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AGENDA ITEM 9

POTENTIAL ACTION ITEM:  
REPORT OF BUNCHE CENTER REGARDING  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

# HARM & REPAIR:

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT REPORT ON REPARATIONS IN CALIFORNIA

Submitted to:

The California Task Force to Study and Develop  
Reparation Proposals for African Americans

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First, we would like to extend appreciation to the seven anchor organizations and their staffs. They helped support the organization and facilitation of the listening sessions to ensure that community voices are considered during the Task Force's deliberation over reparations proposals. Their work was at the center of the success and impact of this project:

- ▶ California Black Power Network
- ▶ Othering & Belonging Institute
- ▶ Afrikan Black Coalition
- ▶ Black Equity Collective
- ▶ Black Equity Initiative
- ▶ Coalition for a Just and Equitable California
- ▶ Repaired Nations

We would also like to extend thanks to the many organizations and individuals who supported this project from facilitation to funding. They provided resources, time, and facilities, and they gave the community a voice as the Task Force pursues its purpose and mission. These individuals and organizations include:

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- ▶ The California Department of Justice
- ▶ Staff of the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings of the Ralph J. Bunche Center’s Community Engagement Project for the California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans. This project was designed to collect and document important community perspectives obtained through three distinct means: 1) holding community listening sessions, 2) collecting oral histories and personal testimonies, and 3) administering surveys. The fundamental goal of this work was to give the community voice in the ongoing statewide conversation concerning reparations – to create space for communities to express their concerns, desires, wishes, and experiences – and to provide the Task Force with additional community input as it explores and deliberates reparations proposals.

Across the above means of engagement, the Bunche Center focused its data collection on four areas deemed important by the Task Force:

- ▶ Identifying forms of race-based harm;
- ▶ Gauging support for reparations;
- ▶ Determining support for different types of reparations; and
- ▶ Determining eligibility for reparations.

## METHODOLOGY

Between January and August 2022, seven anchor organizations held 17 community listening sessions across the state of California. On average, each listening session had 51 participants, engaging 867 people over the entire project period.

Personal testimonies and oral histories were also collected for the project. In all, 46 personal testimonies, including audio and video recordings, written documents, and photos, were self-submitted between May and September 2022. Additionally, seven oral histories were collected via interviews conducted in August 2022 by the Bunche research team. The majority of the testimonials were provided by African American residents of California, and all the oral histories were provided by African American residents of California, ranging in age from 38 to 88, sourced equally from Northern and Southern California.

Finally, the Bunche Center designed and conducted a closed-ended statewide survey to assess sentiment on reparations measures such as direct cash payments and non-monetary forms of reparations, such as an apology or monuments. The survey recorded responses from two samples. The first was a representative sample of Californians, with 2,499 respondents. The second sample, with 1,934 respondents, was over 90% African American, reached through connections to listening session participants.

## KEY FINDINGS

An analysis of the results of the community listening sessions, personal testimonies, oral histories, and statewide survey revealed the following:

- ▶ **There are five major types of racially-driven harm that communities consistently identified.** Study participants named lack of educational opportunity, discriminatory policing and law enforcement, economic disenfranchisement, housing inequality, and healthcare disparities most often when asked about racially-driven harms that Black people experience. The participants also consistent-

ly cited the following harms: food inaccessibility, employment and workplace disparities, inadequate business support infrastructure, the cycle of municipal disinvestment in Black neighborhoods, and displacement.

▶ **There is broad community support for reparations.**

The survey found that over 60% of Californians support some form of reparations, including financial compensation, community investments, educational opportunities, investments for Black businesses and organizations, and land and property ownership. Furthermore, community listening session participants overwhelmingly supported reparations initiatives.

▶ **While a majority of Californians support reparations measures, they are divided on which types should be used.**

The survey queried respondents on the specific forms of reparations to be applied and found that California residents are largely in support of the three primary types of reparations measures – direct cash payments (66% of respondents); monetary reparations without cash measures (77%); and non-monetary reparations, such as an apology or monuments. Support was consistently highest for remedies incorporating monetary measures, but without direct cash payments, among all Californians, including Black participants. The community listening sessions produced similar results except that direct cash payments were the most frequently mentioned form of reparations followed by other monetary measures.

▶ **There is a lack of consensus about who should be eligible for reparations.**

Community members consistently expressed concern regarding who would be eligible for reparations, generally dividing into two camps: those who supported reparations based on lineage claims to ancestors enslaved in America and those who supported reparations for all Black people, regardless of lineage.

These findings provide important information for the Task Force as it continues its work of developing reparations proposals. They also provide an indicator of community sentiment, where awareness building and education may be necessary, and where continued community engagement will be required in the coming weeks and months.



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# **SECTION 1:**

## **INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND ON THE REPARATIONS TASK FORCE & ITS CHARGE**



This report documents the findings of the Ralph J. Bunche Center’s Community Engagement Project for the California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans (the Task Force). The Bunche Center’s Community Engagement Project undertook the collection and documentation of important community information through three distinct means: 1) holding community listening sessions, 2) collecting oral histories and personal testimonies, and 3) administering surveys. The overarching goal of this effort was to bring the voice of the community into the conversation about reparations (including community members’ concerns, desires, wishes, and perspectives) and to provide the Reparations Task Force with further community input as it deliberates reparations proposals. More detail on the assessment efforts and the resulting findings is below.

Before proceeding, it is important to provide the following background information to clarify the purpose and historical importance of this effort.

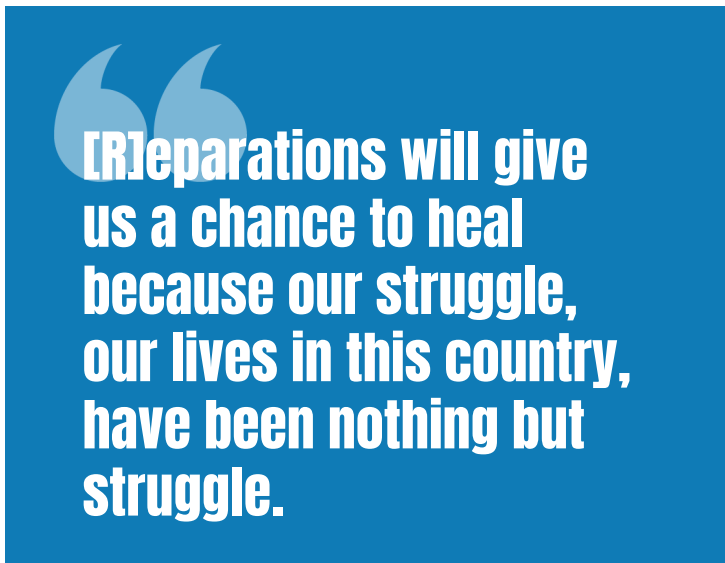
On September 30, 2020, the California State Assembly enacted Assembly Bill 3121 (AB 3121), thereby establishing the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans. AB 3121 gave authorization to the California Department of Justice to provide administrative, technical, and legal assistance to the Task Force. This legislation is historically significant, as it makes California the first state in the nation to formally examine the harms and consequences of slavery and potential remedies.

The undertaking of the Task Force is important both in historical and contemporary terms. Slavery and its consequences are deeply woven into the history and development of the United States. From 1619 to 1865, constitutionally sanctioned slavery deprived more than four million Africans and their descendants of a range of rights and privileges, taking from them life, citizenship, cultural heritage, and economic opportunity. Following its legal abolition, government entities at the federal, state, and local levels continued to perpetuate, condone, and sometimes profit from practices that further harmed African Americans and reinforced their marginalized position in society. This legacy of slavery and racial discrimination resulted in debilitating economic, educational, and health hardships that were and continue to be uniquely experienced by African Americans.

AB 3121 charges the Reparations Task Force with studying the institution of slavery and its lingering negative effects on living African Americans, including the descendants of persons enslaved in the United States. As part of this effort, the Task Force will identify, compile, and synthesize relevant evidence-based information on the institution of slavery as it existed within the United States. This includes how California laws and policies continue to disproportionately and negatively impact African Americans, how they perpetuate the lingering material and psychosocial effects of slavery, and how those laws and policies can be eliminated.

## THE TASK FORCE’S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

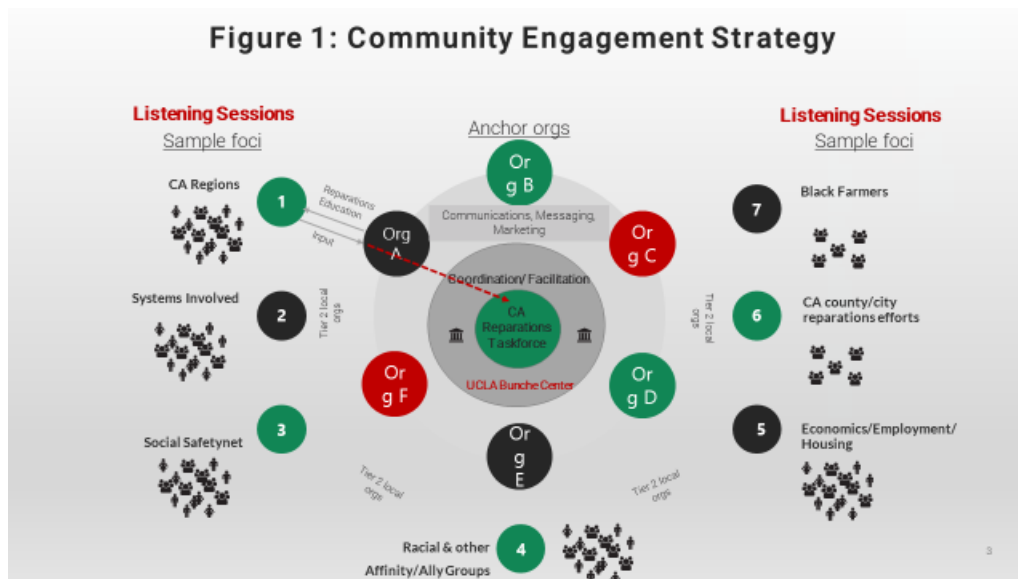
As part of this data collection effort, the Task Force elected to hold a series of community convening/listening sessions across California to obtain input regarding harms and potential remedies. To aid this effort, the Task Force relied on anchor organizations that had with deep roots, historical significance, and reach in the Black community to assist in the planning and delivery of the listening sessions. Such organizations were well placed to reach a representative share of Black Californians thanks to the historically significant work they have done and



are doing in communities, their reputation and trust, and their ability to deliver for community members.

Figure 1 presents a schematic of the Community Engagement Strategy that the Task Force pursued while collecting important information for its deliberations. Anchor organizations were tasked with organizing a series of community listening sessions to solicit community input and gather personal testimony on the harms and legacy of slavery to create well-informed reparations proposals.

The stated goal for the Task Force’s community engagement strategy was to collect information on slavery and its consequences (and potential remedies) from a representative swath of the social fabric that makes up California. This included reaching people in different regions; through different service provider organizations, including civil rights organizations, churches, and social service providers; people from different economic backgrounds or employment groups, such as Black farmers; and organizers, policy makers, and otherwise active citizens who have been exploring and advocating for reparations.



## THE BUNCHE CENTER’S ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

To complement these efforts, on September 23, 2021, the Task Force elected the UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies to serve as the intermediary organization supporting the efforts of the Task Force as it pursued its community engagement strategy. The Bunche Center provided an important, neutral-organization function. In this capacity, it helped solicit and identify key stakeholders to administrate and execute the Task Force’s efforts. This included the selection of the anchor organizations – who played a foundational role in this effort – as well as locating key personnel to convene this undertaking and organize, conduct, and facilitate the community listening sessions.

As part of its efforts, the Bunche Center recorded and documented important information offered by participants in the community listening sessions. In addition – to complement the stories, ideas, narratives, opinions, and experiences of those who attended the community listening sessions – the Bunche Center also gathered information regarding the community’s experiences, concerns, and opinions through two additional avenues. This was done through in-depth interviews and oral histories that were taken with a select number of participants from the community listening sessions. Analysis of personal testimonies self-submitted to the Task Force was also conducted. Finally, a survey of public opinion was designed to collect opinions on reparations proposals from a representative share of the population of California as well as from those who attended the community listening sessions. Together, these activities define the Bunche Center’s Community Engagement Project to provide the Task Force with important information on the community’s experiences, sentiments, ideas, and opinions con-



cerning reparations that will aid in its deliberations.

The remainder of this report focuses on the findings of these engagement efforts. The next section focuses on findings from the community listening sessions, followed by an analysis of the in-depth interviews, oral histories, and personal testimony, and concludes with the presentation of results from the survey of public opinion on reparations proposals.



# **SECTION 2**

## **THE BUNCHE CENTER'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT DESIGN**

As Figure 2 shows, the Bunche Center’s Community Engagement Project involved organizing and collecting data from 1) community listening sessions, led by anchor organizations involved with the Task Force’s community engagement strategy, as described below; 2) developing a semi-structured interview protocol and conducting in-depth interviews with a select number of individuals as well as analyzing personal testimonies self-submitted to the Task Force; and 3) developing and administering a closed-ended survey of public opinion on reparations proposals.



Each of these activities was conducted independently of each other but were nevertheless complementary. Discussions and interactions at the community listening sessions revealed key themes with respect to reparations. The in-depth interviews of participants of the listening sessions allowed for deeper understanding of themes related to reparations than what could be conveyed in the listening sessions. Furthermore, in the community listening sessions, in-depth interviews, and self-submitted personal testimonies, participants offered a number of remedies to address the harms from the legacy of slavery. These qualitative measures dovetailed with the closed-ended public opinion survey administered to Californians and to the participants in the community listening sessions to provide quantitative measures of individuals’ opinions about whether, how, and to what extent reparation measures addressing harms should be supported.



For each research activity, the Bunche Center focused on inquiry and data collection in four areas that were deemed essential by the Task Force: 1) the areas of harm, 2) the presence of support for reparations, 3) what type of reparations should be supported, and finally, 4 ) who should be eligible for the reparations. In the sections that follow, each avenue of inquiry focuses attention on these categories, although the degree of attention to the various areas of concern is different across the activities. As noted, the analysis of the community listening sessions documents the discussions focused on each of the areas of concern, while the in-depth interviews focus

more on harm. The public opinion surveys collected opinion data regarding support for reparations by type with respect to eligibility exclusively.

## THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT TIMELINE

The Bunche Center's Community Engagement Project began in January 2022 and extended through September 2022. The community listening sessions, held by anchor organizations, began in January 2022, with the final session held in August 2022. Each one of the sessions was recorded using either audio recording or via Zoom for sessions held virtually. The Survey of Public Opinion on Reparations Proposals and Eligibility was administered from the end of May 2022 to July 2022. The survey was conducted with a representative sample (along race, age, and gender) of Californians eighteen years of age and older. A similar survey was administered to those who participated in community listening sessions. These respondents had the opportunity to fill out the surveys from March 2022 to August 2022. Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted in August 2022, and personal testimonies were continuously self-submitted to the Task Force from February 2022 to August 2022.



## THE COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

The community listening session process must be described before the findings of the report are presented. The key stakeholders in this process included the anchor organizations, the convener and organizer of the listening session project, and the professional facilitator of the listening sessions.

### ANCHOR ORGANIZATIONS

For the listening sessions, seven anchor organizations were invited to participate. Suggestions for anchor organizations were solicited from among Task Force members, thought leaders in the state, workers in philanthropy, and the landscape of organizations engaged in community organizing in Black communities across California. The final organizations were chosen for invitation to serve as anchor organizations based on the following criteria:

1. Organizations that are skilled in community outreach and community mobilization.
2. Organizations with deep roots in the Black community. Such organizations are well placed to reach a representative share of Black Californians because of the historically significant work that they do in communities, their reputation and trust, and their ability to deliver for community members.
3. Organizations with historical significance and reach within the Black community – to assist with the



planning and delivery of listening sessions. Reach of the organizations proved very important in the selection of anchor organizations. A high priority was set on the selection of organizations that were part of or leading broader networks that either cut across issues or regions of the state.

4. Organizations that have reach with ally groups and organizations who must be educated about the Task Force and its mission, efforts, findings, and recommendations.
5. Organizations with a presence in multiple parts of the state.
6. Organizations engaged in a cross-section of social justice issues with diverse Black populations.

The anchor organizations that helped plan and facilitate the listening sessions include:

- ▶ **California Black Power Network:** The California Black Power Network is a growing, united ecosystem of Black-empowering grassroots organizations working together to change the lived conditions of Black Californians by dismantling systemic and anti-Black racism.
- ▶ **Othering & Belonging Institute:** The Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley advances a groundbreaking approach to transforming structural marginalization and inequality. We are scholars, organizers, communicators, researchers, artists, and policymakers committed to building a world where all people belong.
- ▶ **Afrikan Black Coalition:** To liberate all Afrikan people through organizing intellectual & economic resources to transform the quality of Afrikan/Black lives. To ensure Afrikan/Black people globally are equipped to build sustainable infrastructures to advance Afrikan/Black people on a local, regional, and national level.
- ▶ **Black Equity Collective:** The Black Equity Collective's mission is to join funders and communities as partners in strengthening the long-term sustainability of Black-led and Black-empowering organizations in Southern California.
- ▶ **Black Equity Initiative:** Composed of Inland Empire organizations that share a desire to improve social conditions through empowerment, education, and policy change. Guided by a deep commitment to the liberation and self-determination of Black people, this work advances our mission by helping us to deepen our influence and reach for educational equity throughout the region.
- ▶ **Coalition for a Just and Equitable California:** A statewide, grassroots Coalition of California community-based organizations. The mission: Achieve reparations and reparative justice for Black American descendants of U.S. slavery living in California.
- ▶ **Repaired Nations:** The mission at Repaired Nations is to educate, organize and empower low-income Black youth in the Bay Area to launch cooperative enterprises for sustainable economic security through shared ownership and control of housing and businesses.

## KEY PERSONNEL AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LISTENING SESSION PROJECT

The Bunche Center contracted with highly qualified experts to help facilitate the listening sessions. In particular, the center contracted with Mary Lee as a lead convener for the project, who has more than thirty years of experience as a public interest and civil rights attorney, community activist, and public policy advocate. She is an experienced educator, trainer, and project manager with a background in strategic planning and transformative systems change. She has also served as deputy director of a national organization working to advance racial and economic equity.

In addition to being involved in the initial planning of this project with the anchor organizations, including how these groups would engage with members of the Black Community, Mary Lee participated in brainstorming regarding the need for a survey and a portal to collect individual reflections, stories, and testimonies.

Lee coordinated and convened eight meetings with the community engagement stakeholders – including the anchor organization group meetings – and supported the facilitation of the community listening sessions, including serving as a breakout group facilitator at two listening sessions. Lee also tracked the progress of all community listening sessions and responded to all inquiries from the anchor organizations themselves, the Task Force and the California Department of Justice.

The Bunche Center contracted with Ama Nyamekye Anane to professionally facilitate all community listening sessions held by the anchor organizations. Anane is the founder of Good Influence Consulting, a Black-owned boutique firm that helps organizations engage with and learn from their stakeholders, refine their strategies accordingly, and communicate more meaningfully.

In this role, Good Influence partnered with the anchor organizations to design the format, schedule, and manage logistics of the listening sessions. Some listening sessions focused on specific issues and communities, such as questions of health, housing, mass incarceration, education, the faith community, and the needs of Black rural, urban, and suburban communities. All participants were asked a set of open-ended questions, prompting them to share any harms related to slavery, as well as repairs, compensation, restitution, and “Dos and Don’ts” for structuring reparations. The sessions were designed to allow participants to share their voices uninterrupted for 3-5 minutes. This format enabled diverse stories, recommendations, and perspectives of community members to be heard. For larger group convenings, Good Influence trained facilitators to lead breakout rooms.

Recognizing the mental and emotional weight carried in the listening session conversations, Good Influence worked with each anchor organization to integrate wellness and inspiration practices throughout the process. For example, some listening sessions opened with inclusive prayer, spoken word poetry, music, meditation, and/or visual art, all produced by Black Californians. After a few sessions, the following quotation was also displayed at the start of each listening session, as it reflected a common sentiment we heard from many participants: “There is more to Blackness than our struggle” – Angela Shanté.

## **TYPICAL LISTENING SESSION FORMATS AND FLOWS**

Although no structure was mandated for facilitating community listening sessions, some elements proved universal at each session. Each session tended to begin with a welcome and introduction by a representative of the hosting anchor organization, followed by a short educational segment providing a brief history of reparations and an introduction to the California Reparations Task Force.

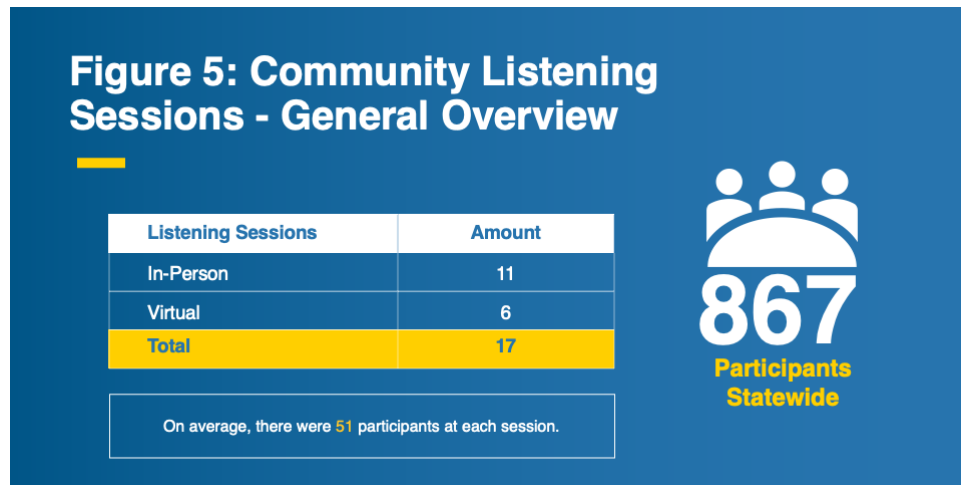
Following the introductory period, anchor organizations typically had a local community leader give a speech or hold a panel on topics relevant to reparations and issues pertinent to the work of the hosting anchor organization. Following the community discussion, the hosting anchor organizations allocated most of the allotted program time to recording community testimonies, finally ending the listening session with a call to action.

## **KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS**

In total, 17 listening sessions were planned and hosted by the anchor organizations. Of these, 11 were in-person, and 6 were virtual. The in-person events were largely held later in the project period in response to local public health decisions to reduce restrictions on public events relative to changing pandemic conditions. On average, 51 people participated in each listening session, with a total of 867 participants over the project period. We cannot confirm that all 867 were unique participants as we did not inquire about multiple session attendance. Thus it is possible that one person (or more) may have attended two (or more) listening sessions.

Nonetheless, the target audience for these listening sessions was diverse and comprehensive. During publicity for these events, extensive efforts were made by all partner organizations to ensure multi-generational participation ranging across socioeconomic groups. Further, in some cases, community testimonies were sought primarily from some of the most vulnerable communities in California, such as people who are unhoused, justice

system-impacted individuals, and Black women to ensure inclusion of groups traditionally underrepresented.



Anchor organizations exercised care and discernment while selecting the geographical locations of the event venues. Approximately one-third of the listening sessions were conducted virtually via Zoom, and thus could be accessed by individuals across the state. The remainder of the sessions occurred in-person, in geographic regions that possess larger concentrations of Black communities in the state. This included areas within the San Francisco Bay Area, Southern California, and the Inland Empire. Specifically, sessions were held in Sacramento, Berkeley, Vallejo, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Diego. The settings of these sessions primarily consisted of community centers, minority-owned businesses, and public parks. Anchor organizations' representatives determined that these locations were more accessible to their target populations, and that local attendees would possess connections to their local community. Thus, it was anticipated that the attendees would express and contribute community grounded perspectives and insights.



# **SECTION 3**

## **COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS ANALYSIS & FINDINGS**



This section reports findings from 17 community listening sessions regarding the major themes discussed at these events that fall into the following major categories of inquiry: harms experienced, types of reparations, support levels for different types of reparations, and eligibility.

## **METHODOLOGY AND DATA**

At least one researcher on the Bunche team attended each virtual and in-person listening session hosted by each respective anchor organization. They provided logistical support (e.g., time keeping), took observational notes, and ensured that each session was recorded, whether via Zoom for the virtual sessions or with a handheld recording device for the in-person sessions. All audio recordings went through a two-step transcription, using both artificial intelligence software and a professional transcription service. First, the transcriptions were uploaded to Otter.ai, an online software program, to draft the preliminary transcripts. The preliminary transcripts were then uploaded to Adept Word Management, Inc., a third-party professional transcription consulting company, to clean the transcripts up and ultimately ensure that the audio files were accurately documented.

This generated over 1000 total pages of transcripts from the 17 official listening sessions. The transcripts were analyzed and coded by two primary researchers using Atlas.ti, a web- and desktop-based qualitative analysis software program, to assist in the creation, organization, and analysis of codes within the transcribed data.

## **ANALYSIS**

Researchers employed a qualitative approach to the analysis of the listening session data, applying a two-pronged framework for thematic content analysis to meticulously identify and assess prevalent themes. Using a hybrid of deductive and inductive analytical techniques, a codebook (see section appendix) was derived that highlighted key themes relative to our four primary areas of inquiry: harm types, reparation types, eligibility, and support levels.

By first applying an inductive framework of analysis, the researchers were able to identify primary themes emerging within each of the four primary categories. The themes for the four areas of inquiry that emerged from the first cycle of inductive coding were used to develop the initial codebook of themes. From this foundation, researchers revisited each of the transcripts a second time, utilizing a deductive approach in a content analysis process.

Using a deductive framework, researchers reviewed and assigned statements and responses within the listening session data to the codebook themes. This form of content analysis prompted greater refinement and organization of the initial codebook, while allowing for newer codes to emerge, which contributed to greater accuracy and validity of the themes identified within this section. This approach, in which content is dissected and parceled out, enabled the researchers to understand not only the types of themes prevalent within the data but also their frequencies.

The analysis centers the perspectives, experiences, and narratives of Black participants within the aims of the Task Force. As such, the researchers labeled and categorized their responses according to the primary categories that drive this study and sought to report the direct insights obtained from Black Californians “as is,” at face value (e.g., using data-derived codes; see the Appendix at end of this section). Ultimately, the purpose of presenting and eliciting direct responses and statements from Black Californians was to highlight and acquire legitimacy for the real, everyday experiences of a group that is most often overlooked and undervalued within society.

## **RESEARCH TRUSTWORTHINESS: VALIDITY & RELIABILITY**

To promote the utmost reliability and validity of the project process, researchers applied a two-pronged analysis

(as noted previously) and implemented consistent peer review and discussion sessions.

In the first phase of the listening session data analysis, researchers used a sample of the transcription data to code inductively or openly, allowing the voices of the participants to influence the creation of the codes and thereby to guide the identification of the corresponding themes. The next phase of the analysis involved deductive content analysis, which were applied to align content with each of the corresponding themes and fine tune the code categories accordingly. These two phases of analysis allowed not only for the respondents' insights to guide integral themes found within the parameters of the four predetermined areas of inquiry but also for greater insights to be garnered relative to trends or issues that emerged outside of these categories. Moreover, this two-step analysis cycle assured the validity and reliability of the interpretation and categorization of the findings.

Further, the review cycle, undertaken to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the entire analysis, was multi-fold. In addition to applying a two-pronged method of analysis, the data collected was consistently coordinated with other members of the research team, who provided feedback on the coding of the themes as they emerged. Although the analysis of the listening session data was mainly performed by a subset of the research team, the other members of the team also regularly engaged in a continual and iterative process of weekly peer debriefing, review of code labeling, and revision of coded categories. The entire team of researchers periodically met over Zoom to produce consensus in coding categories and finalize the codebook that would be applied to all the transcripts, as well as reviewing and approving content labeled and assigned to each code category.

## FINDINGS

### EMERGENT HARMS

The identification of harms and the discussion of remedies for such harms formed a majority of the listening session content. Participants and facilitators communicated their various stories and testimonies about harms caused by institutional racism and the legacies of slavery. Many participants were audibly emotional as they recounted their stories of loss, grief, and trauma.

In every session, facilitators posed a correlative question to gauge the forms of harm and types of discrimination that Black listening session participants regularly experience within their everyday lives. Although the exact wording of the question was not fixed, the questions asked at the listening sessions were broadly comparable. Examples of such questions asked by facilitators include:

- ▶ To repair harm, we have to acknowledge harm. If you had to describe the one to three harms you would want reparations to acknowledge, what would they be?
- ▶ What are some of the harms that have happened to you, your family, and your community, as a result of being Black?



Figure 6 shows the top five most common themes that emerged in the community listening sessions, in this order: 1) education inequity, 2) discriminatory policing & law enforcement, 3) economic disenfranchisement, 4) housing harms, and 5) healthcare disparities. The instances of harm are discussed at greater length below.

## EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY

Harms relating to educational inequity were the most frequently mentioned within the community listening sessions. Educational inequities include the lack of a supportive infrastructure that enables opportunities for Black students to thrive and prosper educationally. Education – considered the great equalizer among life circumstances – is thought to provide a pathway toward success and economic mobility. However, Black Americans exhibit the lowest educational attainment and completion rates of all groups, which prompts inquiry into the factors and circumstances that contribute to this disparity. Participants within the community listening sessions cited experiences of specific struggles and hardships faced exclusively by the Black community that contribute to disproportionate outcomes between Black students and their non-Black counterparts.

### *Lack of Black Instructors*

One theme that emerged during dialogue pertaining to Black children’s educational struggles in K-12 education and early childhood learning was the lack of Black teachers and instructors within the classroom. There were frequent references of this theme among listening session respondents, namely that their children encountered a lack of fundamental understanding at the hands of non-Black teachers. This lack of understanding, as one participant mentions, translates to the “mistreatment of our Black students, which causes a lapse in their ability to learn.” Such mistreatment, both from teachers and from school personnel, was consistently voiced within the listening sessions. One parent noted that the lack of understanding that a teacher had for her son led to him being singled out and experiencing differential treatment by school personnel:


“[T]he teacher tried to previously have him tested out of the class to be put in special ed because she just simply didn’t want him in the class. He wasn’t a bad student. This all happened behind my back without any knowledge, without any parent consent. The principal knew about it. The entire staff knew about it. The special education department questioned it, but they really couldn’t get anywhere with their questions. So, the principal basically continued his stance on that.”

A few respondents mentioned that some teachers make Black children feel defective and are responsible for pushing them out of the school system. Ultimately, these participants indicated that the lack of foundational understanding or even willingness to understand, results in implicit bias against Black students on the part of teachers and staff, thereby fostering an animosity or scrutiny that the child will internalize and that can greatly affect their ability to grasp concepts and learn on par with their peers.

### *School to Prison Pipeline & Over-Criminalization of Black Boys*

The implicit biases of school instructors and personnel relates to the emergent theme of over-criminalization of Black boys in schools. Some listening session participants’ responses directly demonstrated the widely known “school-to-prison pipeline” that connects Black children in schools to outcomes of carceral involvement. Specifically, these responses detailed the process whereby non-Black school staff constructed alternative narratives of Black boys, in which the boys were perceived and interpreted through a deficit-based lens. One participant shared their perspective about how Black boys are:

“[B]eing categorized because [they’re] a student of color. And they’re creating negative narratives for our Black boys, which also seems to be the catalyst for them being forced into the prison system based on their quote-unquote perception of behavior or what they qualify as behaviors and things like that. Teachers misusing their position in order to push a narrative based on these particular structures that are put in place ...”



**[W]e have to be aware, and we have to make our kids aware of what's going on ... until we get reparation[s] ... as far as I'm concerned, we're still in slavery.**

Another story was conveyed, which details the extent that racial bias may contribute to not only the manner in which the school decides to intervene in conflict arising between two students but also how racial prejudice can interfere with development and influence early involvement with the juvenile carceral system:

“...[M]y oldest, in the second grade, there was an incident on the playground where a little girl ran into him on the playground. He was minding his business, playing ... when this situation happened with this little girl running into him, they pushed to have him prosecuted as a second grader, prosecuted for assault against this little girl, where the principal also went to the parents and encouraged them to have him prosecuted for assault because this little girl who ran into him suffered a bloody nose.”

### *Lack of Culturally Responsive Curriculum*

Another theme that was alluded to in several instances while discussing educational harms hindering Black people referred to the lack of culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogical approaches. Respondents who spoke to this phenomena indicated the importance of feeling a sense of connection and belonging within the classroom. Although this can be achieved through a variety of channels, participants often mentioned the significance of being taught through an Afro-centric lens. One participant noted, “I think that’s very important that we have real education and real history in the schools. Our children need to know what happened pre-colonization as it references to Africans.”

The lack of a high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum was also discussed by another participant, who concluded that the absence of such is a supportive curriculum is a primary reason why a larger subset of Black youth are “lost” and eventually become involved with the carceral system. Specifically, the participant detailed how those imprisoned are victims because:

“They had nowhere to go. Nowhere to express themselves. They didn’t have the proper education to rebuild their community, and they didn’t know all the things that were coming up against them. All the things that were going, that were put in front of them as hurdles. They fell over the hurdles, and they didn’t realize what was happening to them was an organized effort to destroy them.”

As the participant conveys, it is the lack of a culturally inclusive and empowering curriculum for Black youth while coming of age that represents yet another way in which K-12 schooling system marginalizes Black populations. Failing to connect and correlate lesson plans to the specific experiences and realities of students – namely students of color – can contribute negatively to their identity development.

## **DISCRIMINATORY POLICING, LAW ENFORCEMENT & CRIMINALIZATION**

Black Californians who participated in the listening sessions discussed at length their experiences and concerns with the criminal legal system, and detailed their experiences with discriminatory policing practices, in particular.

Throughout all of the listening sessions, the matter of police reform represented a major area of concern. Participants openly discussed the need to eradicate police violence, and many participants specifically recalled various encounters within California’s criminal legal system, and the subsequent harms resulting from such system involvement. Five prevalent sub-themes emerged throughout the listening sessions:

1. Racial profiling within policing
2. Excessive use of force by police
3. Discrimination and Injustice Within the Legal System
4. Negative experiences with incarceration
5. The extensive history of legalized racism and anti-Blackness

### *Racial Profiling Within Policing*

One of the most pressing anxieties expressed by Black Californians within their comments was the act of racial profiling by law enforcement. Many attendees suggested that racial biases and profiling resulted in disproportionate incarceration rates and harsher sentencing. They argued that these practices resulted in negative impacts for Black communities statewide.

Some participants referenced the “War on Drugs” as a facet of efforts by the government during the early 1980s to justify racial targeting within policing. One attendee described the “War on Drugs” as a War on Black people, and this point was reiterated by a subset of participants. Many stated their belief that the “War on Drugs” was a ploy to over-police and convict Black people.

Regarding more recent experiences of racial profiling, several participants referred to instances of racially motivated prejudice and profiling of Black children at the hands of police. One attendee noted:

“And I can recall one night, my sister and I – this was probably my first encounter. We were coming home from her school dance. She attended Jordan High School, and we were coming home from a school dance. [We] got to our home, and ... The police weren’t accustomed to seeing African Americans with nice cars or living in nice homes. They pulled up beside my sister and I and began to ask us questions, made us get out of the car, and it went from bad to worse just by the responses we gave. Where are you coming from? Why are you driving this type of vehicle? And my sister gave them short answers, and that was not good enough for them. One of the police officers held off and slapped her, and that just set alarms off through the city of Long Beach and Compton. At that time, that was the Rainbow Coalition, so Al Sharpton and Reverend Jesse Jackson came. My father was a pastor, and he was well-known. He contacted them. They came, and we did the march all the way from Long Beach to Compton. And you would think that – you know, as kids, we thought that would change things.”

### *Excessive Use of Force by Police*

The history and knowledge of – and in some instances experiences with – police use of excessive force causes fear in everyday life. Some parents acknowledged that they live with this fear every day beginning as soon as their children step out of the door:

“You don’t know what it means to send your kid out and not know if they’re gonna get stopped by the police or get killed that day.”

Others discussed how fear of the police shapes their everyday lives, consciously or unconsciously, in ways that many might not recognize:

“In the years that I’ve progressed here and saw all the killings and all the different things that was just unnecessarily – I believe – unnecessarily done to the Black people, it brought me to become aware of my surroundings. Where I go, even though we’re free to walk out there, you are not like – you can’t express yourself in a way. My son now, he’s 24. Both my kids were born here. Grew up ... And it’s like I have to tell him, you drive out there, son. If you are stopped by the police, please, please, just do what they say. I never thought that I’d have to be telling my kids this type of stuff because to us, America was the place of freedom. We came here to get a better life and everything else.”



The participant continued:

“Well, fast forward to a couple of years ago where my son was. He and his friend were jaywalking across the street ... and it actually wasn’t jaywalking. The light had turned green for them to go, and it was one of those intersections where the light changes really quick. They get to the other side, and before they could get their foot onto the sidewalk, a cop came up because the light has turned red now. He pulls my son and my brother to the side. My brother is white. I have an adopted brother. They pull my son and my brother to the side – same age, both of them. They threw my son on the hood of the car, told my brother to have a seat on the sidewalk. Asked them why were they jaywalking? [M]y son, [said] ‘Sorry, officer. We, you know, we were trying to get across.’ [The officer told him to] shut up. You know, to that extent. My brother, on the other hand, white privilege, was like, ‘You can’t do that to us. You can’t do that.’ And he, the officer, did not do anything to him. They profiled my son, took his picture. We had to go down to court. He got a jaywalking ticket. We told the judge exactly what happened. And the thing of it, it was, the judge was an African American judge. We brought my Caucasian brother with us to court so that he could tell. They did not care anything about that. And so, you know, that right there set fear and not only fear, but anger, anger towards [the] police system, towards authority, towards, you know, all of that.”

### *Discrimination and Injustice Within the Legal System*

Notable experiences were shared by listening session participants that describe discriminatory practices and judgments being applied within the legal system infrastructure. Specifically, the participants described the legal process as unfairly impacting Black Californians in terms of accessibility to legal resources and information, the processing of conviction and sentencing procedures, and the structure of the bail bonds system. One participant shared some evidence concerning this, saying:

“It’s so bad that so many Black men or Black females are incarcerated ... And, you know, as far as recidivism and the justice system, we don’t have a fair shake. You know, there’s not an equal playing system or playing field as far as receiving sentences, you know? Because, we don’t always have a fair shake as far as receiving the same sentencing as our white counterparts do.”

This “lack of a fair shake” in the legal system was conveyed across many reflections shared by the listening session participants. Specifically, the jury selection process and the discretion of final verdict were described as a primary area in which the legal infrastructure harms Black people. As one participant said, there are “all types of ways that the unjust legal system touches us. And the juries and the jury selection process ... there have to be changes to that.”

Another experience that emerged in a few instances included the lack of quality legal representation, in terms of the acquisition of a public defender, and the lack of suitable and competent legal defense and support. One participant described how the lack of ability to pay for an experienced attorney led to being pushed to accept a plea deal to evade a trial. Another participant described a similar experience and extrapolated this occurrence to the greater injustices of the legal infrastructure, noting:

“It appears that when a lot of young men or anybody who is caught up in any accusations of criminal activity goes to court that there are incredible amounts of charges laid on them, and you know, assuming that it would be very terrible to even try and fight that with a lawyer or jury system which some of them can’t afford. And so, what happens is they get – they’re partial to plea bargain to a few relatively minor charges, and they still wind up with a record because of that. And I think that’s just a terrible injustice and a terrible misuse of the justice system. And I think that’s probably something that affects a lot of people that are caught up in the justice system, and that needs to change.”

Another respondent describes this issue of anti-Blackness being perpetuated within the courtroom and in legal dealings, as follows:

“I’ve been on jury duty a lot, and I never get to see a courtroom. Why? Because these prosecutors are

making deals with our young men, right? Our beautiful young men with a lot of potential, destroying their potential at that point. All right? That has to stop. You know, I hear a lot of people talking about it, but I don't see anything changing, right? You know, that affects a whole bunch of people, right? Strong young men are really there to take care of their family. So now they've got children who, again, grow up without their father. What is that about? Why is that allowed to happen to such a marginalized community at a rate so much greater than any other community, especially those resources? It's ridiculous. Why is the question I ask – and whatnot. Why is it necessary for a person to be pulled from their family, for the destruction of property, while those people who destroy lives get to walk free? Right? So there needs to be a split happening – right? So, I don't know. I don't know the solutions, but I'm just sharing my perspective. Yeah.”

The theme of being falsely imprisoned and criminally convicted by law enforcement agents emerged several times as well. One participant described being falsely convicted and imprisoned for over two decades. It was not until former President Barack Obama granted him clemency that he was allowed to return to his community:

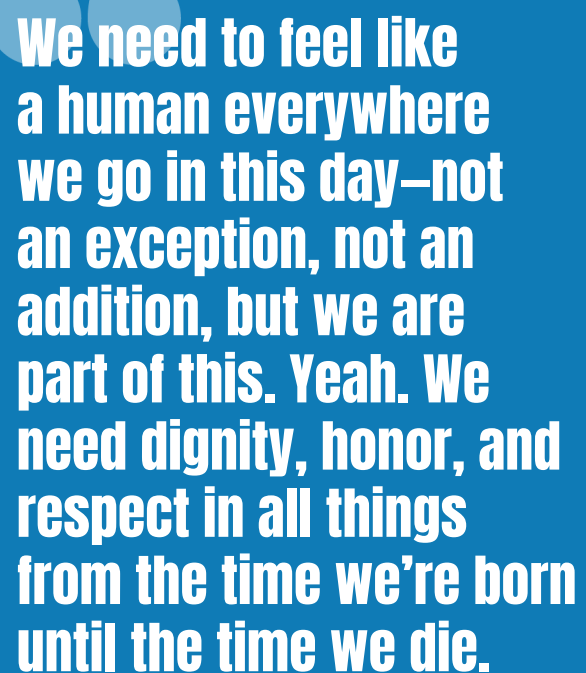
“I'm one of those people who Obama released from prison when he did his clemency project. I was serving two life sentences for a crime that I did not commit.”

The discriminatory way in which Black people have been falsely targeted by police and entrapped within the carceral state cannot be overstated, as false convictions have a tremendous impact on the lives of individuals, their families, and their lineages for generations. This observation was reflected by a gentleman who shared he was falsely imprisoned and later had his sentence commuted:

“I believe that time is our most valuable asset and that we need to be very cautious on how we spend our time, what we spend our time on and who we spend our time with ... It's the most valuable asset ... and I'm almost seventy years old. My children are in their fifties, right? And that time is so valuable that a lot of people don't understand that time is your asset. You can't, you [can't] get anything back that you give away in time that you spend in time. You know, before I left in my twenties, I started my company when I was seventeen years old, and then I was incarcerated, and then I got out in 1990, and by 1996 I was serving life for a crime I didn't commit ... I got eight children and twenty-three grandchildren, and three great [grandchildren]. So, I just came here to say, look to introduce myself to let you all know that I'm here. I'm back after twenty-one years of incarceration for a crime I didn't commit.”

Finally, the participants in the listening sessions identified the inaccessibility of the bail bonds system as a primary tool used to enforce the detainment of Black individuals as they await their legal proceedings. The discriminatory nature of this system was discussed briefly by some participants, and wide consensus was found regarding the disproportionate difficulty experienced by Black people in accessing funds for bail, in addition to the bail amounts determined by the judges. One individual detailed their experience navigating this system:

“All the sudden, I don't have bail. I'm in jail. I just lost the job I have with a whole bunch of people – a community of people I work with who have respect for me, and I have respect for them. That's destroyed. There's no more



**We need to feel like a human everywhere we go in this day—not an exception, not an addition, but we are part of this. Yeah. We need dignity, honor, and respect in all things from the time we're born until the time we die.**

income because you don't have bail? What? Because you did something that – you know ... it just destroys everything, and it's not necessary to destroy lives even when someone makes a mistake.”

### *Negative Experiences with Incarceration*

The racialized targeting of Black populations by the police – in addition to the lack of institutional fairness within the legal process, especially with respect to conviction – was cited by many listening session participants as the main catalyst for the Black communities' overrepresentation in the U.S. prison population.

Among those who had experienced the carceral system, the poor quality of conditions within the system was cited as another significant source of harm. Described as a form of retribution for one's alleged crimes, the prison industrial complex as an institution was described by many Black participants as “excruciatingly cruel” toward Black people. One respondent reported:

“It's really important to acknowledge that correctional institutions have not been correcting anyone but have been places of torture and that people have been treated like less than people – like less than animals under the care of the government.”

Further, the impact of incarceration extends beyond convicted individuals to their families as well, which was acknowledged in several instances. A few participants noted that the jails and prisons in which individuals are held are often distant from where their families reside, which further exacerbates harms experienced by the incarcerated individual and their family. More specifically, one listening session attendee described this experience as:

“The separation of families and the protection of young families ... That's something that I see that should never be happening. Imprisoned people are separated from their families. That should never happen. First of all, [it's] questionable even why they're in prison because we shouldn't trust police officers, you know, as telling the truth. So, we should never even consider their testimony, first and foremost, when it comes to imprisoned people. But the fact that they imprison people so far away from their families is problematic. If somebody has to be imprisoned, they should be in the community.”

### *Extensive History of Legalized Racism and Anti-Blackness*

Although California was a free state before to the Emancipation Proclamation, many Black Californians recognized that the legacy of slavery shaped legislation nevertheless at the federal level. Several attendees proposed remedies for the vestiges of this archaic legislation; they also communicated a desire for the acknowledgment of these discriminatory laws. Among the mentions of these historical legal injustices were the following:

“The first state to have legalized slavery was Massachusetts. It said, ‘there should never be any bond slavery, [villeinage] or captivity among us unless it be by lawful captives taken in just wars and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us.’ That was in 1641. First state to legalize slavery. The Thirteenth Amendment says, ‘Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude except as punishment for crime whereof the party have been duly convicted.’ The Fifth Amendment ... talks about crime, and it says that the persons have to be ... convicted with due process of law. The Fourteenth Amendment ... It talks about citizens et cetera, okay? And it says this also was a matter of – without due process of law, but the Thirteenth Amendment said nothing about due process of law. Now the Massachusetts law was recognized as making slavery legal. It used the word unless it be lawfully captive et cetera. The Thirteenth Amendment used the statement except as punishment. Except [is] a synonym of unless. So, my point is: slavery is a continuing tort. We are still legally slaves because they didn't say by due process of the law here. It says if you are duly convicted. What does that mean? We have been convicted by this society. They consider all of us criminals.”

“Every time my husband, nephews, and brothers go out – they have PhDs, they're running organizations – they still are equally threatened by the police that are there to protect them. It doesn't matter. So, at



some point, we have to stand and say enough is enough.”

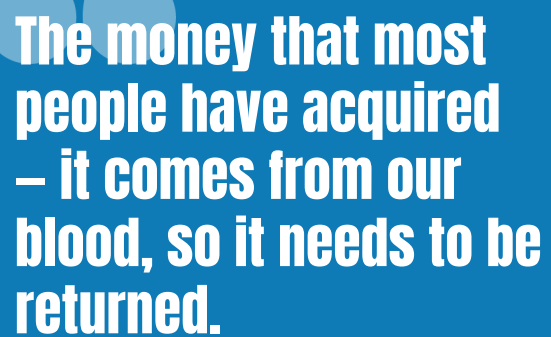
## ECONOMIC DISENFRANCHISEMENT

Among the numerous individual responses recorded in the community listening sessions, experiences stemming from economic and financial disenfranchisement were among the most commonly described. Disenfranchisement – the act of depriving a person or group of people of inherent/guaranteed/assured freedoms, rights, or privileges – when in reference to financial or economic deprivation, refers to the exclusion of individuals from opportunities that the individual or group requires to improve or sustain their financial outlook and generate wealth.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a group that is economically disenfranchised and possesses fewer opportunities than other groups to achieve financial security and upward social mobility is thus structurally oppressed by both the institutions and the beneficiaries of this configuration. This sort of oppression can result in widespread disparities among the financial prospects and outcomes of these groups, to which economic inequality, or the “unequal distribution of income and opportunity between different groups in society,” takes place. This is widely evident throughout the listening sessions data, in which Black respondents largely discussed themes related to both the historical origins and present-day channels through which this discrimination persists.

### *Lack of Compensation for Forced Labor*

It was commonly noted throughout the community listening sessions that from its earliest origins, the United States had legalized and endorsed the institution of chattel enslavement of Africans and Black people. Slavery of Black people within the U.S. dates to before the official founding of the country as an independent, sovereign nation, and remained an active institution for nearly 250 years. The economy of America relied upon the forced, unrelenting labor of Black people and their children for generations, on behalf of the white individuals to whom they were sold. Unyielding labor, in addition to other atrocities – such as whippings, mutilation, lynchings, rape, branding, and dismemberment – were commonplace and became ingrained as a central feature of enslavement. The labor of those enslaved largely consisted of harvesting agricultural products – such as rice, cotton and tobacco – as well as tending to livestock, and the construction of buildings – among other things. Despite the revenue and wealth this generated, both for the individual slave owner and for the nation, those who were enslaved and those who descended from formerly enslaved ancestors received no financial restitution or repayment for the services rendered or the atrocities endured.

The participants in the listening sessions often referred to this lack of comparable compensation for the forced labor and ancestral bloodshed as being unresolved and long overdue. One participant mentioned how the “...vast amount of blood money gained by the U.S. government and some of its citizens can be directly tied to the uncompensated labor from my ancestors. With that blood money, the government and some of its citizens have been reaping the benefits passing down to generations their wealth from the institution of slavery, and we’ve been systematically locked out of that.”



**The money that most people have acquired – it comes from our blood, so it needs to be returned.**

This notion is not incorrect, as the institution of slavery and the forced labor of Black ancestors served as the primary catalyst for the development of the United States as a major economic powerhouse globally. The production of food, goods, and infrastructure – carried out by Black ancestors forced to labor through inhumane conditions – built and carried the U.S. Gross Domestic Product and allowed America to rise to the extent it is currently, the largest economy in the world. Despite high levels of amassed wealth built on the backs of enslaved Africans, the U.S. has failed to render any formal accountability for the atrocities that occurred within the first several cen-

<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster

turies of its founding and continues to fail to recognize the need for restitution or repayment to the descendants of those enslaved for their ancestors' painful, shattering, forced contributions to the economic growth of this nation.

### *Longstanding History of Legal Provisions Suppressing Black Peoples' Earning Potential and Outcomes*

Another economic topic that emerged in the listening session data involved the continuity, or lack thereof, of laws and policies that legally reinforced economic disparities and inequality. A few respondents discussed how, after slavery was formally abolished, there were promises of financial restitution to be allotted through the government, including the payment of 40 acres and one mule to each individual family unit. These promises, however, as noted by some participants, did not come to pass for a large majority of Black families. One participant details this occurrence more explicitly, stating:

“General Sherman tried to give – he took federal land along the coast from the Atlantic to the Pacific to give back to freed slaves ... after Sherman did his executive order – it's called order number fifteen – President Andrew Johnson came in and revoked it so that African Americans could not gain economic independence.”

Ultimately, there was very little enforcement of restitution provisions, and many families did not receive their benefits. A few listening session participants followed-up and remarked on this, in a similar manner. Primarily, they described the wealth that white Americans have acquired post-slavery as something that “comes from our [ancestors'] blood... so it needs to be returned.”

### *Unequal Opportunities for Economic Upward Mobility Between Black and Non-Black Individuals*

Regarding the ways in which economic harms manifest today, there were quite a few references made to the racial gap in opportunities to build and maintain financial wealth and security. While describing their financial hardships, a few listening session attendees touched on differences in income stemming from differences in employment opportunities. One participant explained their experience of being employed and compensated at lower salary than a white counterpart with similar credentials. In another instance, a participant described not only the complications of receiving lesser pay on average, but a narrower employment outlook and simultaneously lower-level economic opportunities that stem from such underemployment. The participant said, “[T]hat is ridiculous. And yet white men ... get these great jobs, and they can pay off their debt. But that doesn't happen for Black women.”

The employment of Black individuals in blue-collar employment industries, and the implications of this, was alluded to within the listening sessions, specifically regarding the gap in economic opportunities. Some participants described many Black workers as being employed in occupations that, on average, provide lesser pay, fewer benefits, lower prestige, and fewer opportunities to progress. This is demonstrated by one individual, who noted that they could identify the lack of opportunity in their own prospects and those of their family members:

“I'm actually working towards my MSW, working towards getting [an] LCSW, and in light of just everything that has gone on, my nephews are having a very difficult time finding opportunity. I will have my third degree, and I'm still having difficulty finding opportunity because it is about networking. It's about who can walk you in ...”

As other participants expressed, the pandemic took a tremendous toll on the economic conditions of Black individuals. One listening session attendee describes this as follows:

“Yeah. Then the pandemic hit. Everything – they had to put things on hold. But there's – you know, now we have – what's that, inflation? What's that, the crisis that we're having with the money? Everything is high. Gas high. So, no one can afford anything right now, so all that's getting put on hold and – but the

housing is still going up. It makes no sense.”

To highlight the unequal opportunities by race, one participant referred to the recent sale of the Baldwin Hills-Crenshaw Mall. The mall, located in the heart of Black Los Angeles – the Crenshaw District – was formerly owned by a people of color-led investment firm and is one of the oldest malls in the country. It went into financial distress partly because of the global pandemic and was offered for sale. One bidding group was led by a local, community-led, mostly Black investment group called Downtown Crenshaw. The participant pointed out that this community-led investment group was not selected by the trustee of the sale (an independent financial company with no ties to the community) even though they had the highest bid and were from the community:

“I’m part of downtown Crenshaw, the organization that fought to buy the Crenshaw mall, which although we submitted the highest bid, they refused to sell the mall to us...”

## HOUSING INEQUITY & DISPLACEMENT

One of the primary concerns for the attendees of the listening sessions was discriminatory practices regarding assessments of their homes and the economic barriers that they face when seeking to buy homes and property in California. In these discussions, several participants expressed their anxiety regarding the affordability and availability of quality housing options in California, specifically with respect to their ability to maintain housing amid rising costs and discriminatory practices in the housing market.

### *Rising Home Costs*

Participants widely alluded to the increasing costs of both renting and owning property within California, as a major concern. Those looking to purchase a home faced rising costs in terms of the initial down payment as well as closing costs, which they referred to as increasingly difficult. One participant described their experiences with attempting to purchase a home in the current housing market:

“And it has been interesting to see how property values and how our homes – and how Black homes are valued just based off certain things that they may have culturally represented in the house. And we also see there is a prevalence of cash offers only in places like East Oakland for different residences. So now the average person who might want to build some wealth and some sustainability for themselves, if they don’t have half-a-million dollars in cash, you can’t live anywhere from High Street in East Oakland all the way down to the San Leandro border if you don’t have that much money in cash.”

Further, other participants noted that these rising costs contribute to the evident housing crisis, in which many individuals, especially Black people, are being priced out of their homes. The result – as some participants noted – is an increasing rate of Black homelessness and displacement of Black people out of neighborhoods they had historically called home. Remarks from one participant, allude to these changes:

“I live by the USC area where Black and Brown people are giving up their properties, and it saddens me that Black and Brown people are in that area giving up their property to these developers that don’t care about us ... And then to watch in my neighborhood, developers and homes that I can probably afford to own, they’re coming in and just smashing houses down and building apartment buildings all the way up to the sky. So, where I was staying at, it was a Black-owned – lady. Her mother passed up in age. I begged her, please – it’s not even my property, but I begged her, ‘Please don’t sell your property because everybody else is doing it.’ But I guess when developers come and you don’t see that type of money ever in your life, you give up your property. So that’s what she did. She gave up her property. So now I’m in a position where they’re on me. Like, hey, we need you to move. And I’m like, hey, wait a minute, I know rent is high, and I don’t want to move if I’m going to have to run into a homeless problem.”

This experience speaks not only to the process of being priced out but specifically being priced out of communities that have been historically occupied by fellow members of the Black community.

## *Gentrification*

The theme of gentrification emerged within the discussion of housing inequity, and many participants described experiences of this process. Broadly, gentrification is the residential displacement of lower-income residents by higher-income individuals willing and able to pay higher rent levels in economically changing lower-income neighborhoods that tend to be disproportionately Black or Brown communities. Many recount their experiences with rental prices rising so high that they could no longer afford their residence or any other residence within their neighborhoods. They also could not afford rising home prices in historically Black communities that once provided affordable home ownership. One participant referenced this phenomenon, detailing their struggles in acquiring home ownership in an area of their preference:

“I want to be able to buy a home. I’m finally in a position to be able to buy a home but guess what? I’m only approved for \$500,000 which means I’m gonna have to leave the community that I love and want to live in and want to continue to raise my kids in ... [T]he house across the street just sold for 1.6 million ... So, I can’t afford to live in the community that I love and have built in.”

This and several other stories shared by listening session participants make evident that the burden of having to sacrifice either owning a home or residing in a location that is preferred is one that wears greatly on Black people. The reasons for choosing a particular neighborhood or community to reside and settle down in ranged from the quality of local amenities to the prevalence and belonging of ones’ cultural community to perceived safety. Black individuals have experienced a long history of destruction of personal property and dismantling of community at the hands of the majority groups in society. In the present-day version of this process, the erosion of generational ownership within particular neighborhoods is seen – namely historically Black communities – due to the rising home costs.

Another participant shared a story with similar circumstances, and said:

“[T]he way it is now, it seems like we’re being pushed out. We can’t be in the home that we’re – that you grew up in, so it feels like you have a place.”

“And so, we’ve lost family homes. We’ve lost generational homes that have been in our families for years. And now we’re coming to a time where it’s becoming too expensive to live. And so, we’re losing not only the knowledge of how to upkeep a home, right? But also, how to act. How can we actually stay here, right, and afford to live in this space and then pass it on and have the luxury of even dreaming of passing it along to our kids?”

The importance of not only owning property, but specifically owning it within an area that enables Black people to feel a sense of safety and belonging cannot be understated.

## *Discriminatory Lending & Rental Experiences*

In addition to being disproportionately impacted by gentrification and rising housing costs, Black Californians recounted experiences of discriminatory behaviors and practices witnessed or endured while attempting to purchase or rent properties. Several participants described outright prejudice while shopping for rental properties. One participant said:

“Fontana was very racist, and they definitely made you realize that there was a dividing line as far as where you could live. Nobody could live south of Miller because they had signs up showing that there were places for sale and for rent, but if you go and inquire about [them], they would say it was already sold. It was already rented.”

This anecdote is indicative of the prejudice of the property owners and landlords, many of whom deny Black individuals the opportunity to rent or own their properties. Experiences such as these are clear cases of discrimination based on race. However, several other experiences of being denied the opportunity to rent a home based

on economic standing were also detailed – namely, participation within a housing assistance-voucher program. A few participants described their experiences in obtaining a rental unit through use of government-funded Section 8 vouchers. Specifically, participants discussed the hardship they experienced in securing a rental property using these housing vouchers, which ensure that the full rate of rent will be paid to the landlord each month because the government subsidizes the remaining portion of rent that the tenant cannot pay. Essentially, the Section 8 Voucher program ensures the property owner receives full compensation for their unit. Nonetheless, a participants discussed their struggles in being accepted for a rental unit while having Section 8 assistance. One educator working closely with Black families within a school-based setting offered her perspective on this and the crisis it presents for children of parents who are low-income and struggling to obtain a place to live:

“Demand that these landlords stop discriminating on Section 8 vouchers and that we get our students housing because our kids can’t thrive ... we had three Black students in middle school commit suicide in one week you know?”

Other experiences that were discussed within the theme of housing harms involved discriminatory practices with lending. A few respondents alluded to experiences in which they had difficulty securing a bank loan for home purchases, though they met all qualifications. One respondent noted specifically, “when I tried to purchase my house, it was difficult. At the time I was making a salary, I had more than 50% to put down, but I couldn’t get a full loan. I couldn’t get a full loan. I had the money. I had everything, and I just couldn’t get it.”

Another participant discussed the significantly high ratio between the costs of the mortgage and the interest rates and property taxes on homes that she experienced. The participant took on a home loan with very high interest rates, paying over 200% of the actual cost of her mortgage on interest, fees, and local taxes. This experience exemplifies sub-harms, as it relates to housing harms: lack of affordability of home, lack of information and insight upon obtaining home loan, lack of regulation/price-gap over home loan interest rates, and predatory lending practices.

The experiences participants articulated exhibited a pattern of systematic discrimination and predatory lending practices against Black Californians. Listening session attendees repeatedly emphasized the barriers that these practices pose to upward economic mobility and self-sufficiency. The perspectives shared by Black Californians also suggested that the denial of the opportunity to accumulate capital and wealth for their families was among the primary factors in economic disenfranchisement and wealth inequality.

## HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES

Instances of discrimination within the healthcare sector, lack of affordability of quality healthcare services, and blatant anti-Blackness fall into this category. Listening session participants provided detailed experiences of structural racism from healthcare professionals, in service provision, and across the entire fabric of the healthcare infrastructure.

### *Disproportionate Access to Quality Healthcare Services*

There was quite a bit of discussion within the listening sessions about lack of access to healthcare services – with even less access to higher-quality services. This was described by several participants in a variety of instances, with one explicitly noting: “[Black folks] don’t have ... [y]ou know ... equal access to health care.” The lack of access to quality healthcare was further elaborated on by other individuals, one of whom stated:

“[We need] access to resources that affects our bodies. And wanting – for me, wanting to see Black women be their full selves, to live up to their full potential. And forces that shape our societal structures, including those access or lack of access to resources, become embodied in our health. So, creating that framework, creating that framework where we have the choice to – the decision to have access to the best possible health resources, to the decision that’s not just based on our income level.”

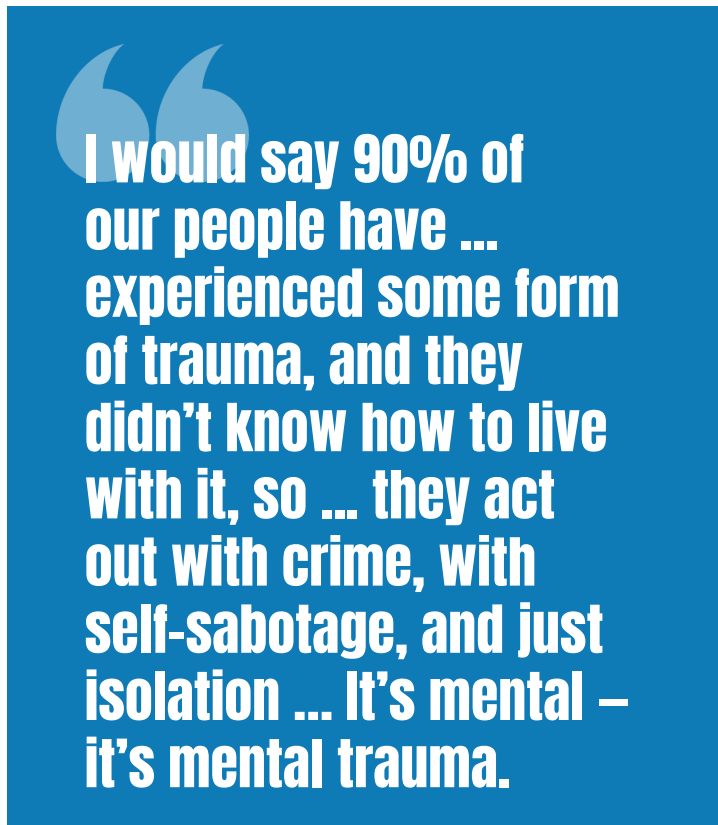


Furthermore, there was wide discussion of the social determinants of health, specifically, how structural racism is embedded into the healthcare infrastructure. One individual described this as follows:

“Right now, there is so much out there in health care to prove that this is true. You know, they’re even out there saying racism is a public health crisis. So, if you out there admitt[ing] it, do something ... I feel like this is what’s killing us, you know?”

### *Disparate Black Health Outcomes*

There was frequent mention of the disparate healthcare outcomes that Black individuals often encounter. The most prevalent topic to emerge from the listening sessions involved considerations pertaining to Black mortality and birth injustices that Black families experience. Describing this, one individual detailed their traumatic experience while giving birth:



**I would say 90% of our people have ... experienced some form of trauma, and they didn't know how to live with it, so ... they act out with crime, with self-sabotage, and just isolation ... It's mental – it's mental trauma.**

“My birth experience is very stressful and disrespectful. [It] still traumatize me to this day and actually transformed who I was as a clinician and a person because of who I have to become to overcome things like that that impact your body.”

Other perspectives arising from conversations relating to Black mortality injustices included how “Black women need to be safe wherever they decide to give birth” and the fact that “...the Black infant health rate is horrible.”

This was further elaborated on by several participants, with one specifically noting:

“The attack of the womb needs to end on all levels. I know I’m going way beyond, but we need to protect the Black womb. If we’re going to protect Black people, it starts right there. Right?”

### *Inadequate Mental Healthcare Access*

Among health harms, many emphasized mental health. Notably, participants characterized mental health harms as enduring, stigmatizing, and often the primary factor behind other health issues. One person indicated:

“... mental health illnesses, substance abuse, emotional and physical abuse, things like that. Those are issues that we need to break the stigma behind that.”

### *Historical and Inter-generational Trauma Within Health Care Settings*

Within health care settings, many participants described instances of racialized trauma perpetrated by medical professionals. Notably, participants shared stories pertaining to the nation’s history of forced sterilization of Black people. As one individual shared:

“The sterilization of men and women, I think is something that is ... has been problematic in the past, and just the sub par treatment continues. And so just for like reproductive health to be in the conversation is one of many major harms since slavery and just wanted to just say that here.”

A few other participants detailed their connections to forced sterilization today, expressing the inter-generational

impacts of having elder family members suffer from distress and trauma due to their exploitative experiences with healthcare professionals. One example was expressed by a participant recounting a story from a woman about her late mother's health battles:

“[A] young woman said that she had just lost her mother earlier this year and that she wanted reparations to address the medical harms that her family and other African Americans who are descendants of people who were enslaved in this country face because while her mother was in her last days, her mother told her that she was a victim of forced sterilization, and that ... in her last days, that she had went to a doctor for a procedure, and while that procedure was supposed to happen, the doctor gave her a hysterectomy.”

Other participants drew connections between healthcare injustices today and those experienced in the past. One person specifically drew parallels between the present and past treatments of Black people that fell below the standard of care:

“The disposable treatment of what I would say, just Black bodies in general, has endured since slavery, infant and maternal health comes to mind. Like as the United States, as a developed nation, African American mothers and babies have very high mortality rates. And I think that is ... a hangover since chattel slavery where we have been treated like chattel and ... the health care system continues to treat Black folks not well ... where they have to go to the hospital many, many times to get treatment.”

## EXTENT OF SUPPORT FOR REPARATIONS

### *Supportive of Reparations*

Another common theme in the listening session was the level of support for reparations initiatives. A majority of the listening session participants vocalized their support of reparations to rectify past and current harms and to pay homage to Black ancestors. A seventy-five-year-old participant, who was born in Compton, stated that she was fighting for reparations when “no one else was doing it” and that reparations was necessary for “repair” and to “make us [Black people] whole.”

Not only did participants talk about their support for reparations, many also underscored the importance of reparations by describing the various ways in which debts are owed to Black Americans. As one participant noted:

“[T]he nation must recognize how the country has continued to profit off of Black people, our labor, and our creativity. It continues to create ways to marginalize and dismiss our community.”

Another participant communicated the importance of reparations to their ancestors and the imperative that Californians continue the fight for reparations using different organizing strategies, stating:

“People say what can [you] do? One thing, wherever you go, talk about reparations. Write it on your mail, reparations in memory of our ancestors. You don't never hear me talk without beginning with reparations



**We are traumatized by exclusion and marginalization. And I think that reparations will build a platform for us to be rid of that ... and from that stable base begin to build according to our needs.**

in memory of our ancestors. You could talk about it, write it up for our ancestors, find you a grassroots organization, get involved, document everything that you did.”

### Questioning or Unsure of Reparations

Most participants were in full support of reparations. Yet, a small but significant minority were unsure about these initiatives. They were worried about the effectiveness of particular types of reparations options, and/or whether any reparations would seriously be considered.

Among the latter group, some questioned whether direct cash payments would serve as an effective way of historically resolving generational harms. One participant noted, “I’m not a proponent of giving cash as a reparation because we have been so thoroughly damaged psychologically that cash money would not lift us up out of our circumstances.” Another participant echoed this statement:

“It can’t just be like a cash payment. Like, that is not acceptable. It needs to be something that is generational because what happened to Black people in this country is generational. This has to be something that our kids’ kids’ kids are benefiting from because of everything else that our ancestors dealt with. So, it’s – like someone offering anything like a \$50,000 cash payment, or I don’t know what it is, but it just needs to be a substantial generational reparations.”

While most participants were in support of direct cash payments, they simultaneously asserted that this initiative must be either substantial enough to impact generations to come or be paired with other forms of reparations.

Others raised uncertainty about whether the government would be serious about giving Black people reparations. Many were skeptical of government because of its past treatment of or inability to protect Black people.

## RESOLUTIONS: A REPARATIONS APPROACH/Framework

A large portion of the listening sessions were dedicated to discussion of reparations options. The purpose of discussing different types of reparations was to determine which forms would serve to uplift and support Black community members the most. In every session, facilitators posed a version of one of the two questions below, to elicit a conversation about their desired form of reparations:

1. As you think about some of the harms discussed, how would you want to see reparations structured in a way that could help Black people heal and thrive?
2. What is your vision for the future of Black California? What does it look like, sound like, feel like (for California to be a place where Black people are thriving)?”

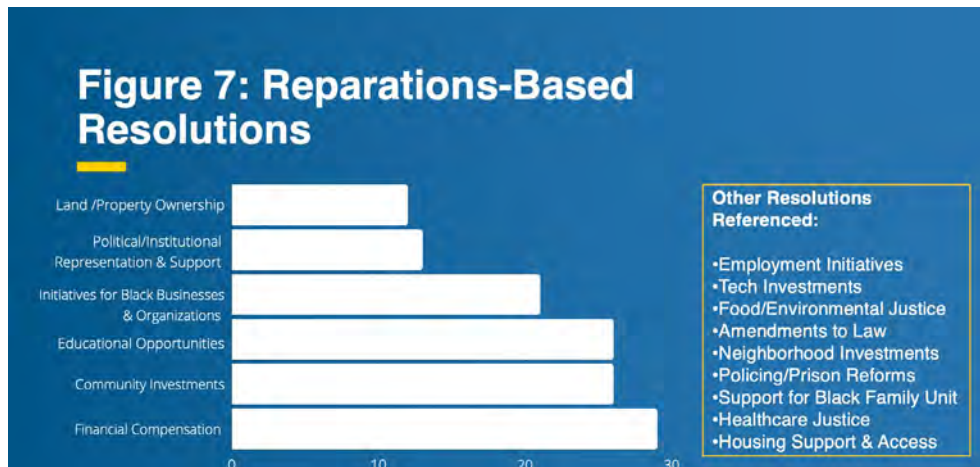




Figure 7 shows that the top five types of reparations mentioned were: 1) financial compensation (direct cash payouts & non-direct monetary alternatives) 2) investments in Black businesses and organizations, 3) educational opportunities, 4) community investments, and 5) land and property ownership.

Other forms of reparations that emerged, although to lesser degrees, included housing support and accessibility, legal amendments and resources, employment initiatives, policing & prison reforms, healthcare justice, and government acknowledgment of wrongdoing. It should be noted that many resolutions discussed by participants were not easy to put into mutually exclusive categories. A discussion of findings is below.

## FINANCIAL COMPENSATION & INVESTMENTS

By far, the most commonly referenced form of reparations was financial compensation and economic assistance. Widely discussed options under this category included direct cash payments, loan debt forgiveness or reductions, tax relief, and the expansion of economic reserves and assistance.

### *Provision of Direct Cash Payouts*

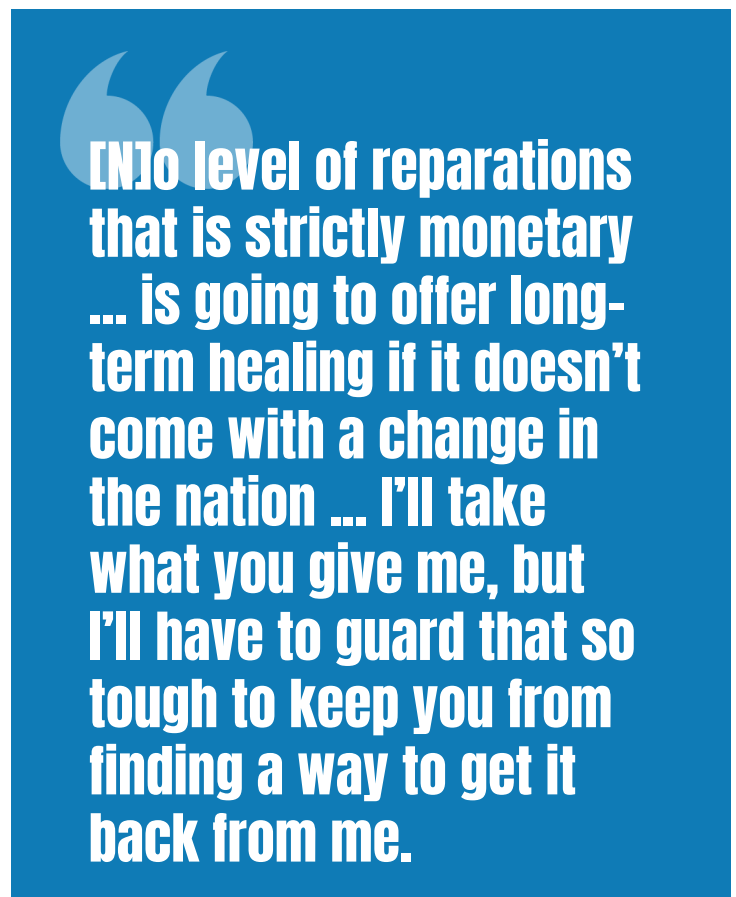
Direct compensation, through cash payments, was the most cited reparations option within the listening sessions. Participants who were in favor of direct cash payments believed that cash compensation was the only appropriate way to remedy the financial exploitation of unpaid slave labor. As one participant explained:

“Reparations should be in the form of cash payments. I definitely believe in cutting the check just like others have received reparations ... Everybody else has received cash payments. We definitely need to receive the cash payments. The vast amount of blood money gained by the U.S. government and some of its citizens can be directly tied to the uncompensated labor from my ancestors. With that blood money, the government and some of its citizens have been reaping the benefits passing down to generations their wealth from the institution of slavery, and we’ve been systematically locked out of that.”

Ultimately, participants who favored direct cash payouts referred to this form of reparations as enabling Black individuals to have the fiscal reserves to build institutions and systems that center Black people and their needs. For example, one participant noted:

“... I’m saying, give us the money and the resources. We will create our own healthcare system and make sure that all our people are well mentally, physically, and emotionally. I do not believe and trust the system that has been in place to fix our needs.”

Many participants spoke of the need to pair reparations proposals to gain maximum effectiveness. They regularly discussed the necessity of a multi-pronged reparations policy proposal that not only involved direct cash payments, but also other alternatives intended to address a variety of discriminatory harms experienced by the



Black community. As one individual shared:

“... with the move for reparations ... I want ... some repair that includes a monetary level of compensation ... you know, give us back what you took, and with what I wish it could be, which is really the dismantling of racism and structural and systemic issues in our society. So, without the one, I’m often kind of pressed to see what will the other bring ... if you don’t remove the harm, if you don’t dismantle the systems that are causing all this harm, and you give us land and some things, I don’t imagine that you’re not going to find a way to come back and take it.”

Further, participants indicated that increasing financial literacy would be important for obtaining the most benefit from direct cash reparations. For instance, one participant noted, “I think it is a lack of knowledge on some things for us, and it’ll be great to get money, but if you don’t know what to do with that money, learn how to invest in assets, you know, things like that, then that money will be gone.”

Although direct cash was extensively discussed in the listening sessions, many participants also referenced alternative forms of financial investments.

### *Alternatives to Direct Cash: Debt Reduction and Cancellation*

One form of financial compensation popular amongst listening session attendees included debt relief, through form(s) of loan reductions, modification of loan terms/interest, and expansion of loan provision opportunities. This relief was indicated across loan categories, including housing, educational, business, and personal loans.

The majority of participants that mentioned loan proposals, emphasized the need for outright debt cancellation. To some, loan debt reductions do not extend far enough to account for the debts owed to Black Americans nor the immense racial disparities in wealth. One participant went on to express the need for:

“[R]eparations around forgiveness of loans and then all this other stuff ... [because] that loan debt – you know, [is] super high, and we have such little wealth.”

Other participants described a proposal for initiatives that would modify the prevailing lending process and qualification guidelines. Proposed modifications to adjust existing loan terms, practices and qualifications included:

- ▶ Eliminating unfair, discriminatory, and predatory practices within the lending process by creditors
- ▶ Expanding loan access to more Black people
- ▶ Enabling greater opportunities for loan repayment
- ▶ Reducing negative impacts on personal credit and finances
- ▶ Promoting increased ownership of assets that would appreciate and create wealth streams

Additionally, many were concerned about loan interest rates. Loan interest rates were described by participants as a primary source of hardship that causes further complications to Black individuals’ debt repayment abilities. This was demonstrated in one participant’s account of her struggle to pay-off her mortgage (and possibly home equity) loan(s) obtained over 20 years ago:

“I own a home ... [M]y house note is 1,365 dollars. Only 400 of it is for the note; the rest is interest. What if I don’t have to pay no interest on anything”

Moreover, she expressed how the interest on her mortgage alone comprised an excessively high portion of her monthly income, burdening her – as well as many others – financially.

### *Alternatives to Direct Cash: Tax Relief, Benefits, and Exemptions*

Tax adjustments were another fiscal policy intervention frequently mentioned during the listening sessions. Specifically, participants suggested adjustments such as tax incentives, benefits, exemptions, and credits for repa-

rations-eligible Black Californians. The purpose of this type of resolution is to aid in providing economic relief to Black community.

Participants offered two types of tax adjustment proposals: 1) the eradication of taxes outright and 2) the reduction of taxes. Several individuals declared “that black people should be exempt from taxes in California” altogether. One participant argued that tax relief “for the next four hundred years” could serve as a way to “pay back every dollar of our blood sweat and tears that we have built in this country.” This notion of long-term tax relief was proposed as a resolution that could offset some of the heavy economic debts that are still owed to Black people today and was echoed by another participant:

“I also look at, you know, some tax exemptions and incentives for both putting our people to work and also for giving us tax breaks and incentives. Because, as was mentioned earlier, you know, our community has already provided centuries of work and labor for free for this country. So, I don’t, I don’t see why tax exemptions of some form, you know, would be a big problem and issue.”

Others also mentioned reductions to taxes owed, in the forms of tax incentives and benefits, as a way to secure economic stability by freeing up money to invest and build wealth. Tax reductions and benefits were described as particularly important for Black families from California, as one participant detailed:

“[W]e pay large amounts of taxes here in California, as you know. And we’ve always paid taxes, even on the lowest, lowest of income. It seems like the government says part of it still belongs to me. So that’s something I would think that might be a consideration in helping families.”

### *Alternatives to Direct Cash: Economic Assistance and Reserves*

Participants mentioned expansion of Black economic assistance and reserves as a form of reparations. They saw economic assistance as resources and initiatives designated specifically for Black individuals with the purposes of uplifting and supporting them economically. Some expressed a need for universal basic income payments, while others referenced areas of economic assistance in addition to income supplements, including rental relief, un- and under-employment services, technological support and training, medical bill vouchers, and financial literacy programs, among others.

Fiscal reserves were described as pools of available monies that Black individuals could access as a sort of financial safety net for times of financial emergencies. As an example, one participant talked about the high costs of single motherhood and need for assistance programs:

“If you have a single person, in order to survive in San Bernardino, you need to make 38,000. You add a child to that, you need to make 79,000. So, when we look at single mothers, you know, we need to look at that. We need to look at, again, that income and that maintenance, you know, of cost associated with maintaining once we, you know, if we do receive any money. So, I think that those are important things to look at and specifically programs, funding programs that are going to sustain us, so ...”

Expansion of economic reserves were also discussed in terms of setting aside funds for the development of endowments, subsidies, grants and scholarships with the goal of providing economic mobility for Black people. This need was referenced by one participant, who mentioned:

“So, that endowment for Black-led organizations, a foundation, a fund, or something in perpetuity to support Black [individuals and] organizations...”

Some participants responded that it was important for these endowments and reserves be managed by Black communities themselves. The following is a perspective that highlights this sentiment:

“The state needs to endow a Black community foundation that they don’t run, they just fund, but that the funds are available for you all to be able to do your work long-term. And to be able to pay more than living

wages, to be able to honor the work, to be able to shift and change narrative. I think that having permanency and ongoing structured resources is essential because we have a Latino community foundation, we have a Jewish community foundation, we have grantmakers concerned with immigrants and refugees. We have all of these populations' specific funds, and we need them all. We have no permanency for Black people, and that is a travesty, and it needs to change.”

Moreover, participants held that these forms of financial assistance and compensation could lead to wealth generation. Discussions surrounding these types of financial reparations initiatives were often paired with beliefs that reparations needs to address Black peoples' lack of financial capital today to promote opportunities for economic mobility tomorrow. Overall, financial incentives and support proposals – including both direct cash payments and non-monetary initiatives – were among the most popular reparations resolutions discussed.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR AND INVESTMENTS IN BLACK ORGANIZATIONS & INITIATIVES**

A majority of participants within the community listening sessions described, in one way or another, a vision for reparations that included greater investments in the development and expansion of Black infrastructure. Many believed that more infrastructure development in Black communities for business development, nonprofit development or other institutional support could improve economic opportunities, and proposed expansion of the following opportunities and programs:

- ▶ Creating New and Supporting Existing Business Infrastructure
- ▶ Developing Robust Culturally Relevant Education Systems
- ▶ Supporting Nonprofit and Community Organizations to Promote Permanency of Black Institutions

### *Black Business Initiatives & Opportunities*

An overwhelming number of participants communicated their preference for opportunities and initiatives to increase and uplift Black business, as a form of reparations. They favored investment in Black business ventures because they believed that “investing in black businesses and creating or expanding opportunities would set black people and their endeavors up for success.”

Many also referenced the need for business development because of past harms by white society in destroying successful black businesses. Many shared examples and stories of this in great detail. One in particular noted the need to rebuild Black Wall Street:

“...[re]building Black Wall Street, you know, not in just Oklahoma, but all states, all cities, all counties. Taking control so that we have that power with that. With good financial backing, good financial stability and reserves, we can put our black dollars together, and we can purchase. Now, we all have investment within our community. We're getting residuals for that ... I did some follow-up and some research, and one young gentleman, not Black, went into our Black community where no one else wanted to go and invest and got the people to invest. And so now they get residuals in that community. They built a store, they build markets, they build clothing stores, and they all own a piece of that and get a monthly residual. He said it took craftiness to do it as far as legal concern, but he got it done. And so now, within that black community, people feel, you know, prideful. They have ownership, they keep their community up, they buy – recycle their black dollars and buy within their community. And that's where we need to be. We need to have that power because for as long as I've known, we are on these calls, we talk about moving forward, but we don't, and we're wondering why. But I believe that, financially, if we get ourselves together with our finances, credit, ownership, land, property, we have that power to move forward and build and do what we need to do.”

Others recounted their experiences of the past with community-based businesses and their understanding of the significance of seeing Black business on a regular basis. One participant recounted:

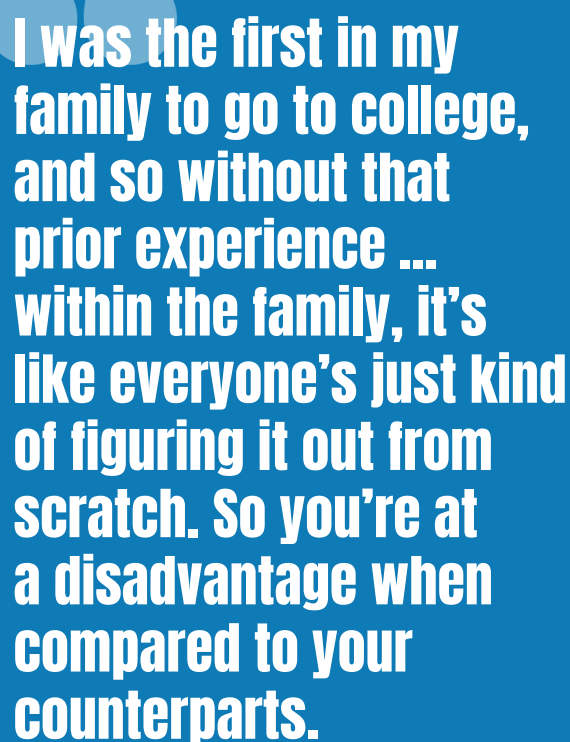
“[It would be] nice if it could kind of go back to the way it was where you found some more Black people, right ... like back in the day, right, when it was Black businesses, Black shops, Black folks ... That felt good. It felt like you had a place in the world, like you belonged somewhere. The way it is now, it seems like we’re being pushed out.”

Another referenced their experiences from a recent trip that sparked excitement around the possibility and significance of investing in the creation and sustainment of Black business infrastructure:

“I recently just got back from Tulsa, Oklahoma, and I got to visit Black Wall Street. And I got to be in that energy, that vibration of Blacks working for themselves and creating for themselves and just succeeding for themselves. And I feel that Oakland – Black Oakland, you feel me – definitely has those qualities. And you know being a child of the ‘90s, like, I got to see that in my lifetime, and I feel that it’s not lost, but it needs to be reinvented. And there’s people in our Black culture that’s too often been not asked to sit at the table. So, I feel that there will be a seat for everyone, whether you’re queer, whether you’re straight or, you know, whatever religion you are, because we need each other to succeed.”

Many participants saw investing in Black businesses as a way to enhance Black neighborhoods and cities, promote individual entrepreneurship, as well as an avenue to build wealth for families and individuals. For instance, a couple of participants mentioned the idea of reparations in the form of designated areas zoned for Black businesses. Black business zoning would be a pipeline to bring up young Black entrepreneurs so “they can get started early on, and by the time they become young adults they’ll be well-versed in how to operate and run a business.” Another participant reflected this same sentiment, noting:

“I’m really interest[ed] in supporting Black neighborhoods and developing policies and practices to promote locating healthy retail sources within the Black community, and that goes back to what I was saying – that we don’t have nothing zoned for our people, for Black people. You go – once you hit 46th going down East 14th, it’s all Latino businesses. That’s their thing; that’s their whole environment right there, you know? So, I would like to see something like that where we have our businesses, so we can bring kids through there so they can see parents developing and creating businesses, so they have something to aspire to and to learn from.”



**I was the first in my family to go to college, and so without that prior experience ... within the family, it’s like everyone’s just kind of figuring it out from scratch. So you’re at a disadvantage when compared to your counterparts.**

### *Quality Educational Improvements, Resources & Opportunities*

A majority of participants were in favor of the expansion of educational resources and opportunities for Black students and teachers in the form of 1) free college education, 2) student debt relief, 3) financial support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), 4) initiatives for enhancing representation of Black teachers and Black curriculum, and 5) the creation of alternative Black schools. First, the participants emphasized the potential impact of student debt relief and free college education across multiple generations:



“[F]or me personally, I believe that the best and probably easiest and most efficient way to deliver reparations would be to eliminate student debt for all African Americans in this country – regardless of how much it is – and to provide an open door for African Americans and their descendants to as much free education. If you want to get five PhDs ... you can actually do that as you want for the next 300 years.”

In addition to investing in individual students, many participants reiterated the importance of providing free college education to Black students through monetary investment in HBCUs to enable Black students to attend for free.

Another major region of potential educational reparations was identified in increased funding and support for Black teachers to enhance representation and inspire Black studies within the K-12 system. For instance, some participants supported expanding the representation of Black teachers by providing incentives or extra stipends to recruit and retain Black teachers. Participants saw this as a crucial way to support Black students emotionally within the curriculum:

“I feel that the more Black teachers we have ... that our Black students would have a better chance because they know our struggle. You know, and they know how to address our needs. They know how to address the type of curriculum we need and want. They know how to address, you know, every aspect of our lives ... So, I think the more Black teachers, the better chance our Black students will have.”

Listening session participants were widely in favor of expanding available resources and support for Black educators and those aspiring to become educators. Specifically, participants voiced their support for providing greater opportunities to enter the field of teaching, which would incentivize and promote increased entry into teaching professions by Black individuals. Participants felt that this would not only serve to support Black children within the classroom but also to offset the current supply deficit of teaching personnel within K-12 classrooms. As one participant noted:



**[Reparations]  
really must be a  
transformation of the  
system and allowing  
access to spaces and  
information that is often  
gate-kept in order to  
go further, in order to  
further disadvantage  
black people.**

“I guess what I might add as an addition to funding for free tuition for colleges, like, free credentials. To make teacher credentialing free and to reduce the barriers to the profession like the CBEST, CSET.”

In addition to increasing Black representation in the teaching professions, participants called for overhauling “the history and curriculum in literature when it comes to actually telling the whole truth about Black and African American history” to educate students about their heritage and history before and beyond slavery. In the same vein, other participants stated that instead of investing in non-Black education institutions, there should be an investment to “create our own [Black] schools, to teach our own

kids – because why would we continue to trust a system that has systematically mis-educated us for years ...”

### *Support for Black Nonprofits and Community Organizations*

Many participants expressed the need for increased support for the advancement of Black nonprofit organizations and community organizations. They advocated for the creation of Black-led nonprofits, greater funding

allocations and reduced red-tape.

Participants emphasized expanding the availability of resources, including start-up funding and property acquisition, to enable more Black individuals to launch Black-serving organizations. One individual, described disparities within the current nonprofit infrastructure, demonstrating the need for Black individuals to create and operate these organizations in addition to receiving the financial support to do so:

“[We’re] trying to figure out how to get dollars to support us having an infrastructure for Black folks to actually access education, quality education, K-12 or preschool through twelve, but then higher education ... For the organization in the sense of the nonprofit itself, what I see is ... how much money we don’t get, right? How we are discriminated against not only being Black but then also being women, right? That there has to be infrastructure or a similar setup, that there is an endowment for Black organizations, specifically in California, to ensure that we get funding, right?”

These participants also highlighted the need to receive funding to start and sustain these organizations. As one individual puts it:

“... [the] funding to start and grow and make sustainable black nonprofit organizations, I think is key. I remember my board not coming through on their donations and funders not coming through, and I had to sell my washing machine and dryer to pay my staff because I wanted to walk in integrity with them, right?”

Participants went on to express how Black organizations were often underfunded relative to other non-Black organizations. One participant described their experience in trying to secure funding for their nonprofit, citing the unequal distribution of funds received relative to white-led nonprofit organizations. She said:

“There’s a lot of discrimination in the nonprofit world. So, I don’t know if you guys all know this, but Black-led, Black benefiting nonprofits receive 76% less than white-led, white-benefiting nonprofits in terms of unrestricted funding.”

The participants shared their belief that Black individuals leading nonprofits should receive comparable treatment to their white counterparts and that the government has a responsibility to step in to address disparities that are evident in the data. As one nonprofit leader shared:

“[W]ith unrestricted funding, what ends up happening is the person who’s giving you the money, they trust you to use the money that you need in order to advance your mission versus directing you to how you should use their money by saying, ‘Oh, this has to go for direct services.’ And I really think California needs to investigate this because I have a white grant writer, and that white grant writer will testify before the state legislature that when he writes the same grant for a white-led organization, 90% of the time, they get funding. When he writes for me, it’s 10%, okay? So, we can bring this up, and people will be dismissive of it. But if we have actual concrete evidence, then I think we need to get before the state legislature and share that.”

Discussions around support of Black-led organizations not only involved the expansion of funding opportunities, but also included reducing the red-tape that regulates these organizations by government and other external entities. Many participants were concerned about the many stipulations Black-led organizations must adhere to – such as a referrals process and board protocol – to operate and qualify for funding. Some participants argued that these regulations cause complications for both the internal organization and its service population (i.e., Black communities). One participant noted, how increased representation in stakeholder settings is important to influencing these policies, saying:

“Increasing the equitable representation of Black people in the shareholder group increases our ability to influence policies and procedures that impact our individual lives, the well-being of our families, and the country as a whole. “

Ultimately, in addition to enhanced funding allocations to these organizations, participants advocated for autonomy over their own organizational affairs and operations. A couple of the participants described the necessity for organizations that are Black-led, Black-operated, and Black-serving to have agency and independence over their management. As one nonprofit leader detailed:

“The state needs to endow a Black community foundation that they don’t run, they just fund, but that the funds are available for [us] all to be able to do [our] work long-term. And to be able to pay [our staff] more than living wages, to be able to honor the work, to be able to shift and change narrative.”

## **INVESTMENTS TOWARDS SUSTAINING BLACK FAMILIES, NEIGHBORHOODS & COMMUNITY SPACES**

### *Land and Property Ownership*

Finally, one of the most popular forms of reparations mentioned in the listening sessions centered around land and property ownership. Participants cited land and property ownership as an important vehicle to secure generational wealth. Participants referenced the history of land ownership for Black Americans citing the history of failed promises, property destruction and theft by government and white society as reasons for reparations of this kind.

There is wide acknowledgment that “land was stolen [and] It needs to be returned.” A few individuals shared stories relative to having their families’ land seized and stolen from them, and one individual in particular references his families’ efforts to trace and obtain their ancestor’s property:

“I’m here to talk about Nelson Bell, one of a few African American settlers during the gold rush in Coloma, California. He passed away January 1869. At that time, his land and personal property was put into probate and later sold by the probate administrator. The land is now part of a California state park. We have good reason to believe that we are the descendants of Nelson Bell. We have historical records and documents from a certified genealogist and information from Ancestry.com that indicates our kinship to Nelson Bell. He is, in fact, my fourth great-grandfather. We have employed a certified genealogist in the state of Virginia to research historical records in that state regarding Nelson Bell. And so far, the results have been very positive. Additional research is currently ongoing. We also have registered with Where Is My Land. Our purpose is to seek reparations once the research is complete and supports our position.”

In another example, a participant expressed similar sentiments of wanting to re-purchase their families’ property:

“Is there any programs that would help us gain land? Now, back east, where I was born and raised, I’d like to be able to go back and buy my grandfather’s farm back ... [T]hey all passed away back in the middle to late ‘60s. The farm has been sitting idle. A couple of years ago, a couple of the Amish people bought the farm, but they have done nothing with it. The house and barn and stuff were built before 1900. Grandpop moved there in 1906 and was there till the ‘60s, when they passed away, Grandma and Grandpop. But I mean, the house is still standing. It’s leaning, and it’s probably full of snakes and stuff, but I would love if there was some kind of program or – I guess you call it a program or organization or something, where we could buy back, especially land that’s in – that was in the family.”

The importance of owning and maintaining land cannot be understated, as a variety of individuals acknowledge that land and property ownership is an important vehicle to secure generational wealth.

However, it was mentioned that for many Black people to have the capital to acquire land in the first place, “[we need] grants to start them up because they stole all that from us.” Similarly, another participant cited this form of reparations as the primary way to right “the wrongs that have been done.”

### *Homeownership & Housing Accessibility Initiatives*

Many listening session participants cited the need for increased access to affordable housing as a form of reparations. They referenced renter relief programs, reduction or elimination of mortgage loans, property tax reductions and cancellations, and additional housing subsidies and vouchers as examples of how this form of reparations might be put into practice. One idea frequently referenced by participants pertained to adjusting the costs of housing. The proposed initiative would entail modifying property values, creating limits on housing/rental cost increases and regulating mortgage interest rates.

In addition to land and home ownership, some participants suggested reparations come in the form of “sovereign land for all Indigenous and melanated people of the land” to occupy states and/or cities to “govern and build our own economy.”

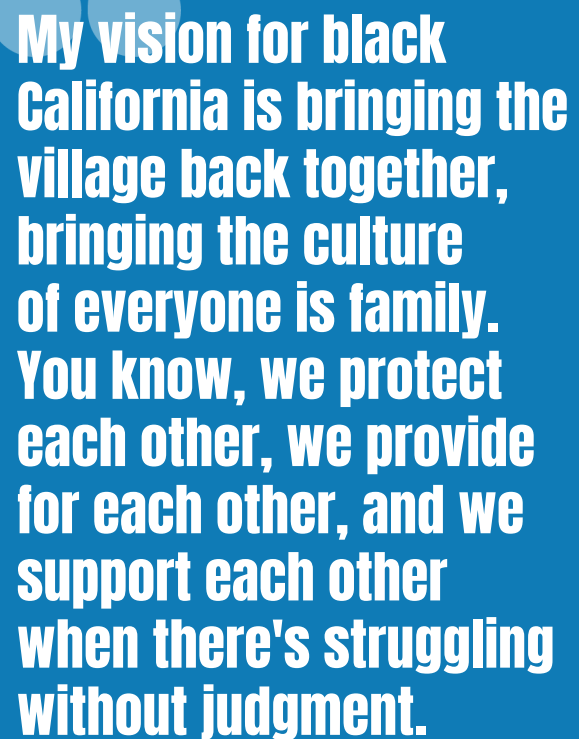
### *Conservation of Black Cultural Hubs and Community Spaces*

Many participants, while discussing their vision for Black California, described a vision of Black neighborhoods and hubs in which they could occupy space, free of surveillance, fear, and limitations to their cultural expression. For many, investing in Black communities meant investing in the environmental health of their neighborhoods. One participant described their vision for Black California as “neighborhoods with cleaner air, neighborhoods with thriving economic centers, access to safe outdoor recreational spaces within walking distance of our homes.” Another participant echoed this perspective saying:

“To me, I feel like Black California should have the opportunity to focus on ways in which we can thrive so that it feels like a joyful place. It feels like a place where our entire being is considered – financially, politically, culturally – that we are taken care of, that our health is seen more holistically. And so, it tastes like good food that is affordable. It feels like good housing that is affordable. It sounds like bustling neighborhoods that play cultural music. It sounds like the exhaust from the sideshows. It’s the music coming out of the scraper bikes. That’s what it sounds like.”

Participants reminisced about current Black cultural community staples that they have seen disappear over time. For instance, one participant referenced the Ashby Flea Market in South Berkeley that was “dwindling down,” saying:

“Everybody knew to be there Saturday and Sunday. You could be there all day. Get what you want to get, eat whatever, come back, whatever. It was a cultural thing for us. Even though it’s a lot of Afro-centric stuff – but it was ours, you know? And then now, it’s different. It’s just on life support, and that’s what you see. A lot of these different areas that we knew were our neighborhoods are literally on life support – if that.”



**My vision for black California is bringing the village back together, bringing the culture of everyone is family. You know, we protect each other, we provide for each other, and we support each other when there's struggling without judgment.**

Participants who shared this opinion felt that investing in and preserving Black communities would involve increasing Black representation in leadership; creating spaces of refuge, safety, and family; and preserving Black community centers and cultural hubs. One participant said that they wanted “a full place dedicated to Black people” where they could have “a place ... to have peace of mind. A place where we can call our own, and we can

feel safe.” They called for institutional investments to sustain Black communities and neighborhoods to create a “resurgence [of] Black commerce, Black buildings, Black bars, and Black restaurants.”

## DISCUSSION OF ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility has been a central topic since the Task Force began meeting in June of 2021, and discussions in the listening sessions about eligibility were centered on the following question: Who should be eligible for reparations and why?

The listening session conversations around eligibility mirror the diverse perspectives showcased in the public convenings held by the Task Force. Two prominent perspectives consistently emerged during these conversations: 1) support for lineage-based reparations eligibility, and 2) support for the eligibility of all Black people, regardless of lineage. Support of eligibility qualifications on the basis of ancestry to those enslaved was slightly more referenced than support for extending eligibility to all Black people in California.

### SUPPORT FOR LINEAGE-BASED REPARATIONS

Many participants agreed with the Task Force’s decision to limit reparations to those who are descendants of enslaved Africans in the U.S. They often mentioned the generational impacts of having elders in their family struggle due to their experience as enslaved people.

Other participants in favor of lineage-based reparations referred to past promises owed to formerly enslaved Black people in the U.S. that the government had failed to follow through on. One participant remarked:

“I think the people who should be eligible for reparations should be descendants of enslaved people. And the reason why is because we were all offered our forty acres and the mule.”

In many other instances, as cited throughout the report thus far, participants referenced the large role that the institution of slavery had played in the founding and succession of the U.S.

### SUPPORT FOR THE ELIGIBILITY OF ALL BLACK PEOPLE REGARDLESS OF LINEAGE

Participants who supported extended eligibility for all Black residents of California often cited the broader impacts of anti-Black racism that Black Californians experience regardless of whether they are a direct descendant of enslaved Africans in the U.S. One participant stated:

“As a pastor, I’ve seen people at all levels, Black people at all levels being affected by racism and a product of slavery. So, if they’re rich, poor, brilliant or not so brilliant, each one of them have been affected in one way or another. So, I believe that all Black people, every single last one of them, should get some form of reparations. And I say this because racism doesn’t care what part of the continent you’re from, what part of the country you are from, how well educated you are. It still has a negative effect.”

Two other participants reiterated this sentiment. One participant noted the expansiveness of racism and enslavement: “[A]ll of our tribes should be eligible for reparations because we’ve been separated, scattered, and unavailable to utilize the resources that we kind of built on. So, I think all Black people.”

Another participant stated, “So yes, I think every Black person deserves some type of reparations because we all have experienced what it feels like to be whipped, whether it be an actual whip, whether it be a mental whip, whether it be you redlined in whatever community or wherever you grew up at.”

Other participants supported reparations for all Black people because of concerns about lineage-based repara-



tions. They stated that some Black residents may not have paperwork to verify their lineage, and therefore that factor would limit who could get reparations.

# SECTION 3 APPENDIX

**TABLE 1: AMENDED CODEBOOK**

Categories	Subcode(s) Label/Name
Types of Harm	Educational Inequity Discriminatory Policing, Incarceration & Legal Systems Economic Disenfranchisement Housing Inaffordability & Inaccessibility Healthcare Disparities Un- or Underemployment & Workplace Discrimination Inadequate Business/Organizational Support Infrastructures Neighborhood Disinvestment Food Inaccessibility Lack of Government Acknowledgments of Anti-Blackness
Forms of Reparations	Financial Compensation & Investments Black Business Initiatives & Opportunities Advancement of Black Non-Profit & Community Organizations Enhancement of Educational Resources & Opportunities Sustaining Black Communities & Preserving Cultural Hubs Initiatives for Land and Property Ownership Affordable and Permanent Supportive Housing Reforms Policing & Legal System Infrastructure Reforms Expansion of Black Representation & Supportive Policies in Government Settings Expansion of Employment Opportunities & Initiatives Advancement of Health Care Justice & Service Provisions Food & Environmental Justice Initiatives Formal Acknowledgment and Apology
Eligibility	Eligibility
Level of Support for Reparations	Supportive of Reparations Questioning or Unsure of Reparations No Support for reparations
Impacts of Harm	Social Stigma & Prejudice Separation & Dismantling of Families Collective Stressors & Intergenerational Trauma Lower Quality of Life





# SECTION 4

**IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS, ORAL HISTORIES, &  
PERSONAL TESTIMONY ANALYSIS & FINDINGS**

This section reports the findings from the in-depth interviews, oral histories, and analysis of the personal testimonies self-submitted to the Task Force portal. It also focuses on the major areas of inquiry: harm, support for reparations, and who should be eligible for reparations.

Two methods were used to obtain personal testimony:

1. Personal Testimony Portal: Community members were able to access the portal through a web link to upload self-guided testimony to Box, a secure, cloud-based content management system.
2. Oral History Interviews: Several community members were invited to complete a semi-structured oral history interview with the oral historian on the Bunche Center team.

## DATA

### Personal Testimony Portal

On the UCLA Bunche Center website, the Box link for the Personal Testimony Portal was titled the “Reparations Task Force Community Listening Session Testimony Portal.” The Portal allowed community members to upload their personal testimony to submit to the Task Force. In all, 46 testimonies were submitted via the Portal between May 10 and September 1, 2022. The testimonies were multimedia content, including audio and video recordings of personal testimony, written documents, photos, and fliers. The Portal link was disseminated through anchor organizations, community listening sessions, and Task Force members. The guidelines provided to respondents indicated they could state their name and/or their connection to California or remain anonymous. The guidelines also indicated respondents could upload a three- to five-minute recording focused on harms, eligibility, or what reparations should entail. Clicking the link led respondents to Box to upload their testimony using a web-enabled device. Before the upload, respondents were further informed that private personal information would be kept confidential.

Of the 46 testimonies submitted, 93% of participants indicated they were African American, with some specifically identifying themselves as descendants of persons enslaved in the United States. Two respondents identified themselves as white, and one identified as an American of Yoruba descent. Additionally, while most respondents indicated they were California residents, two respondents identified themselves as residents of other states.

**Testimony**

In addition to participating in a community listening session, individuals are invited to give a personal testimony about their experiences. Below is a link to a portal to share your testimony. Please record a short three to five-minute account and upload your stories to the portal.

To help guide you in this effort, in the audio or video you record, please:

- Provide your name and location, or you can remain anonymous
- Provide your connection to California
- Provide testimony on issues on which the Task Force is focused. These includes:
  - The harm experienced
  - What reparations should entail
  - Who should be eligible

Provide any additional points relevant to the Task Force's mission.

[Reparations Task Force Community Listening Session Testimony Portal](#)

*Screenshot of the instructions and link to the Personal Testimony Portal on the UCLA Bunche Center Website*

### Oral History Interviews



Oral history interviews were conducted with seven individuals between August 4 and August 31, 2022. Oral history interviewees, hereafter referred to as narrators, were identified through their connection with anchor organizations. Three men and four women, all African American, with ages ranging from 38 to 88 years were interviewed. All narrators were California residents, split almost evenly between Northern and Southern California.

## METHODOLOGY

### PERSONAL TESTIMONY PORTAL

From the personal testimony files, audio and video files were converted to written format using Otter.ai, a text transcription software that uses artificial intelligence. These transcripts were manually analyzed for recurring themes using Taguette, an open-source tool for coding text-based qualitative data. A grounded theory of qualitative analysis was employed to analyze these materials. Thus, instead of specifying themes before the analysis was begun, the researcher identified themes through the process of analysis by noting recurring words, phrases, and ideas. Given the self-directed nature of the submission process, a grounded theory was chosen to best capture the richness of the data before classification. As participants continued to submit testimony through September 1, 2022, the themes were updated and refined.

Photo submissions were analyzed for content and context. Notably, the photos tended to include less specifically usable information than the files in other formats. The researcher noted: individuals and details in the images; connections between submitted images in a set where they may have, for instance, related to the same events or individuals; and she outlined questions to obtain additional contextual information.

### ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

In total, the contact information for eight potential narrators was provided to the Bunche Research Team. The oral historian contacted all eight individuals to conduct interviews. Ultimately, oral history interviews were conducted with all seven narrators who affirmed interest.

Upon initial outreach via phone or email, the oral historian conducted a preliminary interview with each narrator. These calls ranged from 15 minutes to an hour in length. During that time, the oral historian explained that the interview would focus on illustrating the harms that African Americans have experienced in the aftermath of slavery and Jim Crow. From this preliminary interview, the oral historian and narrator worked together to develop the scope of the interview, targeting the specific areas of harm to which the narrators felt best able to speak. All interviews followed a largely similar format: obtaining family and personal background, specifying identification, detailing harms, and naming potential remedies. Given the innate personal nature of each narrator's experience of harm, a semi-structured interview methodology was employed. From the preliminary interview through the end of the interview, narrators were invited to introduce new topics and experiences as they surfaced. Several narrators also opted to provide documents for the oral historian to review in preparation for the interview.

While the harms focused mainly on the narrator, most narrators also provided stories about other family members' experiences. In witnessing their experiences, the oral historian used probing questions to help the narrators provide as much detail as possible on their individual experiences of harm.

#### *Duration*

All interviews took place between August 4 and August 31, 2022. On average, each interview session lasted 1 hour and 13 minutes, with the shortest interview lasting 38 minutes and the longest lasting an hour and a half. Narrators who provided testimony that required more than two hours to communicate were invited to participate in a subsequent session. Overall, three narrators completed at least two interview sessions. Ultimately, 11 interview sessions with the 7 narrators were conducted in total.

## Consent Form

All interviewees were provided a consent form (included in the Appendix) either through email or physical mail. This form indicated that participation in the project was voluntary, the interviews were to be recorded, and recorded materials would become property of the UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies. Completed consent forms were obtained and digitally stored. In one instance, where a participant could not receive a digital consent form before the interview, the consent form was read aloud, verbal consent was recorded, and a physical consent form was mailed.

## Format & Analysis

All narrators were interviewed remotely. One narrator was interviewed over the phone, while all others completed their interviews through the Zoom video conferencing platform. After the interviews were complete, the audio files were transcribed using Otter.ai, and transcripts were uploaded to Taguette. The researcher used inductive and deductive analysis to assess the transcripts of each oral history. The themes generated from the Personal Testimony Portal submissions were manually applied and refined to analyze the interview transcripts, and new themes were incorporated.

# FINDINGS FROM THE PERSONAL TESTIMONY PORTAL

The most frequently occurring themes that emerged from the self-submitted personal testimonies were:

- ▶ Financial Compensation
- ▶ Direct Cash Payments
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Housing and Land Ownership
- ▶ Lineage-Based Reparations

Please note that in all excerpts below, bolded words and phrases reflect places where the researcher has added emphasis to highlight the emergence of a theme that the excerpt illustrates.

## FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

Respondents emphasized the importance of financial compensation. Notably, even those who advocated for multifaceted forms of reparations included financial compensation as a requisite.

**Respondent:** **But the first and primary demand is for financial repair.** And that will help close the wealth gap. **And while we can never really put a dollar value on the harms that were experienced ... we can start fresh in actually saying that there was harm that was done, and that the government will pay.** And according to some works, for instance, I believe in *From Here to Equality* [by William Darity Jr.], they have equated that value ... in terms of unpaid wages ... with a pretty conservative interest rate. They've come up with about \$20 trillion. We actually have seen figures that are as high as a quadrillion of dollars. **So basically, the government owes a debt to Black Americans.**

(Santa Rosa, CA Resident)

**Respondent:** I believe that reparations should be a multi-pronged approach. There should be free education for descendants for as long as slavery was practiced in the USA. That would ensure generations of African Americans in principle have the same opportunity to right the wrongs that were handed down to slaves over the hundreds of years. We cannot approach this as a one-time, one-off event. This should be a years' [sic] long endeavor.

- ▶ **Free Education** to HBCUs or any other college of choice
- ▶ **Business grants**
- ▶ **Home loans** either significantly **reduced interest rates or zero rates** for as long as necessary

- ▶ 40 acres and a tractor with access to **mortgage and commercial loans**
- ▶ Family trust and education around how to manage wealth and pass it down to heirs
- ▶ **Life insurance policies** that are matched to ensure legacy funds are passed down.

(Respondent with Connections to Richmond, CA)

## DIRECT CASH PAYMENTS

Consistent with financial compensation, respondents reiterated the need for direct cash payments as an integral component of reparations.

**Respondent:** I also believe the **California reparations plan should emphasize direct cash compensation** to the descendants of U.S. slavery. Let me repeat that, I also believe the **California reparations plan should emphasize direct cash compensation** to the descendants of U.S. slavery.

(Diamond Bar Resident)

Pointedly, one respondent cited Oregon Senate Bill 619 as a potential template for the provision of direct cash payments.

**Respondent:** Now, for me, **cash payments can be modeled after Oregon’s Senate Bill 619**, which essentially offers anyone who’s an American slave ancestor – who’s been claiming Black for the last ten years on documents – **\$123,000 a year in lifetime payments, tax-free**. I believe that the cost of living in Oregon compared to California is 39% [less] of the cost of living in California. So that would mean that we need a direct cash payments policy. **And I’m talking about direct to the those who are harmed, not into a trust to be governed by institutions**. Directly to the people is the best way to fix the harms that we’ve survived and to address the debts we have, as well as poverty itself. **But these direct cash payments, if it’s [\$]123,000 in Oregon, that would mean it needs to be [\$]177,000 per person every year for life in California**, and that’s still separate from the land that we’re owed.

(New York Resident Raised in Alameda, California)

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Many calls for reparations included educational components, usually relating to access and support services. Several interviewees explained how educational experiences were disrupted due to lack of opportunity or financial constraints.

**Respondent:** Both of my parents never completed high school. Only work, work, work, while living in the projects [of New Jersey].

(New Jersey Resident)

Several respondents supported tuition-free college and student loan forgiveness. However, illustrating her daughter’s experience at a California state institution, one parent emphasized the need for support not just to attend but to succeed in higher education programs.

**Respondent:** In the case of my eldest child, she made it to Cal State LA. While she was there, they determined that she was remedial and needed to be in remedial classes. We were shocked to learn that, as I have been a lifelong volunteer at her school. She graduated with high grades. She had no issues of being remedial in the system. And she graduated [high school] and was optimistic about her future.

When she finally signed into the class, we figured we had no choice. She had to sign up for this class – this series of classes – to be able to even get classes that were going to be worth credit. It turns out that the entire student group in that class was young Black students. My husband and I found this shocking, absolutely shocking. We questioned it, we challenged it, there was no other alternative. And she continued through the program. She made it through the first semester, and she got decent grades, and she

seemed to be on her way to becoming a college student. It turns out that she ultimately left, and there was no support for her. There was no support for her peers. A number of the other students that were in the remedial class with her also left, deeming that college just wasn't for them ... **So please consider long-term education and not just paying for it but also helping support the students through the system as you make your recommendations for reparations.**

(Diamond Bar Resident)

## HOUSING AND LAND OWNERSHIP

Issues of housing and land ownership often co-occurred across submissions. Respondents used the terms redlining, eminent domain, Black displacement, and gentrification to specify both past and contemporary harms.

**Respondent:** Since our arrival in California, I have seen many things happen to the detriment of foundational Black Americans, aka American Freedmen ... **redlining**, in addition to that, **lands taken [by] public domain or eminent domain, for the freeway. The 105 freeway.**

(Southern California Resident)

**Respondent:** And I'll say, you know, being in Los Angeles, **I've been working in the housing advocacy space for probably four or so years now. But I've uncovered a lot of evidence of just Black displacement when it comes to land and housing issues in this state.** Even currently, today, in the 21st century, there are still a lot of Black Americans who are struggling in Los Angeles because they're just continuing to try to fight against poverty, fighting against the establishment, and basically just trying to sustain themselves in a state, in a country that hasn't fairly redistributed resources ... We're talking about **60,000 plus homeless residents in Los Angeles ... you know, over 40% of that [is] Black ... when they're only 8% of the total population.**

(Los Angeles Resident)

Coinciding with the identifications of lack of land ownership and access to housing as sources of harm, the respondents also emphasized land as a component of reparations.

**Respondent:** **I also advocate for that infamous 40 acres and a mule** [that] should be afforded to all. As well as cows, pigs, sheep, horses and any other self-sustaining mechanisms to the descendants of U.S. Slavery.

(San Lorenzo Resident)

**Respondent:** My vision for the future of Black California is to have a sovereign land for all indigenous melanated people in the land.

**Respondent:** **There's 45 million acres owned by the federal government.** [There's] also Katie Porter, the congresswoman who's arguing that even more of that land should be taken back from white oil executives who plan to drill oil on it. We, as the Black American community, are already talking about how we're going to be building solar panels on our land because we know California is moving towards green energy. **So, Katie Porter is someone who could work with [us] to make sure that there's enough acreage of land for every Black American to receive their 40 acres claim, at least in California.**

(New York Resident Raised in Alameda, California)

## LINEAGE-BASED REPARATIONS

Respondents primarily advocated for lineage-based reparations. Many used some iteration of the following language.

**Respondent:** "I also want the reparations commission to know that I strongly support their decision for

**lineage-based eligibility for reparations.** Because the purpose of this reparations commission is to **provide reparations for slavery and the impact of slavery, its legacy and vestiges, including Jim Crow, on the descendants of U.S. slaves.**

(New Jersey Resident)

Several contended that those who descended from persons enslaved in the United States have had distinct experiences.

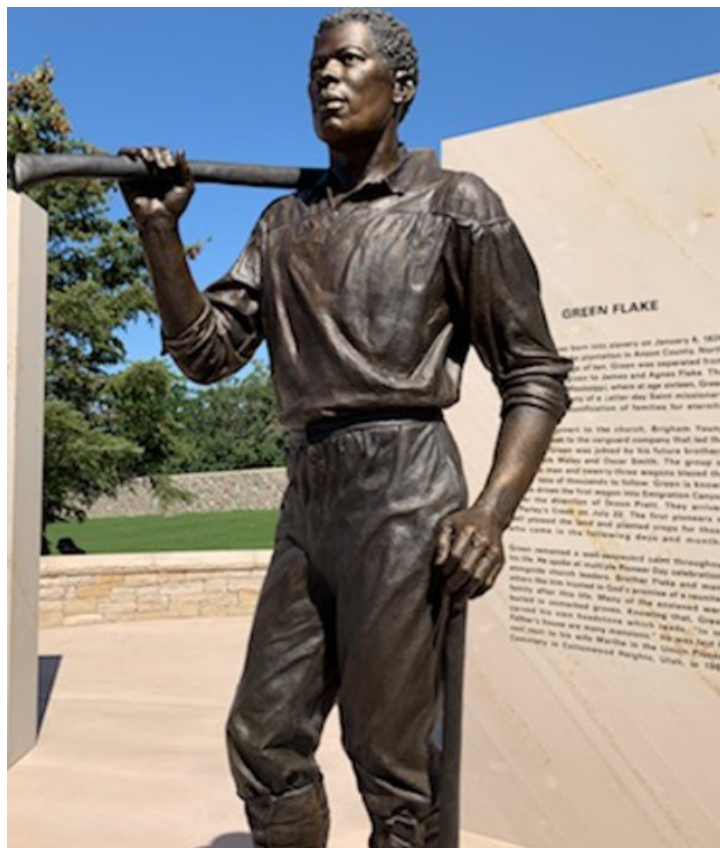
**Respondent:** So, I say all that to say, I am definitely in favor of reparations in the form of cash payments **for descendants of U.S. slaves.** There are a lot of different justice claims that are out [there] that people definitely should fight for. **But in terms of reparative justice, these are things that specifically happened to specific people that I am a part of.** And there are specific instances and grievances that need to be repaired.

(Santa Rosa Resident)

**Respondent:** Reparations will help to repair the economics as well as obtain equity in a country of our ancestors. **That lineage, that heritage continues to live on with Americans that have been here from the very beginning, not by choice, but by force.**

One respondent argued for broader eligibility to include descendants of anyone who was “kidnapped, trafficked, enslaved, and often impregnated,” regardless of race or skin color. However, this view was not expressed by the majority, who emphasized lineage-based reparations for the descendants of persons enslaved in the U.S.

## ADDITIONAL THEMES



Personal Testimony Portal Submission about Green Flake

### *Photo & Mixed Media Submissions: Highlighting Lesser-Known Histories of African Americans*

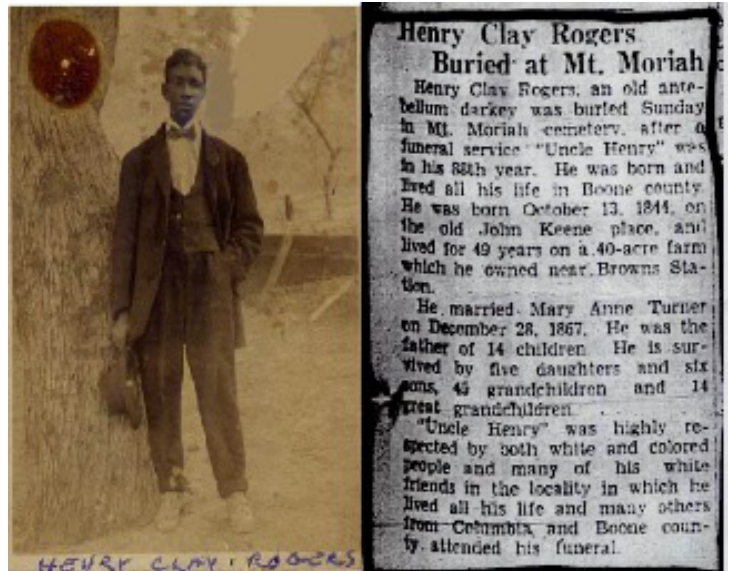
As mentioned, several photos were submitted via the Personal Testimony Portal. Additionally, materials related to two documentaries were submitted by respondents. The first was a 40-minute documentary on the history of reparative justice efforts beginning with Callie House and Harriet Tubman, and the second was a flier for a forthcoming documentary about contemporary advocacy for reparative justice. Unlike other personal testimonies, these submissions, particularly the photos, often did not address specific harms or support for reparations that the Task Force should consider. Instead, they were connected by a common theme of highlighting lesser-known histories, especially the contributions of African Americans.

As indicated below, several photos were submitted that had a connection to a monument of Green Flake. Additional research revealed that Flake, while enslaved, was integral in the westward settlement of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to the Salt Lake Valley during the mid-19th century.



Another photo documented the obituary of Henry Clay Rogers. He had been born before the end of the Civil War and died in 1931, having owned 40 acres in Boone County, Missouri, for nearly 50 years.

The final series of photographs captures a written document on the life history of Eunice Salary, a woman brought from South Africa as a child. She lived through enslavement and died in 1927 at the age of 110 years with 89 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Collectively, these submissions are consistent with a theme to be discussed in the oral history findings, acknowledging what's frequently characterized by community testers as the "true" history of African Americans.



*Personal Testimony Portal Submission about Henry Clay Rogers*

### *Comments on the Communications and Participatory Process of the AB3121 Task Force*

Another finding pertained to the communications and participatory process of the AB3121 Task Force's work. One respondent indicated a need for more clarity about how to actively participate.

**Respondent:** I would also really appreciate a more clear process when learning how to testify in front of the California Reparations Task Force. I'm a PhD student in education. Some other people I know are graduate students or they've been doing research [and] they pay attention to these things. This is also my job, to be [a] Reparations Research Fellow. **So, I would appreciate having space and being able to know how to participate in meetings as a live actor**, as a person who is from the state who's been here for three generations and is also a student at the same time.

Finally, another testimonial submitter argued for the need for dedicated communications efforts, arguing that too few Black Californians are aware of the Task Force.

**Respondent:** The other day, actually, I spoke to this elderly woman and her sister, and I asked them, 'Hey, do you know about the Reparations Taskforce?' She said, 'No, I have no idea ...' We visited a church here, a long-time standing church called St. Andrews and we asked the congregation how many people knew about the Task Force and what's going on with the reparations right now? And maybe 10-20% at most [knew], and there may have been 50 people in the congregation. **So, whatever decision needs to be made needs to be made quickly to really get this word out nationally, but especially here in California.**

### *Crack Cocaine Epidemic*

Though not a dominant theme, multiple respondents identified the crack cocaine epidemic as a primary source of harm, emphasizing its impact on family dissolution, children, and communities. Most identified the state or federal government as complicit.

**Respondent:** We are owed a debt for slavery. We're owed a debt for government-sanctioned genocide. We are owed a debt because **California has been complicit in locking up our men** and affecting 10 million families, locking up 1 million men for slavery in prisons **due to the crack cocaine epidemic that you, the government, put into our communities throughout this country.**

(Southern California Resident)

**Respondent:** I happen to be an 80s baby. And I remember the crack epidemic and the war on drugs, and my biological mother actually happened to fall victim to the crack epidemic and going into the system. And because of that, there were, unfortunately, **a lot of things that happened or that we saw that should not have happened to children.** Then to hear of the government's role, not only in the distribution of the substances but also the crackdown on the people and treating addiction as a crime instead of what we see it now as, as a sickness. **A lot of stuff ended up happening to me personally during that time, to a lot of children that were around during that time.** We saw the areas that we are forced to live in degrade to levels that I wouldn't wish on anybody and that were even worse than third-world conditions, **simply for the fact that we happen to be Black in America and the government allowed things to happen.**

(Santa Rosa Resident)

### *Legal Protections to Ensure Security*

Several respondents identified the legal system as a source of harm and as a target for reparative justice. One respondent uploaded a copy of her filing to the State of California Second Appellate District, requesting an investigation into perceived judicial misconduct and 14th Amendment violations. Other respondents more broadly spoke of the need for legal protections to ensure that reparations are successfully implemented.

**Respondent:** I would say I would like to see reparation be structured where we get some financial stability. Also, to get land. We get access to technology to get access to resources, and for a time, we get the resources and **laws and everything to go in our favor, so we can have access to those things without people attacking us and hurting us while we're doing our thing.**

**Respondent:** And so, to rectify that, to rectify the harms that were done by the government, we are calling for cash payments for Black American descendants of U.S. slaves. **We're calling for protections by the government and an assurance written in law that this will never happen again.**

(Santa Rosa Resident)

### *Beyond California: Federal Level and the Other States*

Several argued that many of the stated harms connect to issues beyond California.

**Respondent:** To me, the most important harms **I want California to address are the issues that happened due to migration. A lot of people in my family would not have even come this way had their land not been taken due to eminent domain down South.** And I would like for that to be addressed like it was addressed with the Bruce family, with the beach over there in Manhattan Beach. I feel that these are the most important harms because they are interconnected. The housing crisis goes hand in hand with the health care issues.

(Pasadena Resident)

Thus, several suggested that California is setting a precedent for what they'd like to see in other states and ultimately at the federal level.

**Respondent:** **I believe that California can lead the nation in beginning to heal not just Black America, but America in general.** Because helping Black Americans addresses poverty, crime, illness, mental health, and so on and so forth. So, I can't stress enough that I strongly support reparations.

(New York Resident Raised in Alameda, California)

### Other States

**Respondent:** I'm here in **Atlanta, Georgia, and** I do support the reparation bill for [a] lineage [basis]. And I think all descendants of slaves should support this bill. **I know [I'm] not in California, but I'm hoping**

they'll be able to put the same kind of bill here in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Respondent:** I want the **New Jersey reparations commission** to know the harms in which my family is still suffering educationally, economically, and psychologically.

### **Federal-Level Reparations**

**Respondent:** So, I would hope that we can at least get some form of guarantee from Gavin Newsom, Shirley Weber, and many of the politicians out in California, the elected officials out in California who have supported this measure. **I hope we can get their support as far as making a demand of President Biden to set up a federal commission for reparations by executive order.** I think that the damages that have been done to the Black community of America, the descendants of American chattel slavery, is **too deep for any local entity to handle, and it definitely needs to be handled on the federal level.** So, I would support an effort to push Biden to take action.

## **FINDINGS FROM THE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS**

Generally, the areas of harm narrators identified fell broadly into five areas:

- ▶ Education
- ▶ Home & Land Ownership
- ▶ Employment, Forced Labor, & Business Hardship
- ▶ Psychological & Emotional Trauma
- ▶ Failure to Acknowledge True History

Please note that to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms are used below to identify each narrator.

### **EDUCATION: IDENTITY AND FUTURE**

Education was a significant theme across interviews. When discussing the harms related to basic education, narrators consistently connected these harms to an impact on their sense of identity.

#### *Basic Education*

**“Teaching history in a way that centers our identity, I think like Black Americans just need that space.”**

(Ronnie Lynne)

One respondent identified himself as The Man Whose Blood Remembers because, although he does not personally remember the “atrocities that were passed down from the shores of Africa to the slave ships and the American Plantations,” he believes “[e]ach atrocity that was faced by his ancestors was written in his DNA.” The Man Whose Blood Remembers attended middle school in Oakland, CA, in the 1990s. When his teacher’s lesson on the Civil War seemed unclear compared to the lesson on the American Revolutionary War, he became curious.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** I remember being in middle school, and they were presenting the Civil War. And they didn’t clearly define the reason why in the book. So, I asked my teacher, and he just said, because of state rights and this disagreement, you know? So, I didn’t know. I didn’t know it was due to slavery and basically them trying to keep the union because of slavery – which was the primary reason – until I got older. I remember when I found out because I [had] actually asked my teacher. He was

teaching a subject, and he wouldn't even tell me the truth.

The Man Whose Blood Remembers would not learn the integral factor that slavery played in the Civil War until he became an adult. Acknowledging that many history programs have improved, he noted that while the legacy of slavery is part of United States history, often the courses that go into the most depth are ethnic studies courses at the collegiate level. Thus, he argued, many Black students are left to learn their history from family members or during adulthood, contributing to a lost sense of identity.

### *The Impact of School Proximity: Parental Advocacy*

Violet Allen grew up in South Los Angeles in the 1970s. While she attended kindergarten through middle school in her neighborhood, as her parents observed the influx of drugs and gang violence alter the community around them, they successfully petitioned to send her to school in Westchester. Despite the perceived exceptional level of education at that school, she always perceived a sentiment that she did not have a right to be there.

One teacher routinely marked her grades down for talking in class, admitting only during a parent-teacher visit that he'd been marking her down for raising her hand to ask questions. When she struggled in science and math, another teacher minimized the value of courses, claiming they were unimportant. Moreover, she could not participate in extracurricular activities due to her school's distance from home. A teacher's comments about math or Violet Allen's inability to participate in after-school activities may initially seem innocuous. However, Violet Allen communicated how these shaped both her sense of self and future opportunities.

**Violet Allen:** My mom got me a tutor through my church. And so, he would meet with me at church over chemistry. And he was just amazed at what I knew. And how would I know he just thought I was fine. And he was a teacher at a local high school. **So, I'm thinking to myself, you know, if I had this teacher, it might have been different for me in terms of my science and math. Like, I hate science. I'm out now, but had I had him, then it would have been different** versus this woman telling me, 'Don't worry about chemistry. It's not that important. You don't even need it.' **I mean, I needed it to graduate. Well, I needed it to get into the type of college I wanted to get into.** And this woman is telling me I don't need it. **And it just kind of placed a psychological barrier on me** where I just wanted to get through this course with a decent grade. Excelling in it wasn't a concern of mine, just getting through it.

Additionally, her school's distance from home meant she carpooled with her neighbor who taught at the school. Thus, when her neighbor left, Violet Allen left. With colleges often using extracurricular activities as a gauge for student discipline, she was less able to reflect that.

**Violet Allen:** Well, I do know that one of the things that high school students do is they get involved in extracurricular activities so that they can bolster their college application. They want to be able to say **they participated in this club or did this sport. It shows discipline, ability to discipline oneself to stay focused. I wasn't able to necessarily show that through school.** In terms of after school, let's say I wanted tutoring. I couldn't get that at school or meet with the teacher after school to go over math problems. When I left school, I left. And I'll tell you that it's the lady across the street from me the one I was telling you about who was the piano teacher. She worked at Redondo. She was a PE teacher. So, I was able to drive in with her. **And so, I drove with her in the morning, and I left with her in the afternoon. So, when she left work, I left work.**

Juxtaposing her own experience to that of her daughter, she reflected that distance also meant difficulty in parental advocacy. As mentioned, it was only after her mother visited the school that her teacher admitted to penalizing her for raising her hand. When her daughter recently requested a more rigorous math class, Violet Allen could submit her daughter's grades with letters from her teacher and math tutor and then follow up with the principal. The difference between her experience and her daughter's is that having a quality school for her daughter near their home increased the feasibility of Violet Allen's parental engagement and advocacy.

## Professional Education Access

Two narrators spoke about the challenges of gaining access to professional education. The Man Whose Blood Remembers spoke about two medical professionals, his wife and his brother, who struggled to gain entry into medical programs in California despite high grades. While his brother, the first in their family to go to college, ultimately became a nurse practitioner, the pressure of having to support himself through school financially slowed his progress. For his wife's pursuit of a registered nursing (RN) program, her commitment ultimately forced her out of state.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** And, and just to share my, my wife is a nurse too. And so, she ended up having high honors when she graduated from LVM nursing school. But she couldn't get into any RN programs in the state of California despite that. So, she actually had to go to school in Idaho, because they ended up just accepting her. You know, like, immediately, like, you know, what, you know, not immediately there's a process, but I mean, they saw, you know, like her experience and everything, and they accepted her. But she, like all the programs that she tried to buy for in the state of California, like she couldn't get in any despite having high honors. I think she had the highest, I'm sorry, the fourth or third highest GPA of her graduating class.

**Interviewer:** What year was this that your wife was trying to get into RN programs?

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** It was a process. So, it was probably like, a couple years where she was trying different ones. I would say maybe, like, between 2016 [and] 2017 because I believe 2018 is when she actually started a program.

**Interviewer:** Yes. And had to go to Idaho for it?

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** Yes, yeah. Because I wanted to make sure she was able to succeed at what she wanted to do. So, while she was there, I had the kids with me here. Despite at that time, I was working two full time jobs. And so, then I ended up just start working one, but I was still working overtime and stuff. And so, I had all four of the kids while she went to school, because I wanted to make sure she was able to do what she actually wanted to do.

Similar to The Man Whose Blood Remembers, Violet Allen also spoke of the challenges of attaining professional education. An administrative judge with a state regulatory agency, Violet Allen doubts whether she would have pursued law again if she had known the cost. After being waitlisted and subsequently denied entry to the University of California, Hastings, she began attending law school in 1995 at a private institution. Though her father's veteran status would have covered her tuition at a state school, attending a private university required her to take out loans. She graduated in 1999 with \$85,000 in debt. After 25 years of loan payments, she still owes \$50,000.

While she's spent the last 10 years as a civil servant, because her loans were unsubsidized, it's only under the temporary update to the Public Service Loan forgiveness program that she would have had a chance at her loans being discharged. Violet Allen's story is significant because it illustrates that even in her apparently successful position, the impact of student debt is significant. That student debt integrally shaped her career choices.

**Violet Allen:** Everybody has their own opinions about reparatory justice and what it should look like. For me, and this is just for me, I personally believe that educational opportunities, and specifically **not having to incur the amount of debt that I did, would have made a world of difference for me, and the type of law that I could have and would have practiced.** I think I would have definitely done something different with my career. I would have probably worked in civil rights. **I would have probably done some nonprofit work. I would have probably worked in areas to serve the needs of people who didn't have access to lawyers. I had to pay back loans.** So, I had to have a job where I was getting money to pay back my loans. So, I initially started in a private industry. I started as a private attorney. And that's just because of the choices, the limitations that I had, with the type of choices I could make. I couldn't be



a nonprofit attorney; I couldn't be a civil rights attorney. Couldn't afford it.

The through line in many of the narrators' accounts is that their pursuit of higher education was motivated by the belief that earning a degree would open doors for greater opportunity. However, as discussed with respect to housing and employment as well, the returns on degrees have often been less than promised.

## EMPLOYMENT, FORCED LABOR, & BUSINESS HARDSHIP

Collectively, harms related to employment, forced labor, and business hardships represent the most discussed theme of harm. Every narrator reported at least one, and often multiple, accounts of harm that either they or their family members experienced while working. Broadly, the sub-themes can be categorized as:

- ▶ Histories of enslaved and forced labor in California and the rest of the U.S.
- ▶ Gatekeeping practices and elusive barriers to entry
- ▶ Reliance on their expertise but restrictions on their career advancement
- ▶ Lack of social capital

### *Histories of Forced Labor: A Grandfather Enslaved in California & a Grandmother and Former Sharecropper Currently Living in California*

Four of the seven narrators gave accounts of their grandparents who were either enslaved persons or sharecroppers in the United States. When considering the contemporary relevance of these narrators' accounts of their elders, it should be noted that of these four individuals who experienced forms of bondage, one was enslaved in California. Additionally, another, who was a sharecropper in Arkansas, is still alive today. Finally, one narrator, aged 88 years, gave a personal account of forced labor after wrongful imprisonment.

#### **Enslavement in California**

Foundational Black American's great grandfather lived in California as early as the mid-1800s, appearing on the 1850 Census.

**Foundational Black American:** Well, it's my understanding that my great grandfather was enslaved in Kentucky or Tennessee and brought to California as a slave. [Name removed] A decorated historian reached out to our family in 2006, I believe. The document she shared stated that **our great grandfather, not only was he sold once, but he was sold twice here in the state of California.**

#### **Ties to Slavery in The City of Oakland**

Another narrator also reported to a history of enslavement within California. In describing a lawsuit that he attempted to file against the City of Oakland, Bishop Porter indicated that enslaved labor was used to build the Port of Oakland and Oakland railroads.

Consistent with Bishop Porter's report, according to a [City of Oakland Memo](#) authored by Mary Mayberry, Interim Director of the Department of Workplace and Employment Standards, and distributed on April 13, 2022, the Oakland City Council enacted the City of Oakland Slavery Era Disclosure Ordinance in 2005. The ordinance was intended to promote the full and accurate disclosure to the public of the scope of historical ties to slavery within Oakland and create a fund for contractors subject to the ordinance to voluntarily contribute to "promote healing and assist in remedying the present-day legacy of slavery." Among contractors potentially subject to this ordinance, were any textile, tobacco, railroad, shipping, rice, and/or sugar company doing business with the city.

#### **Legacy of Sharecropping**

Three narrators attested that their grandparents were sharecroppers. Ronnie Lynne's grandfather was a sharecropper in Alabama who served in World War II and moved to California.

The Man Whose Blood Remembers' grandmother, born in the 1920s, began sharecropping at eight years old, attending school for only half a day. His grandmother was threatened with a loaded gun and rescued her brother from a fire pit while she was still a child, and The Man Whose Blood Remembers recounted she experienced familial separation due to sharecropping.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** She also mentioned to me that her mother and her father both wasn't on the same farm that she was on. That they lived on a different farm and that she lived with her auntie. And so, what at first, **she didn't know that that was her auntie. She thought it was her mom.** And she ended up finding out later [when] she got older. But **even her father and her mother was on different farms too. So, they weren't even together on the same farm. So they were, like separated.**

### *Gatekeeping: Navigating Elusive Barriers to Entry*

While narrators' accounts of employment discrimination and hardship have been categorized into sub-themes to identify specific elements, often the accounts illustrated more than one type of harm.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** I'd apply for a position that I was well qualified for. You know because of the way that I talk, right [they say] Yeah, sure. Come on, in. **But the thing is, nobody can lie with their eyes,** like the way they look at you.

Gatekeeping is used here to describe a phenomenon by which access to opportunities is barred without a clear rationale. Gatekeeping was a recurring theme in employment-related harms, particularly for narrators at transition points in which they sought new employment or business development opportunities.

Beginning his own business after being routinely denied employment positions, Ronnie Lynne's grandfather, a World War II veteran, encountered gatekeeping during the second half of the 20th century.

**Ronnie Lynne:** [M]y paternal grandfather, you know, he was a sharecropper in Alabama. And he only had an eighth-grade education. But when he came to LA, I heard how he couldn't find work. You know, **he served in World War II, [but] couldn't find a job.** And he **started his own construction businesses, but he would have to get white men to pretend like they own[ed] the company, just so he can get work.** And that was true for my maternal great grandfather from Louisiana. He also served in World War Two. And when he, you know, moved out here, [he couldn't] find work. So, you know, **I heard stories about how they, even though they fought in World War II, they still were being discriminated against.**

Several narrators described more contemporary iterations of gatekeeping. Elaborating on gatekeeping at different phases of the employment application process, The Man Whose Blood Remembers described that he would be met with enthusiasm over the phone, which would be contradicted when he showed up to the interview. Noting examples of gatekeeping before he could attain an interview, he reflected upon a point in which he considered whether to continue indicating his race on applications.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** In some cases, they have a **requirement to put your race or not put it.** And I was just like, man, it **sometimes made me wonder if I was to not put it, would they give me a better chance? But then they probably gonna see me.** But then I was just like, I can't not be who I am. Like, I can't do that. Because if that's the case, then I shouldn't be there anyway. **Even though it's affecting my family and potential for me to grow and advance, I can't try to hide who I am** because somebody wants to treat me unfairly.

Notably, Freda Day elucidated how she has encountered gatekeeping while navigating hiring agencies. She has found that hiring agencies serve as a gatekeeper by discounting her worth.

**Freda Day:** So even though this was a Black company, where everyone in reality was actually paid, well,

**in order for me to get the job, I got to deal with this gatekeeper, who's gonna discount me to a Black-owned firm.** And it happens. It happened when I left that job and went to the job that I have now. They went through three people who were not Black, who were horrible, but now you hire the third person who is great. But I gotta take the discount, because y'all hired two, two incompetent people before me. Like, how does that work? A white gatekeeper, I got an interview in your house, in a very posh part of LA where I can see wealth all around you. And you're discounting me, as we sit looking out [over] the hills. Like this is the world we live in. **I had to leave that job and come back and then command the salary that I deserve, that I should have been paid in the first place.**

### *Using Their Expertise but Barring Their Advancement*

Related to gatekeeping was the harm of having the expertise accepted but the opportunities provided for promotion and advancement being limited. Often, narrators' ideas or expertise were used while either their:

1. Responsibilities disproportionately increased relative to coworkers without commensurate compensation, or
2. Ideas were adapted while excluding them from the process.

### **Disproportionately Increasing Responsibility Without Compensation**

Of the seven narrators, three described examples of being expected to carry additional responsibilities relative to others at work, often while making the same or less than their coworkers.

Noting the barriers that he had navigated to reach his position, including instances in which he was more qualified than those with more specialist positions, The Man Whose Blood Remembers felt the need to frame his professional advice discreetly.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** I went to one meeting, and they had someone who was supposed to be a specialist on something. **I didn't want them to see because I had more experience in it. And so, they really wanted to lead into training, and I didn't want them to feel like less than, so I framed it a certain way. I even approached, trying to give them guidance to where I posed it as questions.** So, then it gave them an opportunity to answer more so and then for me to just add to it ... And so, they actually was really happy. Instead, of me being able to correct them – because he should have known some of those things. **But I don't want to ever make anybody feel like I was made to feel on a regular basis, even though I was actually the qualified person.**

When The Man Whose Blood Remembers' expertise was perceived, he was routinely placed in employment positions that prevented him from progressing. Multiple times, he was asked to train several of his superiors. At one point, while working in construction, his employers even attempted to reassign the sites he was supervising so he could help his new boss supervise his own.

Freda Day described a similar experience while working in accounting. Despite having both a college degree in her profession and regularly advising her coworker, Freda Day was paid less than the coworker she advised.

**Freda Day:** **But a woman again, who was trained up in this profession who did not know accounting, who cannot do some of the things that I can do, she was making \$10,000 more than me.** And she asked me, "Do you know how much money I make?" I said, "No." She said, "**Well, I know how much money you make ... You should be making the same if not more than me because anytime I need to know something, I come to you ... You have a degree, and I don't.**" So, I've been at this now for 30 years. And I've been with this company since 2015. And I've literally had to leave in order to come back on the terms that I should have had when I came through the door in the first place.

Attempting to justify why she'd given the only two Black women on her staff noticeably larger caseloads than others, Violet Allen's manager characterized them as "workhorses" who could get a lot done. Yet, when special assignments arose, which often provided pathways for promotion, neither Violet Allen nor her colleague was ever

afforded an opportunity.

**Interviewer:** And when people were given these special assignments, there wasn't any sort of criteria that they explained about how they chose who was going to have this assignment?

**Violet Allen:** Not to my knowledge. Because I recall asking to be placed on an assignment. Something, you know, interesting, different, noteworthy. **And I never really could ascertain what criteria was used to place folks in these assignments.** I do recall asking this guy [Name removed] who was in charge of a special project. I asked [him], **“How do you choose the judges for your project for these particular cases?” And he said it was who he liked.**

### **Adapting Ideas While Excluding Them from the Process**

Consistent with the accounts of gatekeeping and limited opportunities for advancement, one narrator demonstrated how ideas matching her own were adapted to create a novel office, but she was deemed ineligible to apply for the specialist position in that office.

**Kay Move:** [E]ven if we remove the fact that I wrote a grant, which ended up being the blueprint of what this office looks like. I mean, I had direct experience.

In 2017, Kay Move submitted a proposal for the City of Sacramento's Creative Economy Grant after the City called for ideas to bolster the creative economy. After earning two degrees – an associates in television production and broadcast journalism and a bachelor's in communications – working for her local Public Broadcast Service, the Sacramento Film Commission, and the communications news division of the California Farm Bureau Federation, Kay Move proposed an idea.

**Kay Move:** My idea was all about a city-sanctioned Film Office that would provide local resources and assistance to filmmakers in grant making, you know, getting databases together of the crews and filmmakers in town. And they actually put that office together, but they would not even give me the chance to interview for that position.

Kay Move submitted her application and resume for the specialist position in the new office, which was consistent with the ideas she had proposed in her grant application. However, she was not invited to interview. She spoke to a Black filmmaker who received an interview and described his interviewers as disengaged before they cited his insufficient work history.

**Kay Move:** If you knew he didn't have enough work history, why are you interviewing him if that's automatic, you know ... Why are you interviewing him in the first place, and here I am with direct experience [and] a ton of work history. At the time that I applied for this field office job, I had been at the California Farm Bureau for ten years. So, I definitely had a track record and work history. **And it just seems like they picked somebody that they would easily be able to tell no.**

### ***Lack of Social Capital***

Gatekeeping and minimal opportunities for advancement correlated with limited opportunities to develop social capital. As reported, when Violet Allen inquired about the criteria used to distribute special assignments, one person in authority told her he chose those he liked. Violet Allen indicated that having few people to explain how these social systems worked created obstacles.

**Violet Allen:** When there are not very many Black folk, specifically Black Americans within a department, an agency, an institution, then the ability to kind of explain processes and how to move up are not there.

Commenting on the intersections of race and class, Ronnie Lynne, a professional within Hollywood, also contended that the absence of social networks removed safety nets for making mistakes. Thus, those who are less

connected are required to maintain exceptionalism.

**Ronnie Lynne:** I feel like Hollywood reflects society; you know? Like, [it's] about relationships, right? People whose parents went to college with someone who's already established. **But as a Black American, many of us, some of us, are still the first generation to go to college. We don't have those sorts of connections because of the history.** But I've seen white kids whose families they have these sorts of connections because of their privilege. And it helps. They get away with a lot. **Let me just say that. They can make a mistake, and [it will be] overlooked. You make the mistake [and it] is judged harsher.** It's harder for you to get promoted. And it's harder to make it because it's such a competitive industry. Having resources like connections and money, make a difference. And if you're just starting out at the bottom, and you don't know anyone, you get vomited out.

Similarly, Freda Day experienced the impact of a lack of social capital from the beginning of her career to the point at which she began her business. From the beginning, a senior partner made the deliberate decision not to give her mentorship shaping her opportunities.

**Freda Day:** I had the senior partner come to me and tell me, “**You are too smart.** You're the kind of person who, if I train you, you're going to take everything you are going to learn, and you're going to leave.” **So, this man mentored many people ... But what I was told was that I was too smart.**

Subsequently, when Freda Day began a firm with her business partner, another Black woman, they found that despite their expertise, consistent mentorship for young professionals, and ability to keep accounts in the Black, due to their lack of social connections, they could never grow to profitability due to undercapitalization.

**Freda Day:** It was a business management practice. You know, an accounting office for high net worth, high profile people. I had walked away from the company that I was with, with an anchor client. We knew we needed two anchor clients to sustain the business. And we thought we had a second anchor client, and then that guy wound up stiffing us, but you know, **when you have a small practice, people want you to be discounted. And I understood that, in a way ... But our skills are the same, my skill set didn't change because I changed location.** But when we came to that realization, we decreased our hourly billing. But in terms of being a retainer client, those numbers are not going to change much.

## HOME & LAND OWNERSHIP

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** Just something simple. **Just [to] be able to have a home for my family.** Like, that was just the goal. A home in the area that I grew up [in], that my family had been in since the 1940s. That's just what I wanted. I don't need to have the best car. **Like, I just want my kids to be able to have a home. And it was too hard to get.**

Consistent with the personal testimonies submitted via Box, the challenge of attaining and maintaining land and home ownership was the second most significant theme in the oral history interviews. In addition to discussions about redlining and segregation, narrators went into depth about historical and contemporary home and land ownership harms related to:

- ▶ Inherited property
- ▶ Urban planning & development
- ▶ Corporate interests

### *Inherited Property*

As a child, Violet Allen looked forward to visiting her mother's family every other year in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, where they collectively owned 40 acres of land. From the time she was about eight years old, Violet Allen recalls her mother receiving letters annually from an attorney requesting that she sell her inherited portion of the



family land. Her mother refused for over fifty years until, in 2012 she received a notice of a petition to partition the land.

**Violet Allen: The individual, who is a veterinarian out of my mom's small hometown, had been purchasing pieces of my relatives' portion of the land.** And so, this individual had such a large interest that it was not financially feasible for us to continue to fight in order to maintain the very small portion that was left. He was able to acquire roughly 30 acres of the 40, leaving 10 small acres or the remaining family members. So, he was able to go to court and file what's called **a petition to partition the land and to force the sale of the land so that he could not only maintain his 30 acres, but he could then force the sale of the 10 remaining acres** and then give the remaining heirs... a small monetary compensation for their portion.

When they attempted to defend their land, Violet Allen used her legal expertise to organize her family, find an assessor and an attorney in Louisiana, and draft documents to fight the sale. However, the process was too far gone when the family realized what had been happening. Illustrating the distinct vulnerability of individuals who inherit property and the fact that even with her expertise, navigating the legal process surrounding the inherited property proved difficult. Given this difficulty, Violet Allen is an advocate for the right to first refusal.

**Violet Allen: I think we should have been given the right to first refusal.** That should be a law that before my cousin can sell to Jim Bob, my cousin must give me the right to buy it. If I decide no, I don't want to buy your portion, then you can sell to an outsider. That's something that's not allowed, or that's not typically done with respect to heirs' property. And then all of the heirs should be advised that Jim Bob has presented cousin A, B, C, D, with offers to sell the land. [We] were completely kept in the dark. And **we're talking about a people who are just coming out of Jim Crow. Without access to lawyers, I was the first lawyer in my family.** I am the only lawyer in my family on both sides. My mom had 11 siblings, which means I had hundreds of cousins. I am the only lawyer on both sides of my family.

Violet Allen lived out another issue associated with inherited property when her father and his siblings decided to sell their late mother's property in Texas. Despite her efforts to buy the land with her two cousins, several obstacles prevented her from purchasing it.

**Violet Allen:** [T]he rough valuation of the land was probably about \$100,000, and I told him that I wanted to buy it, and I don't have a whole lot of money. But I was willing to do whatever I needed to do to buy the land. And so, I contacted my cousin in Arizona, two cousins in Arizona, one is a vice president [at] a bank. Another one is a police chief, got money, and I said you guys, let's go into it together. Let's purchase this together. It's land right next to Whole Foods Market, right next to Harley Davidson. You know, it's valuable. **So, my cousin starts investigating, and he finds out that we cannot get a mortgage on the land ...** I believe the reason was, because there was no home on it. And so, if we were to buy it, we'd have to buy it in cash. Okay, so I'm thinking to myself, Okay, yeah, that's a risk. But you know, let's still do it.

**Then the second issue that came was that even if we purchased it, we couldn't find anybody who would insure us.** And I forgot there was a specific reason that they would not insure the land. And it escapes me, but it was something along the lines of it not being that type of property that was insurable for most insurance companies. So, I was running the risk of, if I buy this land, and I erect something on it, then you're talking about losing a life savings when I'm a single mom. I'd love to be able to send my daughter to college. I can't risk investing in this property and not being able to insure it. So, ultimately, I decided that I could not as an individual woman, purchase this land, although I wanted to.

**And then the third issue with this land is that Whole Foods and Harley Davidson advised us that my grandmother never owned all of the land, a portion of it belonged to someone else. In fact, they were claiming that a portion of it belonged to them.** And so there would be litigation, fighting title, or establishing title to the land. Knowing that I have the issue of it **not possibly being insurable,**

**not with me not being able to hold a mortgage on it, and then me possibly having to battle, a title fight with Whole Foods,** which is owned by Amazon, I don't care how smart I think I am. I don't have the financial wherewithal to fight that kind of power. So, Daddy and all of his siblings sold the land.

### *Inherited Property in California*

Foundational Black American's interview echoed the phenomenon of heirs unwillingly losing inherited land. Connected with his family's history in California among the Black pioneers, Foundational Black American described a concerted effort to erase records of Black land ownership.

**Foundational Black American:** It was a book that was written by, I believe, Karen L. Robinson. The book was titled *Gaining Ground [African American Landowners in California, 1848-1860]* and was actually her master thesis. And it's at Arizona State University. That's the only copy left on campus; it has to be checked out by students. And that particular book really spoke about the African American pioneers of California, that were landowners from 1850, California began a state or the union until 1950. **And it showed [an] extreme decrease, and then land ownership of these African Americans. And I just find it interesting that that book was pulled out of circulation.** And the only way I was able to get a copy or actually get the information from the book was to have a student at Arizona State University go into [the] library, check it out and take pictures. But I was I was stunned because a lot of this history, you have to go to higher education [to] learn it. And I don't even call that critical race. I call it just teaching th[rough] rough history. And so, if we taught that history, and it wasn't hidden, one would then question, well, what happened to all the Black landowners? **My family is living proof of what happened to all the Black landowners. We just happen to have the deeds that were not destroyed ...**

The deeds to which Foundational Black American referred are those detailing his great-grandfather's ownership of land in Coloma, CA, which was ultimately seized under eminent domain.

**Foundational Black American:** For my great grandfather to come home from fighting for this country and be told, "You're gonna sell your land boy" – because they call them boys back then – "or you're gonna be jailed." Now that came from the archives. [The] Department of Justice actually shared that with me. **Legislation was actually created to take land from my family. And they took land.** Why? Well, as I began to read documents, there was gold still there. When [my relative] said, "No, you guys [can't] dredge up my land." They wrote in the newspaper, "Negroes surely to lose against the state of California."

Despite acknowledgments about his family's ownership, Foundational Black American attests that none of the lands have been restored. Thus, the through line between Violet Allen and Foundational Black American's stories is that even when Black families have attained land ownership, maintaining ownership across generations has consistently been threatened.

### *Urban Planning & Development*

Continuing the theme of urban development, one narrator illustrated the hardships created by development projects that directly target or exclude Black communities.

#### **Building Through Black Corridors**

**Freda Day:** My children's grandmother purchased a home over by where they built the 91 freeway for \$14,000. That house didn't achieve his highest level of appreciation because they put the freeway literally at the end of the block. The freeway went through the end of the block. Well, we know that had racial implications, as did the 110 freeway, [the] 10 freeway, and **all of these freeways that became built went through Black corridors. So, the house didn't really appreciate very much in value.**

Ultimately, leaving California to purchase a home in Texas allowed her children's grandmother to pay cash for a

home. However, the narrator emphasized the importance of such implications: Many who are likely to be eligible for lineage-based reparations in California, should they occur, have emigrated due to hardships experienced in California.

### *Levittown & Racial Covenants*

Pointing to the example of Levittown, Freda Day indicated that urban developments that have deliberately excluded African Americans have also created hardships for Black home ownership. Her great grandmother moved into the Kingsborough Housing Projects, a primarily Black housing project in New York, in the early 1940s. She lived there most of her life. By contrast, when suburban development projects called Levittown were constructed, often with racial covenants, residents who lived in white housing projects were afforded access to social mobility.

**Freda Day:** For my great grandmother, there was no daggone Levittown for Black people. She wasn't able to move out of the projects and into some other housing that was different. My grandmother lived in the projects until she moved into a nursing home.

## CONTEMPORARY HOUSING HARMS: CORPORATE INTERESTS

### *Denial of Mortgage Modification during the 2008 Housing Crisis*

Before the 2008 housing crisis, Violet Allen bought a home in the Southland Park area of Sacramento, California. Wanting to live in her childhood community near her aging her mother, yet unable to secure a home in the once predominantly Black community she grew up in, Kay Move used an inheritance from her aunt to put a down payment on her home in another area. She then left California to care for her dying grandmother. When she returned to California amid the housing crisis, she secured a mortgage modification with her lender.

**Kay Move:** When I first bought the house. I was paying \$4,400 a month. I had a first and a second mortgage. Like I said I had some inheritance from my Louisiana family. So, we were able to keep up that payment \$4,400 a month for a year. And then at that time, you know we refinanced [and were] able to get a little bit less than \$3,700 a month but it was still deemed that the property was underwater. So, looking to get the modification with Chase [Bank], they finally agreed to it. And they sent a trial modification contract for \$1488 a month. And I'm like, okay, so this is something I can work with, even with my underemployment [and] the inheritance running out.

Despite paying her mortgage every month for two years, under the presumption that the modification would become permanent, her mortgage was ultimately sold to another lender, beginning the modification process anew.

**Kay Move:** There was this algorithm where **you had to be making you know, X amount of money over your mortgage price in order to even be considered for modifications at lesser rate.** So, it's like, the more money you made, the better modification package they would give you. At one time, they were offering interest rates at 2%. My modification ended up being at 4%. But they also had something they were offering called principal reduction. They were paying off \$100,000, or even half of people's mortgage, just paying that off. But only if you make enough money. **And I'm like, if I made all this money, I wouldn't even need a modification, I would just pay the bill.** I wasn't thinking about it in these terms at the time, before I got into my advocacy work, but it's like, okay, well, **if Black people are, you know, the data is showing that they're underpaid,** and most situations that their median incomes is like [\$]40,000 or under. So, they set the rules, so that **it's unattainable.**

Over the years, Kay Move's mortgage was sold to multiple lenders who engaged in practices such as increasing her payment by \$100 without notice and subsequently refusing to accept her payment. After falling into default, the lender foreclosed on Kay Move's home, and it was nearly sold.

**Kay Move: My house was on the auction block.** I couldn't go because I had to work. But I did have

a friend go for me. **And he said that it was like a scene from the movie *Men in Black* because it was all these private investors with earpieces and talking.** And they were calling the houses, and then people would bid on them... Not just normal people going to try to buy a house [but] these were private investors. And that's a big problem. Sacramento sold a large swath of the housing inventory to these private investment firms like BlackRock. So, they buy up the properties, and then everybody has to go in as a renter, and then they're charging exorbitant prices for rent. So that's how we ended up in that situation. But he said it was basically like a scene from the movie *Men in Black*. And he said, **they called my house**, and then they were like, oh, **no, this one has a stay on it. So, this one won't be sold today, but that's how close my house got to being sold out from under me.**

### *Corporations Buying Up Single-Family Homes*

Consistent with Kay Move's account, The Man Whose Blood Remembers described how in the current housing market, investors and corporations are continuing to overbid for homes that enter the market. The practice makes it virtually impossible for individual families to buy homes, even in neighborhoods in which they have always lived. As an aspiring small-business owner in real estate, the phenomenon also meant that The Man Whose Blood Remembers' previous work to position himself to begin his business was moot.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** Basically, people who have like billions of dollars and stuff, they're purposely purchasing any homes that come on the market. They will purposely purchase it at a higher rate. So that, basically, can end up driving the market. So that's happening ... **They only, build a certain amount of homes at a certain time, which causes overbidding.** And so, then when someone overbid[s], and it happens multiple times, they can now use that as like the point of [value]. There was some homes that I was actually attempting to try to buy. And that was one of the things they did. [When] they started off, it was like [\$]300,000 for certain homes. And then they would only build a certain amount. And they have you go through this process where you're waiting, and then you try to buy it, and then someone bids like [\$]100,000 extra. I don't have [that] type of money ... **I did all this work to get in this position to finally be able to almost bid in this.** Now, something new is put in place to, where I still can't because now people are coming up with \$300,000 ... I can't compete with that. My family don't have money like that. I barely got to a position where I can even almost try.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL & EMOTIONAL TRAUMA

The impact of psychological and emotional trauma was another dominant theme across the interviews. One of the repeated notions was that when recounting past harms there's a reluctance among elder African Americans to talk about their experience.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** She [his grandmother who was a sharecropper as a child] encountered a lot of racial racism. But I think for her being so young, and encountering it, she didn't really look at it for being that. **But when she shared the story, which was difficult to get ... from what I've been seeing, some of the older generation[s] don't really like sharing some of their experiences. So, it kind of took a lot to get her to talk about it.** But then she didn't want to really, like really take a deep dive and think on it too much, which is understandable, because it was traumatizing.

**Ronnie Lynne:** My elders were very religious or Christian. So, that's how they dealt with it was through their faith. **Black Americans were super into the church. That was how they dealt with their pain.** [It] was through the church through community. **But there was clearly harm, you know, trauma. It just was something you didn't talk about ... The older Black people, that's how they dealt with it. They will go to church three, four times a week, they will yell, scream and just the assurance that they believed God was with them.**

Notably, in both instances, narrators are describing the impact of the psychological trauma on their elder family members. That is, the experience of trauma limited their elders' ability to talk about the struggles they have un-

dergone and thereby limited these narrators' ability to understand their family histories.

Among the narrators who described their own psychological trauma, they were able to speak more about the specific origins of their trauma and what the experience of trauma looks like in their lives. For one narrator, his trauma originated from being forced to continue facing the land ownership harms that took his family's land.

**Foundational Black American:** The trauma that I mentioned – when we talk about slavery, I can't relate to that, because I just can't. But the trauma I mentioned is like everything after I think. Okay, slavery was legal, it was wrong. There are some cruel things that happen. I didn't live it. But what I do live and what's in my veins are those ancestral ties. **When I say trauma, there are sleepless nights.** Whether people believe it or not, I've had my great grandfather come and talk to me. And tell me I haven't found all the documents yet. And so, some of that is the lack of trust. I walk through life convincing myself that I have to believe that not all white people are a certain way. I have to look for the good in people. Even though the majority of white people are afraid of other white people because they've told me, and they show me what their continued silence of allowing this systemic system to continue on. **So those are emotions that I cannot even begin to describe.** But it's stress. When we think about **why do Black men have high blood pressure? Have ailments? You know, why am I passionate? Why does my voice fluctuation change? My voice? That's trauma.** That's – I don't know any other way to explain it. Right? I have to humble myself and suppress feelings and emotions, and that's traumatic within itself. **It's actually relieving sometime[s] to let my voice go up. But I, I feel like well, if I do that, I might scare somebody, or I'm going to be titled as the angry Black man** that has a cost. That comes with [a] cost. People say, "How do you sit and talk to these people?" And I say, because not everybody did what's being done. But it's trauma. When I hear white people tell me, "We stand with you. [We] just have to be silent now."

For another narrator, her trauma sourced from going through the process of filing a suit against the State of California based on racial and gender discrimination. In addition to her diagnosis with nerve damage following her experiences of harassment, she illustrated the emotional toll that fighting the case itself took both on her and her family.

**Interviewer:** And one of the things that you mentioned, is in deciding to accept the settlement. You wanted to be able to be a mom again. To the degree that you feel comfortable, what ways did you find that focusing, you know, working on your case took you away from being a mom?

**Violet Allen:** Depression, I was very depressed. [I was] unable or just failing to engage in the way and at the level that I did. I think when I had my daughter, one of the things that I always wanted her to know, was that when she entered a room, that I was happy to see her. That I was joyful to see her. That her just entering a room would light me up, and light up my life. And when I was going through this process, I found that I was very unhappy, and that when she entered a room, I wasn't joyful. Just her presence would literally bring me joy because I wanted this child so badly, and I have this beautiful baby. And so, when I was going through this just not engaging in a way that she deserved.

## FAILURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE TRUE HISTORY

One of the final major themes across the interviews was the harm associated with failing to acknowledge history in its truth. Some narrators connected this failure specifically to experiences in education in which history was deliberately obscured, such as *The Man Whose Blood Remembers'* description of his teacher explaining the Civil War as an issue of states' rights.

However, many more connected a failure to acknowledge history more broadly. Often this theme occurred concurrently with the theme relating to inaccessibility to data and records. As noted, Foundational Black American described how histories of Black land ownership in California, and limitations on access to records which illustrate that land ownership has both limited his ability to learn about his own family and erased the contributions



of other Black pioneers.

One narrator connected this lack of knowledge of African American history and their contributions to the U.S. to a sense of shame and lack of purpose for many African Americans.

**Ronnie Lynne:** For me, as a Black American, I felt like growing up, we were made to be ashamed of who we are as Black Americans. I was always hearing Black Americans talk about Egypt. Oh, we're Egyptian. **It was just something to make us feel like, we we've done something, and it was just [having] this obsession with trying to prove that the first Egyptians were Black instead of us being proud of what our families built here,** you know, we, we can never just be proud of who we are as Black Americans. Like, you know, I love the fact that, you know, I'm of African descent, but I also felt like we were told made me feel like Africa was better than what we built here character, like, we were ashamed that our ancestors were slaves. But for me, what helped me was just accepting that my family built their own culture here. And they, you know, there's nothing to be ashamed of, like, they overcame such great obstacles ... **We get judged a lot as Black Americans. We were always told we don't work hard enough. We're always complaining. You don't value education. And you know, the history says otherwise.** History says that Black people built their own schools – HBCUs. The history shows that Black Americans fought for public schools, so everybody can get a free education. But yeah, you have immigrants who come here and white people who say, well, why don't you just do what Asian Americans do? They go to college. And you know, people don't know our story ... **I feel like a lot of Black Americans, they don't have a sense of purpose because they don't value their legacy. They don't value what their families went through. They're looking outward. Just for validation ...** So, for me, definitely teaching history in a way that centers our identity, you know, instead of us, you know, I think like Black Americans just need that space.

## ADDITIONAL FINDINGS & CLOSING THOUGHTS FROM NARRATORS

Connected to the dominant themes of harm detailed above – home and land ownership, education, employment, psychological and emotional trauma, and failure to acknowledge true history – the narrators' stories also reflected several additional themes, but to a lesser extent.

### *Health Harms Connected to Employment*

While health harms did not emerge as a dominant themes, notably most of the health-related harms described were linked with employment. The two most prevalent sub-themes were issues around taking health-related leaves and employment conditions that correlated with injury and fatality. Of the four women who were narrators, three of them described issues with taking employment leaves related to medical conditions. Additionally, each of those three women described employment situations experienced by themselves or their family members which correlated with injury and, in the worst cases, fatality.

### *Inaccessible or Inadequate Government Services*

Specifically, four areas were mentioned regarding inaccessible or inadequate government services:

- 1. Denied benefits for Black veterans under The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the G.I. Bill:** Relating the experiences of her two grandfathers, Ronnie Lynne, described how despite their service in World War II, neither was able to access the benefits of the G.I. Bill. Moreover, once they came to California, both experienced difficulty getting jobs, despite their service. As mentioned, her paternal grandfather, ultimately, launched his business after being unable to find work. Nevertheless, he frequently had to hire white men to pretend they owned the company.
- 2. Small Business Administration (SBA) loans:** The Man Whose Blood Remembers found that despite claims that the SBA and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) are professed to help Black and minority business owners, he found little support when referred to an MBDA-affiliate organization for support. He remarked, “[The MBDA] have these other government organizations

that's connected with them. But one of the groups that they referred me to was actually called ASIAN, that was the name of the organization. It was actually spelled Asian, and it actually meant something. But it was connected with one of the groups that's supposed to help me get a loan. And of course, they didn't give me nothing, you know."

3. **Services for working caregivers:** As a working single mother, Freda Day experienced the challenges of those who make too much to qualify for support services related to housing, childcare, or healthcare but cannot make enough money to afford all these expenses, especially when they're caring for multiple generations. In discussing these challenges, she described the need for a sliding scale and more support for families caring for Black elders who have lived through years of hardship that contribute to health disparities
4. **Legal representation for parolee candidates:** During her five years as a parole revocation attorney with the California Parole Department, Violet Allen observed what she characterized as the frequent lack of a zealous defense. She noted, "An inmate had a specific period of time within which he or she could be on parole ... Let's say it was four years. [I] **found that the board was holding inmates after this four-year mark. This information would come to the attorney's knowledge ...** But rather than challenge that and push for the inmate's immediate release, it would be something where the **attorney didn't want to rock the boat** in order to not get work. You want to continue to get work. **So, parole revocation work became an economy fueled off of maintaining folks in prison.**

### *Civil & Military Service Consistently Reflected in Personal Histories*

It's notable that as they spoke about their family and personal histories, every narrator's history reflected a commitment to military or civil service to their country as teachers, judges, municipal workers, and soldiers. Bishop Porter proudly spoke about the feats of military bravery for which two of his relatives had been honored. Kay Move, while priding her parents' work as lifelong civil servants also mourned her father's premature death from a brain aneurysm at the age of 59, which his coworkers attributed to hidden stressors on the job.

### **Belief in Repairing America as a Whole**

Finally, the narrators echoed the sentiment that they wanted harms to be acknowledged and repaired not only because of what has happened to the descendants of slavery, but because the contributions Black Americans have made and can make with reparations have integrally shaped the nation for the better. Thus, they believed that providing reparations to the descendants of slavery was not just an effort to repair Black America, but to heal the nation as a whole.

**The Man Whose Blood Remembers:** "I really do believe if you fix the descendants of slavery in America ... [and] the government actually do what they supposed to do ... it actually allows the U.S. to say and show, we were actually willing to clean up our own messes. **We were willing to be the country we said that we were when we said liberty and justice for all.**"



# SECTION 5

## PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS ON REPARATIONS PROPOSALS & ELIGIBILITY ANALYSIS & FINDINGS



This section reports findings from the statewide surveys to assess public opinion on reparations proposals and on eligibility. The findings are reported for the statewide representative sample in California and for those who completed the survey through the community listening session process. The survey results are provided with a focus on the following two major areas of inquiry: support for reparations and who should be eligible for them.

## DATA

The Bunche Center designed a closed-ended survey that queried a representative sample of Californians about their support for reparations proposals and their opinion about who should be eligible for that support. The sample consisted of 2,449 individuals from across the state who were over the age of 18, and was conducted from May 10, 2022, to June 6, 2022. A proportional stratified sampling frame of the American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year estimates of California was used to mirror the state's demographics in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, and race. The research team at UCLA designed the web-based survey and it was administrated by LUCID HOLDINGS Marketplace, a third-party source.

In addition, the community listening session survey was administered between March and August 2022. This survey was offered to those who either directly participated in the community listening sessions or were connected to the survey by a listening session participant. In total, 1,934 respondents completed the community listening session survey. The analysis below compares the results of the representative statewide survey to those who completed the survey based on connections to the community listening sessions, where appropriate.

## METHODOLOGY

The research sought to understand the level of support for reparations in the state of California. Survey questions were developed based on the suggested reparation measures to address past harm according to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner:

- ▶ Restitution should restore the victim to their original situation before the violation occurred (e.g., restoration of liberty, reinstatement of employment, return of the property, and return to one's place of residence).
- ▶ Compensation should be provided for any economically assessable damage, loss of earnings, property loss, economic opportunities, or moral damages.
- ▶ Rehabilitation should include medical and psychological care and legal and social services.
- ▶ Satisfaction should include the cessation of continuing violations, truth-seeking, search for the disappeared person or their remains, recovery, reburial of remains, public apologies, judicial and administrative sanctions, memorials, and commemorations.

A Likert scale was used to collect respondents' attitudes and opinions on the extent to which the participant agrees or disagrees with reparation measures for eligible Black residents in California. The scale was used to rank survey respondents' level of support by choosing one of the following: *strongly support*, *support*, *likely support*, *strongly oppose*, *oppose*, *likely oppose*, *neither support nor oppose*, and *unsure*. For ease of presentation, the responses are reduced to three broad sentiments: support, indifferent, and oppose. The newly defined support category combined the *strongly support*, *support*, and *likely support* responses, while the oppose category combined *strongly oppose*, *oppose*, and *likely oppose*. The indifferent category collapsed the *neither support nor oppose* category and the *unsure* category together.

For racial atrocities committed in California, our research identified three main categories for reparation remedies, direct cash compensation, monetary, (no direct cash) measures, and non-monetary measures. In this case, direct cash compensation refers to a one-time cash payment.

Monetary measures are a collection of economic and financial proposals that invest in Black communities, such as: economic investments (e.g., grants, business loans, entrepreneurial investments); education (e.g., educational grants); health care (e.g., expansion of Medi-Cal); housing (mortgage assistance/down payment/housing revitalization grants); loan/debt forgiveness (e.g., student, mortgage, business debt relief); and financial resources (e.g., universal basic income, baby bonds, annuities, endowments, trust funds).

Non-monetary measures refer to proposals such as an apology from the state; curriculum reform (i.e., K-12 education on Slavery/Transatlantic Slave Trade); monuments (e.g., memorials to honor victims of Slavery/Transatlantic Slave Trade, abolitionist monuments); and restoration of unfairly seized property/land.

This section first presents results from the representative statewide sample and then compares them to the results from the community listening session surveys.

## KEY FINDINGS

### SUPPORT FOR REPARATIONS

#### *A Majority of Californians Support all Types of Reparations Measures*

Past research has focused on reparations in the form of direct cash payments for harm caused and has shown that support for reparations falls when reparations is defined as such. Although our research finds there is majority support for reparations in the form of direct cash payments (64%), support is significantly higher for remedies that include monetary measures (77%) but do not include cash payments. Support is also significantly higher for remedies that include non-monetary (73%) forms of reparations (Figure 8).

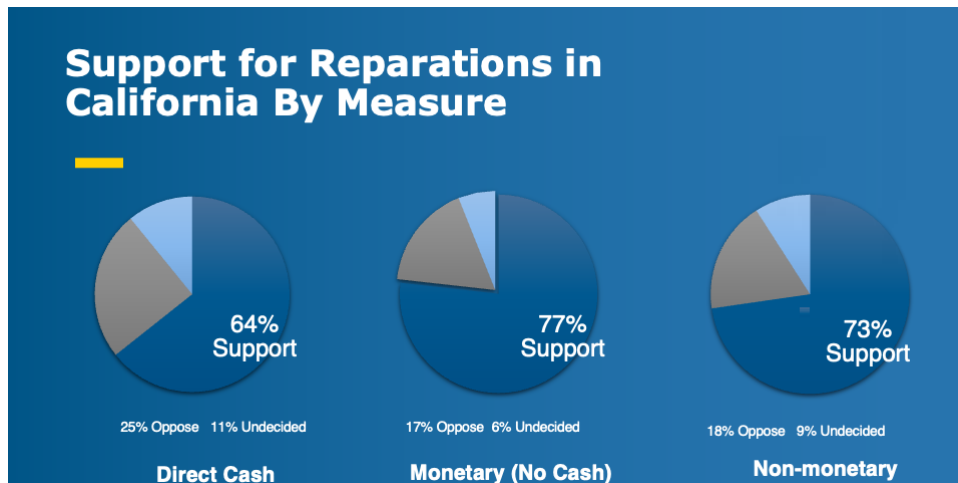


Figure 8. Support for reparation measures for the state sample

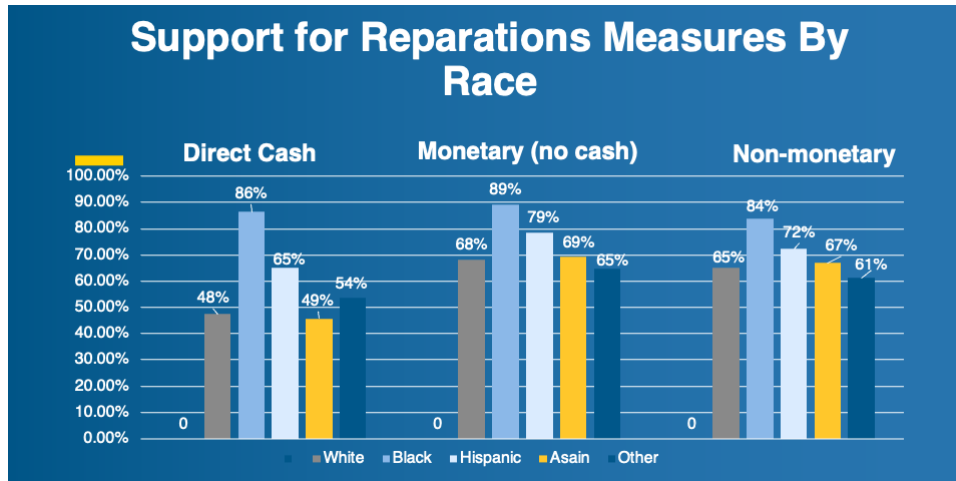
These findings support past research but show that support for monetary reparations (arguably equivalent to cash in value) is quite high if cash is not included. Despite this, a majority of Californians support a direct cash form of reparations.

Below, support in California for all three reparations measures is explored by key demographic variables. The results shows that support for reparations in California differs significantly by race, age, educational attainment, and political affiliation.

#### *Black Californians Are Much More Likely to Support All Reparation Measures (Especially Direct Cash Transfers)*



Support for direct cash compensation vastly differs by race (Figure 9). Non-Hispanic Black (86%) support for direct cash payments was nearly two times greater than support among Whites (48%) and Asian Americans. Support within the Latinx community for such forms of reparations is fairly strong as well, with nearly two-thirds (61%) supporting direct cash compensation.



**Figure 9. Support for reparations by race from the state sample**

Still, support for monetary (no cash) measures was the most supported reparations measure across all racial and ethnic groups. Black Californians support this reparations measure the most (at 89%) and only slightly more than their support for direct cash payments (see above at 86%). Over three-fourths (79%) of the Latinx community indicated support for monetary based (no cash) reparations measures, while support for this reparations measure for whites, Asian Americans, and others hovered in the 60% range. Still, a majority of these groups supported monetary (no cash) measures for reparations.

Further analysis not shown here reveals that Black Californians' higher support for monetary (no cash) reparation measures is driven by their strong support for business investments (82%) within Black communities and educational investments (81%). Their support for non-monetary reparations measures is driven in part by their much stronger support for the restoration of seized property (78%), compared to other racial/ethnic groups.

### *Younger Californians Are More Likely to Support Reparations for Eligible African Americans*

The survey found that younger Californians support all reparation measures more strongly than older Californians (those older than 45) (Figure 10).

Age is a particularly significant indicator for the strength of support for direct cash payments as the reparations measure. According to the breakdown provided for the state sample, respondents aged 30 to 44 (74.2%) offered the most significant support for direct cash compensation, followed by roughly three-fourths (73.6%) of those aged 18 to 29. By contrast, only roughly one-third (38%) of respondents aged 65 or older expressed support for this measure.

There is a similar trend regarding the level of support for monetary (no cash) and non-monetary measures. While a large majority (83%) of people aged 30 to 45 supported monetary no cash reparations, support declined (73%) with those aged 45 to 54. Similarly, support (62%) for non-monetary measures was significantly lower for people aged 55 to 64 than among those aged 18 to 29.

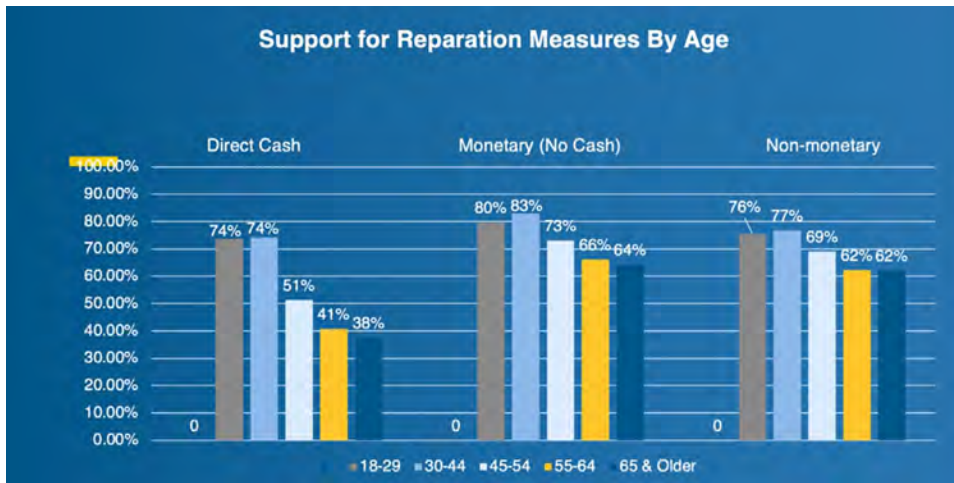


Figure 10. Support for reparation measures by age

### Women in California Are Slightly More Likely to Support Reparations for Eligible African Americans

The proposal for direct cash compensation was equally supported by men (62%) and women (62%). However, support varied in the support for monetary (no cash) and non-monetary measures. Overall, women expressed more support for monetary no cash reparations measures (79%) than men (74%). The greatest difference in support between women and men was regarding non-monetary reparations measures, which women were much more likely to support – 75% of women versus 69% of men (Figure 11).

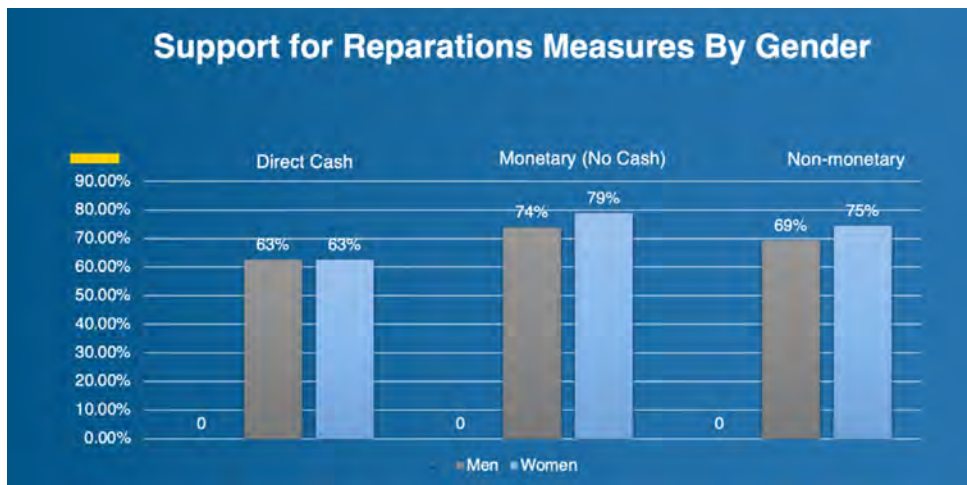


Figure 11. Support for reparation measures by gender

### More Educated Californians Are More Likely to Support Monetary (No Cash) Reparations

With respect to educational attainment, the results from the state sample show that the greatest support for reparations came from more educated Californians – those with a bachelor’s degree or more – who supported monetary (no cash) reparations at 87% and 85%, respectively (Figure 12). While a majority of Californians expressed support for direct cash payments, this support did not vary significantly by educational attainment. Support for non-monetary remedies as a form of reparations also did not significantly differ by educational attainment, except that those with only a high school diploma were less likely than others to support this form of reparations.

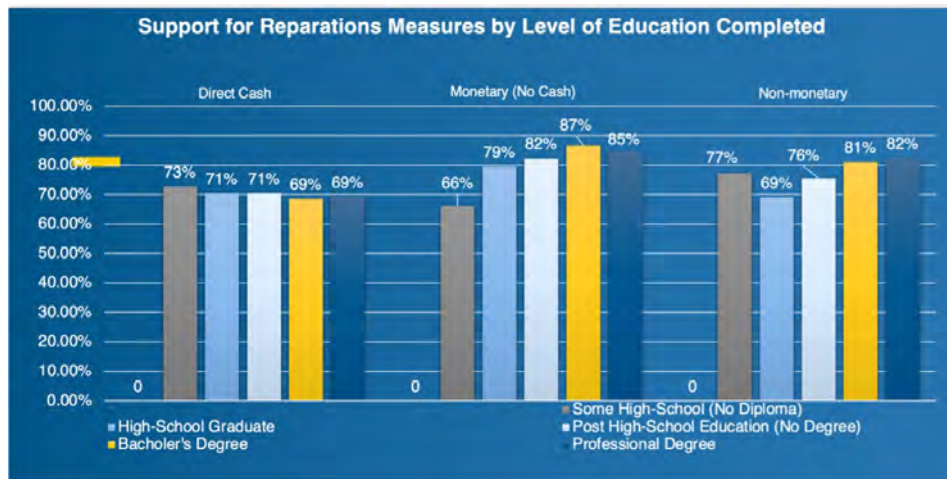


Figure 12. Support by educational attainment

### Democrats in California Are More Likely to Support All Measures of Reparations for Eligible African Americans

Political affiliation had a significant impact on support for reparations. Democrats overwhelmingly expressed the most support for all types of reparations: for direct cash compensation (73%), monetary (no cash) measures (86%), and non-monetary (82%) reparation measures (Figure 13).

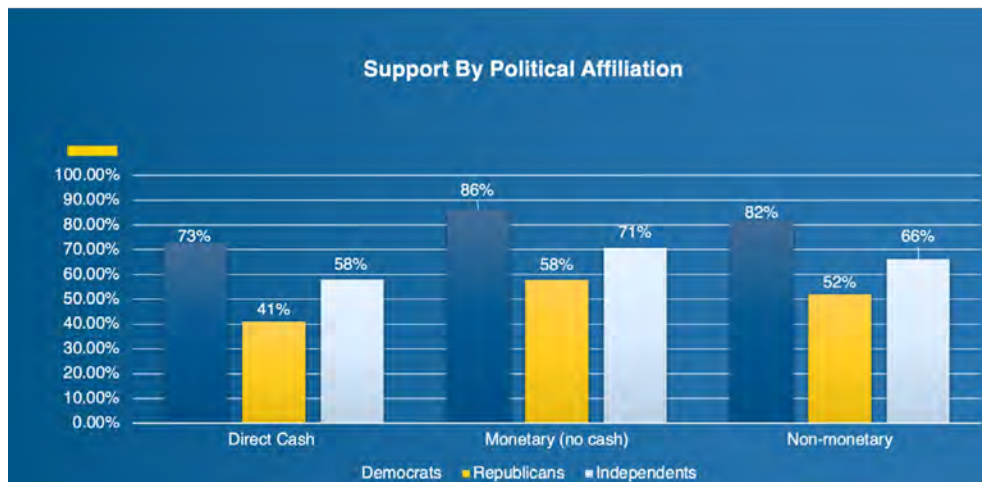
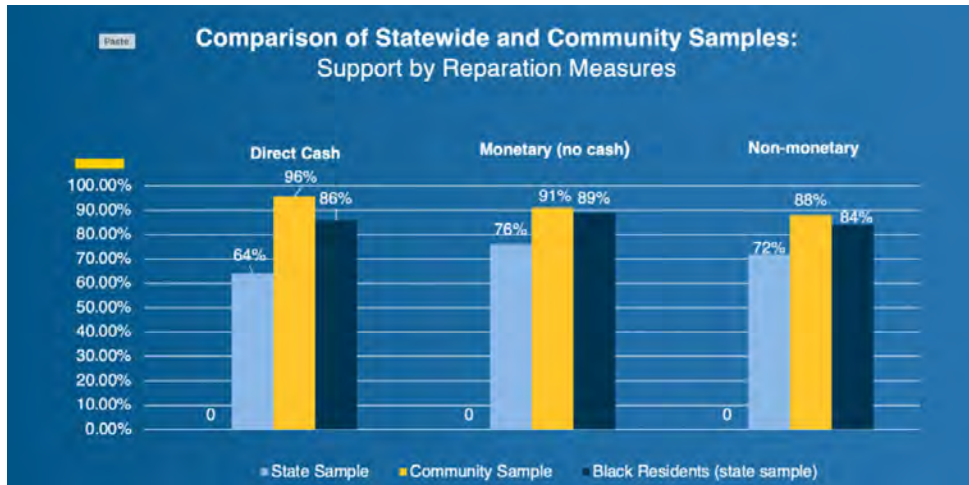


Figure 13. Support by political affiliation

In comparison, Republicans supported direct cash payments as a form of reparations (41%) at a level nearly half that of Democrats and nearly a third less than Independents. However, a majority of Republicans indicated support for monetary (no cash) reparations measures (58%) and non-monetary measures (52%). There was also strong support for monetary (no cash) reparations measures from Democrats (86%) and Independents (71%).

### The Level of Support for Reparations Differed between the California Statewide Sample and the Community Listening Session Sample (but Only for Those Not Black)

Figure 14 compares the results from the California Statewide representative sample and that from the community listening sessions. It is important to note that well over 90% of those who attended the community listening sessions were Black.



**Figure 14. Comparison in the level of support for reparations within the state sample, community sample, and Black respondents from the state sample**

Significant differences were seen in the level of support for reparations across these samples. To begin with, support for direct cash compensation (96%) was significantly higher in the community listening session sample than in the state. There was a nearly 30-percentage-point difference in the level of support between the community listening session sample and the state representative sample for this form of reparations. Respondents in the community listening session sample were also much more likely to support monetary (no cash) and non-monetary reparation measures when compared to all Californians.

However, the differences in support for reparations were smaller when comparing the levels of reparations support between Black respondents in the statewide sample and the community listening session sample, which was overwhelmingly Black. Black respondents from the statewide sample shared a perspective with those who participated in the community listening session regarding support for most reparation measures. Nearly all participants from the community listening session sample (91%) supported monetary (no cash) measures, as did a large majority of the Black respondents (89%) from the state sample. Moreover, the level of support for non-monetary measures (88%) from the community sample was nearly the same as Black respondents (84%) from the state sample. The one slight deviation in these observations was support for direct cash payments where support for this form of reparations is more strongly supported – by a margin of 10 percentage points – by community participants than by Black residents in the state.

## ELIGIBILITY

### *There Was a Difference in Opinion Regarding Eligibility for Reparations between the Statewide and Community Samples*

The survey also queried respondents about their responses to questions regarding who should be eligible for reparations in California. The opinions about who should be eligible for reparations differed across the statewide sample, the community listening session sample, and Black residents in the statewide sample. A plurality of respondents in the statewide sample supported reparations for all Black people (30%) followed closely by support for lineage-based reparations (29%). Lineage-based reparations refers to people who are descendants of those enslaved in the U.S. In the statewide sample, 24% believed that reparations should be for those Black people who experienced race-based discrimination (Figure 15).

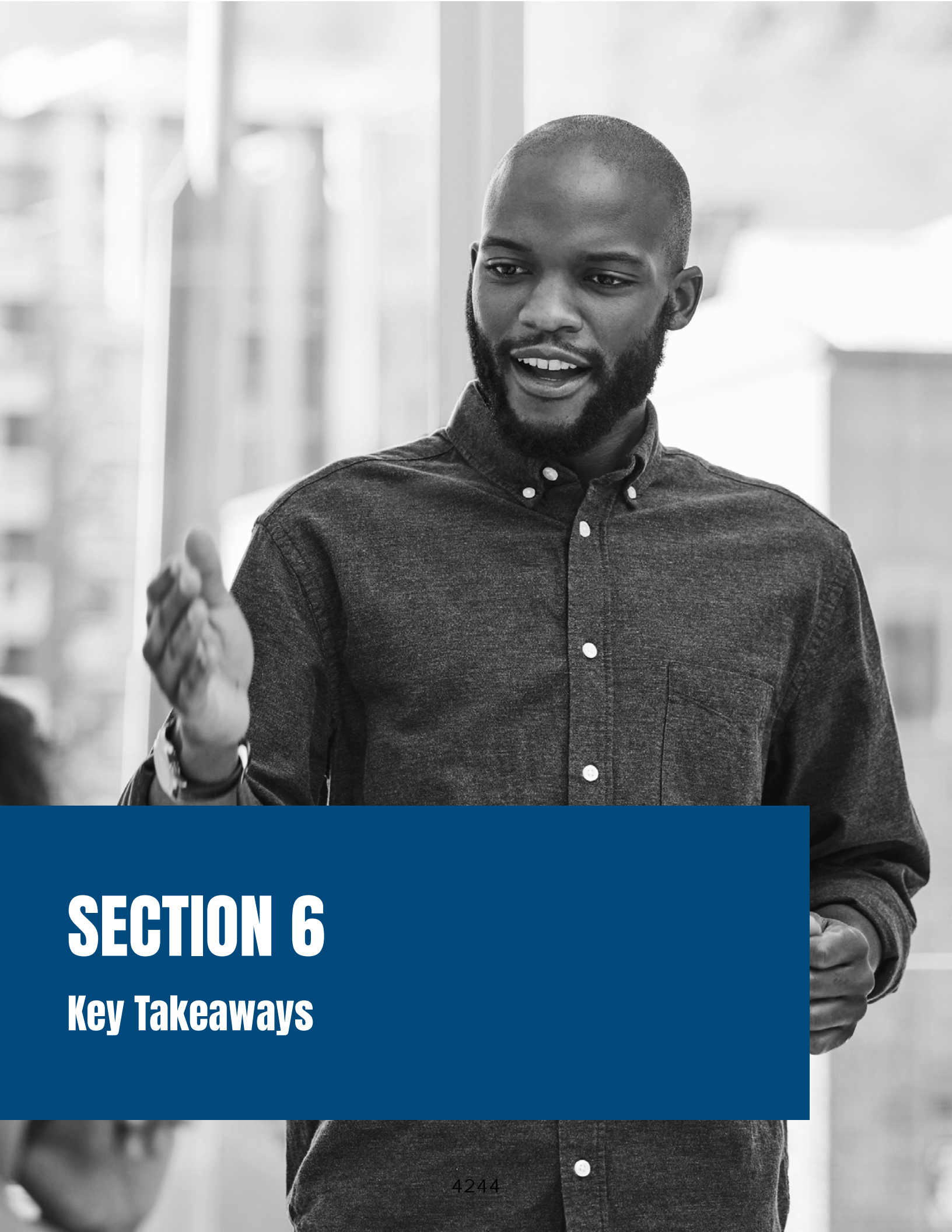




**Figure 15. Eligibility support by state, community, and Black respondents within the state sample.**

On the other hand, 67% of respondents in the community listening session sample supported reparations for people who descended from those enslaved in the U.S. (lineage based), while 18% supported reparations for all Black people. Black Californians were in the middle of responses when compared to both the overall statewide and community listening session samples. Black Californians indicate nearly equal support for lineage-based (40%) reparations and for reparations for all Black residents (39%).





# SECTION 6

## Key Takeaways

The overarching goal of the Bunche Center's Community Engagement Project was two-fold:

1. To give the community voice and allow them to express their concerns, desires, wishes, and perspectives in the conversation about reparations in California.
2. To provide the Task Force for the Study of Reparations Proposals for African Americans with direct community input as it deliberates reparations proposals.

Through three major research activities, the Bunche Center's Community Engagement Project sought to collect and document information regarding race-based harms, support for reparations and their kind, and who should be eligible for them. These efforts included collecting information from community listening sessions that were organized and held by a strong group of community-based anchor organizations, from oral histories and personal testimonies of those who participated in the process, and from a survey developed by the Center.

This project documented a wide variety of racially based harms experienced as told through various means by members of the Black community in California. Moreover, the members who provided personal testimony or unsolicited opinions and stories at the community listening sessions were in close agreement about how these experiences reduced their quality of life and, in many instances, compromised their mental and physical health. These members also agreed that acknowledgment and recognition of the harms should, at minimum, be publicly made and that the harms warrant serious consideration for restitution.

The Bunche Center Community Engagement Project found remarkable similarities in the themes, concerns, and remedies collected across these three distinct research activities. In both the community listening sessions as well as the oral histories and personal testimonies, the types of race-based harms expressed converged. The harms expressed included those related to barriers to educational success; miseducation around racial histories; economic disenfranchisement; criminalization based on race; and race-based harms in housing and labor markets, to name a few. These all led in some way to psychological and emotional trauma.

The Bunche Center Community Engagement Project also finds consistency in sentiments about who should be eligible for reparations. The two most mentioned eligibility standards included lineage based ones or for all Black people. The lineage-based standard referred to those whose ancestors could be traced to those enslaved in the U.S. In contrast, all Black people refers to those who are Black and may or may not have ancestors to trace back to those enslaved in the U.S. Fewer made mention of whether only Black people who experienced race-based discrimination should only be eligible.

Surprisingly, or unsurprisingly, the remedies proposed, especially in the community listening sessions and through the oral histories and personal testimonies, were remarkably similar. Not only were their calls for and support of direct cash transfers, but also for monetary interventions that were not direct cash-based transfers. These included such things as business, education and community-based investments, debt relief from student loans, mortgages or business loans, and calls for land ownership or return of land improperly confiscated, among other things. They also included identifying non-monetary remedies, including reform of the criminal legal system or reworking school-based curriculums to reflect more accuracy of the Black experience in American history.

The survey designed and administered by the Bunche Center provided Californians and members of its Black community an opportunity to express their desire and level of support for reparations in measurable ways. In separate efforts, it asked a representative sample of Californians – as well as those who were connected to the community listening sessions – a series of questions about support for different kinds of reparation measures for eligible persons. These measures were grouped into three distinct categories: 1) direct cash payments, 2) monetary measures that included no cash, and 3) non-monetary measures such as apologies or monuments.

The Bunche Center Community Engagement Project found that a majority of Californians support all three types of reparations measures. Still, support is significantly higher for remedies that include monetary (no cash) measures. Black Californians are much more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to support all three reparation measures (especially direct cash payments). However, they still supported monetary (no cash) measures at the

highest level.

Younger Californians, Democrats, and, to a lesser extent, Independents are more likely to support all three reparations measures for eligible African Americans than their older and Republican peers. Combined, these results show strong support in California for remedies that address racial harms to African Americans in California.

While most Californians agree on their support for reparations, they are less clear on who should be eligible. Californians and Black Californians, in particular, are split in who they think should be eligible for reparations. By similar percentages, both groups indicate that eligibility for reparations should go to all Black people and to those who are descendants of enslaved people in the U.S. This is in contrast to community listening session participants who were slightly more in favor of eligibility criteria that only included descendants of those enslaved in the U.S.



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