed attention this year from task forces in California and San Francisco floating proposals for hundreds of billions to compensate Black residents for the harms of slavery.¹ Analyzing her bill, reparations also would go to Blacks whose ancestors were not slaves. Bush and her partners have been working on the plan, which includes demands for direct cash payments and investments in sectors like housing and education, for years. **HR 414** encourages the reintroduction, passage, and implementation of legislation establishing the U.S. Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation. Bush accepted a question from Fox News Digital about from where federal funding for a federal reparations program would come but refused to answer.²

ENDORSEMENTS. Bill endorsements look like the cream of the Far Left. National Coalition Of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA), Color of Change, Action St. Louis, Arch City Defenders, Rainbow PUSH Coalition, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International USA, National Black Justice Coalition, African American Redress Network, Black Music Action Coalition, Reparation Education Project, Universal Human Rights Initiative, National Council of Churches, Drug Policy Alliance, National Education Association, Decolonizing Wealth Project, National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL), Reparations Finance Lab, National Council of Jewish Women, and the US Program.³ Fellow Squad Members include Cong. Jamaal Bowman (N.Y.), Rashida Tlaib (Mich.), Summer Lee (PA.), and Barbara Lee (CA.). In 2019, the NAACP passed a resolution calling for reparations and detailing the continued harm of slavery and discrimination. The resolution also outlined what sponsors should include in a reparations bill, including a national apology.⁴

**Why should people
who never owned
slaves give money to
people who were
never slaves?**

POLLING. A 2022 Pew Research Center poll showed that 77% of Blacks endorsed reparations but only 18% of Whites. 48% of Democrats supported reparations; 40% opposed. Only 8% of Republicans supported reparations; 91% opposed.⁵ A 2019 Gallup Poll found that 67% of citizens opposed reparations, 29% in support. 72% of Black respondents supported reparations; 16% of Whites supported them. East Coast Americans showed 35% support but only 24% of Midwesterners. 69% of Southerners indicated opposition. Among Republicans, 5% in favor, 92% opposed.⁶

OPPOSITION ARGUMENTS.

ALL ABOUT MONEY. Instead of solving problems, everyone will fight over money. It will become a debate over the money. This frenzy will not help a nation reckon with its past. Paying reparations to all descendants of slaves is a mistake, because the people owed for slavery no longer here. Reparations simply equates to the redistribution of wealth, socialism.

¹ Washington Times, Valerie Richardson, Rep. Cori Bush brings 'Reparations Now' resolution to address \$14 trillion 'wealth gap,' May 17, 2023.

² Yahoo Life, Jessica Washington, Rep. Cori Bush Pushes For \$14 Trillion In Reparations, May 17, 2023.

³ Washington Examiner, Jack Birle, Cori Bush pushes for \$14 trillion in reparations for black people, May 17, 2023.

⁴ Fox 16 News, Cheyanne Daniels, Black leaders push new resolution on reparations, May 17, 2023.

⁵ Carrie Brazina and Kiana Fox, Pew Research Center, Black and White Americans are far apart in their views of reparations for slavery, Nov. 28, 2022.

⁶ Mohamed Younis, Gallup Politics, As Redress for Slavery, Americans Oppose Cash Reparations, July 29, 2019.

REPARATIONS ALREADY DONE. The War among the States saw thousands die to end slavery, and several Congresses have passed remedial civil rights legislation.⁷ The reality is that Black American history is not one of a hapless, hopeless race oppressed by a more powerful White race but a history of millions of middle and upper class Black Americans throughout the 20th and 21st Centuries achieving the American dream.

DEMEANING. The idea of reparations is demeaning to Blacks and would further divide the country along racial lines. Reparations require the country to put a monetary price on the generational traumas of slavery, calculating how much is a slave suffering worth and compensation for several generations of enslaved ancestors. It would insult many Black Americans by putting a price on the suffering of their ancestors. Coleman Hughes, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, stated in 2019 testimony before Congress, “We would turn the relationship between black Americans and white Americans from a coalition into a transaction — from a union between citizens into a lawsuit between plaintiffs and defendants. Paying reparations to all descendants of slaves is a mistake ... [because] the people who were owed for slavery are no longer here, and we’re not entitled to collect on their debts.” Former NFL player and now Cong. Burgess Owens (UT.) expands on the idea of victimhood: “At the core of the reparation movement is a divisive and demeaning view of both races. It grants to the white race a wicked superiority, treating them as an oppressive people too powerful for black Americans to overcome. It brands blacks as hapless victims devoid of the ability, which every other culture possesses, to assimilate and progress. Neither label is earned.... It is their divisive message that marks the black race as forever broken, as a people whose healing comes only through the guilt, pity, profits and benevolence of the white race.” Reparations indeed tend to show Blacks as somehow inferior and in need of extra help.



RESENTMENT. Reparations will exacerbate tensions between Blacks and White reparations taxpayers. Angry White Americans will respond by frustratingly thinking stop whining about racism in modern America, take your check, and we do not want to hear from you again. Paying reparations for slavery forces everyone living today to accept responsibility for a grave sin committed by some of our ancestors. No one currently living is responsible for righting the wrongs committed by long dead slave owners. Some Americans have expressed opposition to paying out reparations, because the enslaved individuals already dead. If we paid reparations today, we would only divide the country further, making it harder to build the political coalitions required to solve the problems

facing our multi-racial society today.

WHO SHOULD PAY. Difficult to determine precisely who should pay reparations. Perhaps billing the Black Africans who sold fellow Africans into slavery. Perhaps billing the descendants of European slave traders. Perhaps collecting sums from African Americans who sold other African Americans into slavery or who themselves owned slaves. It seems unjust to demand monetary reparations from current taxpayers for the sins of a small subset of Americans from many generations ago. The generation that would pay have nothing to do with slavery in the past. Many of our ancestors did not reside in the U.S. during slavery. White Americans whose families arrived after the segregation era will wonder why they must pay for the sins of ancestors of other Americans.

TOO EXPENSIVE. The U.S. suffers a huge federal debt with ongoing serious deficits. Reparations would present too large a bill to pay without cutting necessary federal government services. Though the potential cost of reparations is abstract and has only a nebulous plan, one estimate figured by William A. Darity Jr., an economist at Duke University, set the 2019 cost at \$80,000 per African American descended from slaves, or approximately \$2.6 trillion taxpayer dollars if estimating for about 30 million descendants of slaves. That estimate is about 55% of the \$4.7 trillion U.S. budget for 2019. Financial expert Brett Arends, using the values assigned to generations of slaves in 1800, 1830, and 1860 and adding interest, set a \$16 trillion price tag for reparations. At the time of this 2019 calculation, the entire federal debt was \$22 trillion. Assigning monetary values to different timeframes and experiences poses the question if we accurately can quantify pain and suffering, particularly across multiple generations. Reparations propounded by its zealous promoters equates to redistribution of wealth, socialism.

⁷ Ted Barrett, [McConnell opposes paying reparations: ‘None of us currently living are responsible’ for slavery](#), June 19, 2019.

WHO GETS THE DOUGH. It would become extremely difficult to calculate who deserves compensation and who must pay for the institution of slavery. Besides the financial difficulty of implementing reparations, there is serious question of who would receive payments. Oprah Winfrey can trace her lineage to 19th Century slaves, but she has net assets of an estimated \$2.6 billion, so her net worth may mitigate against a reparation payment. Difficult to determine who is a descendant of slaves. Barack Obama does *not* have Black American ancestry, because his father was Kenyan and his American mother was White. Many biracial people or more recent black immigrants, though not descendants of American slaves, may not have standing to receive reparations payments. Tough to define percentage of Black to receive reparations. DNA tests not prescribed by reparation proponents. Further, Ancestry.com notes the unique difficulties of



tracing African American ancestry in the South to prove slave ancestors, including family member name and nickname changes, the passage of slaves from one family member to another without a deed of sale, and the dispersion of family members sold away from the rest of their families. When slaves arrived here, they oftentimes given the surname of their first owner, if they even had a surname. Others did not take the slave owner's name until after Emancipation. As former slaves grew accustomed to their freedom in the years after the Civil War, many rejected their former owners' names and created new surnames for themselves. A percentage of Black Americans are the descendants of later immigrants, mostly from Africa and

the Caribbean, so questionable if they have standing. A hefty number of Black immigrants did not reside here during slavery, nor their ancestors. Some states did not allow slavery, and free Blacks prospered there.⁸ It appears too difficult to carry out reparations and likely unconstitutional.

NEXT IN LINE. Proponents as a model use reparations given Japanese-Americans for their internment during WW II. Native American tribes could get in line to demand reparations next; one estimate sets this cost at \$35 trillion. Many immigrants from parts of Europe and Asia have faced horrid discrimination. They also could demand financial compensation.

TAKE ACTION NOW. Reparations are not about helping the Black community. It is only a ploy to attract and retain minority votes. The individuals deserving reparations are long dead. We can instead guarantee economic prosperity and social and political equality by dispensing with apologies and offer safer neighborhoods, better educational opportunities, well-paying employment, and brighter futures. If the Socialist Democrats are so intent on paying reparations, they can open their own wallets and purses and generously contribute. Using the content above, lobby your congressman and 2 NE senators to vote NO on **HR 14**. Email netaxpayers@gmail.com for congressional contact information and join our NTF *Congress Watch Project*.

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⁸ INVESTOPEDIA. Shomari Wills, [Should America Pay Slavery Reparations?](#) Nov. 9, 2022.