

SUBSCRIBE >

Search

U.S.

World

Business

Tech & Science

Culture

Newsgeek

Sports

Health

The Debate

Experts

Vantage

U.S.

After Reparations Study Suggests \$151 Million for Each African American, Experts Say Money Alone Isn't Enough

BY **JACOB JARVIS** ON 7/17/20 AT 12:15 PM EDT

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

Email address

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)[U.S.](#)[REPARATIONS](#)[RACISM](#)[CONGRESS](#)[BLACK LIVES MATTER](#)

While debates around reparations for the descendants of slaves often focus on costs of such action, advocates believe discussions must also address other efforts for systemic change.

Financial estimates are wide-ranging depending on how they are projected and thoughts on what exactly will, or even can be paid for are also divided.

"Reparations is not a check in the mail," Raymond Winbush, author of *Should America Pay? Slavery and The Raging Debate on Reparations* and *Belinda's Petition: A Concise History of Reparations For The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, told *Newsweek*.

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)**You have 5 free articles remaining this month**

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

"We've got to look at the difference between changing symbols and changing systems."

NEWSWEEK SUBSCRIPTION OFFERS >

READ MORE

- [House Could Hear Slavery Reparations Bill for Black Americans This Summer](#)
- [Joe Biden Wants to See Studies About Feasibility of Slavery Reparations](#)
- [N.C. City Approves Reparations for Black Americans in Historic Vote](#)
- [BLM Global Leaders: 'It Feels Like There Is Actually Change Happening Now'](#)

The growing dialogue surrounding racial justice following worldwide protests sparked by the death of George Floyd has also brought the issue to the fore. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has got behind Democratic calls in Congress to enact a study on the matter of reparations being made to the descendants of those impacted by slavery.

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

forming a committee to discuss reparations. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said he could be in favor of cash reparations to African Americans and Native Americans if studies found this to be a viable option.

"I think that Black people are saying we've had enough and I think white people are coming to grips with the fact that this country owes a debt that has been unpaid," Winbush added.

NEWSWEEK SUBSCRIPTION OFFERS >

How could a cost be calculated?

If payments were to be made, the amount that would be calculated could vary dependent on how the cost is estimated, applications of factors such as interest and who would be considered eligible.

A study in *The Review of the Black Political Economy* journal, first published on June 19, titled "Wealth Implications of Slavery and Racial Discrimination for African American Descendants of the Enslaved," looked at the Black-white wealth gap alongside the cost of slavery and discrimination to descendants of the enslaved.

Among its estimates for the costs were around \$12-\$13 trillion in 2018 dollars, based upon estimates looking at land-based, stemming from the promise made to freed slaves, and price-based, considering what slave prices were.

But looking at a wage-based cost and factoring in interest it assessed the cost

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

SUBSCRIBE >

Clive Destiny an activist and founding partner for Unite NY addresses the thousands of protesters gathered on the lawn in Cadman Plaza, Brooklyn for a peaceful protest and march to support Black Lives Matter and protest against police brutality across the Brooklyn Bridge. Protests across the nation have raised discussions around systemic racism and issues such as reparations.

IRA L. BLACK/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >**You have 5 free articles remaining this month**

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

includes some Black U.S. Residents who do not trace their ancestry back to slavery, the researchers note.

Another estimate, based upon wealth disparity, is around \$14 trillion. Robert Johnson, the founder of Black Entertainment Television, suggested this sum, which would amount to around \$350,000 each for the estimated 40 million African Americans in the United States, giving them an amount signifying the wealth disparity between African Americans and white Americans.

This amount echoes that of a previous study, from University of Connecticut researcher Thomas Craemer, who was involved in the aforementioned study published June 19, that suggested an amount of up to \$14.2 trillion.

[READ MORE](#)

**A Great Awakening? It Still Takes
Video for Black People to Be
Believed**

This was calculated by tabulating the hours slaves worked between 1776 and 1865, multiplying the time they worked by the average wage at the time, then accounting

for 3 percent annual interest, as previously reported by *Newsweek*.

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

the failed promise of 40 acres promised to slaves by Union Army General William Tecumseh Sherman. Land was set aside though the order was reversed by President Andrew Johnson.

The June 19 study suggests based upon these parameters, the reparations could amount to around \$11.9 trillion, estimating around \$291,186 per descendant, based on an estimate for 2018.

The case for reparations now

A Brookings Institution report, titled *Why we need reparations for Black Americans* by Rashawn Ray and Andre M. Perry refers to the value assigned to slaves in 1860 of \$3 billion dollars as another point backing calls for reparations.

"Slavery enriched white slave owners and their descendants, and it fueled the country's economy while suppressing wealth building for the enslaved. The United States has yet to compensate descendants of enslaved Black Americans

[Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial](#)[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

SUBSCRIBE >

value we know that was placed on enslaved Blacks, the fact that other groups have received reparations, and the fact that Blacks were originally awarded reparations only to have them rescinded provide overwhelming evidence that it is time to pay reparations to the descendants of enslaved Blacks," it concludes.

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >**You have 5 free articles remaining this month**

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

Speaking with *Newsweek*, Ray said Congress should have looked into reparations long before now.

"There should not be any blocks to simply forming a committee. It should be a no brainer and should have occurred long ago," said Ray, a David M. Rubenstein Fellow in Governance Studies at The Brookings Institution.

On what should be done, he said "wealth-building opportunities" might also be an option.

"While direct payments are one option, we might also think about wealth-building opportunities in the form of tuition payments, housing grants, and small business grants," he said.

Winbush echoed that the time for reparations had come

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)**You have 5 free articles remaining this month**

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

"The reparations movement is old. I think that people think it's very young," he told *Newsweek*, suggesting people linking it to Black Lives Matter makes them think it does not go as far back as it does.

"It goes back well over 200 years in this country," said Winbush, also a research professor and the Director of the Institute for Urban Research at Morgan State University, commenting on how social media in recent years has brought it to the fore.

More than just money

Winbush also suggested that while handing out money is an option, other methods of reparations, focusing on systemic change, could be implemented.

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

atonement for that is money. But it's a variety of solutions.

Roy L. Brooks, author of *Atonement and Forgiveness: A New Model for Black Reparations* and *Sorry Isn't Enough: The Controversy Over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice* suggested that reparations must look at factors other than simply money.

"One of the most important responsibilities of the commission would be to educate the American people, including African-Americans, not only about slavery and its lingering effects, but also about the fact that reparations come in many forms and are not the only way to redress slavery," he told *Newsweek*.

"Apologies, truth commissions, truth trials, and reparations are just a few of the ways to redress any atrocity, whether it is slavery, Japanese-American internment or the Holocaust. Calculations are complex but not impossible because they have been performed all over the world in the last 70 years."

[Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial](#)[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

"Until that happens, it is not only premature to talk about the "cost" of reparations (or more generally slave redress), it is irresponsible," said Brooks, who is also a professor at the University of San Diego.

The costs of slavery

Joe Feagin, author of *The White Racial Frame* and co-author of *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, and *Racial and Ethnic Relations*, similarly told *Newsweek* that there needs to be an examination of the "many other costs of slavery."

He said: "For example, how do you calculate the costs of great pain and suffering, and lives lost or cut short?"

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)[READ MORE](#)

**House Could Hear Slavery
Reparations Bill for Black
Americans This Summer**

calculate just the labor and wealth lost, he added, "I think it is at least as important to talk about the many other costs of slavery."

In terms of a starting point for reparations being paid, he suggested beginning with people who suffered under segregation.

"Start with reparations for Jim Crow, no questions there about the white nonsense about this harm happened centuries ago and we cannot figure out who did what to whom," he said. "Start with the living folks and then work backwards to slavery."

Deciding the amount

Craemer, whose research is mentioned above, suggested the work of a commission in looking at the financial costs has largely already been done—though stated issues that are difficult to quantify need to be looked at, with the descendant community integral in choosing an outcome.

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

reasonable to proceed directly to reparations," he told *Newsweek*.

"Otherwise, the need for further study may be misused by reparations opponents to indefinitely delay implementation. This has disadvantages not only for eligible recipients, but also for the U.S. government—reparations become exponentially more expensive the longer we wait."

With regards to the sum of reparations, he said estimates only address the financial aspect of slavery, not looking at its other implications.

[READ MORE](#)

Only After Reparations Can

"These specific estimates only address the value of slavery in the United States, they do not address colonial slavery, or racial discrimination after slavery. Also, they only address lost inheritances, they do not address loss of freedom, loss of other

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

federal government to determine whether the entire estimate should be compensated, or only a portion, at what interest rate, and using what estimation method."

Despite the increased discussion on the matter, polling from earlier this year found that only one in five asked felt the U.S. should spend "taxpayer money to pay damages to descendants of enslaved people in the United States," according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll which asked 1,115 adults in June.

Ray said the issue of reparations happening should no longer be a point of discussion.

"If 40 acres and a Mule was actually implemented we wouldn't be having this conversation," he told *Newsweek*. "Time is up. This needs to happen."

[REQUEST REPRINT & LICENSING](#), [SUBMIT CORRECTION](#) OR [VIEW EDITORIAL GUIDELINES](#)

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

SUBSCRIBE >

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

Email address

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)AdChoices 

Sponsored

Conversation 128 Comments

Start a discussion, not a fire. Post with kindness. Read our guidelines [here](#).

Commenting as **Guest** [Log In](#)Sort by **Best** ▾**T TruthisTruth**

17 July, 2020

360 thousand Americans died in the Civil War. Husbands, brothers, and sons taken in the prime of life and dearly beloved. The economic impact echoed through generations. They died and slaves were freed. I figure reparations for their families exceed the figure in this piece by a factor of about 100. Fairness would dictate that the beneficiaries should fund it. Where's the legislation?

Reply  19  1 Show 1 more reply**A Anono**

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)**You have 5 free articles remaining this month**

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

nation. How about some extra tax on the black population, as they have a much greater per-capita crime rate and incarcerated population, which costs our society greatly.

Reply  35  4

 Show 1 more reply

Terence Conklin 

18 July, 2020

The very notion that reparations are due is ridiculous. The original slaves, perhaps, were deserving of being compensated for the involuntary servitude they suffered but there is nothing to support the idea that that money would have been passed down to today's black Americans. My great great grandfather fought for the Union but I inherited nothing from my parents let alone from him. It's time to move on.

Reply  18  2

Bud Bob 

17 July, 2020

This article is so detached from reality and the money stated is so unrealistic, it shouldn't have ever seen the light of day. 150 million per individual 😏

Reply  42  2

 Show 1 more reply

U uberic 

17 July, 2020

So, The Vikings enslaved many British and French, all of whom were white. Should the Scandinavians begin tracking down their relatives paying reparations? How about the Egyptians? Should they start sending the Hebrews money? The Mayas, Inca's and Aztecs were all slave owners, so what to we do about them?

Reply  37  2

 Show 2 more replies

Y Yellowflamethro 

17 July, 2020

History shows that less than 1% of Americans owned slaves. The only people who could afford

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

Email address

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)Reply  35  5 Show 2 more replies**Robert Huck**

17 July, 2020

Absolute nonsense. Does someone who is bi-racial get only half? What if that bi-racial person's white ancestors owned slaves? Does he get nothing? What if my white ancestors fought for the Union in the Civil War? Do I still have to pay? What about people who immigrated after slavery ended? Are they off the hook? Why should poor whites pay reparations to rich blacks like the Obamas or Kanye West or many professional athletes?

Reply  38  2 Show 4 more replies**R****Ransomexx**

18 July, 2020

When I was college age, in 1970, I worked on a NY farm during the summer. I was paid \$60 for 6.5 days of work per week, from 7am until 7pm. The farmer subtracted \$45 for room and board. Minimum wage was about \$1 an hour at the time. My paycheck before taxes was \$60 a month for working about 312 hours with room and board. In 1880 a worker was worth \$1 a day, In 1850 he might have been worth 10 cents a day or a few pennies a day with room and board. \$151 million sounds like a stretch.

Reply  2 [Show More Comments](#)Powered by  OpenWeb[Terms](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Feedback](#)

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >**You have 5 free articles remaining this month**

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

[SUBSCRIBE >](#)

THE DEBATE

**China's Genocide Olympics**

BY GORDON G. CHANG

VS

Don't Boycott Beijing's 2022 Winter Olympics

BY DAVID M. LAMPTON



OPINION

**The Real Divide In America Isn't Politics. It's COVID and Climate**

BY ROBERT REICH

**It's Time to Impeach Andrew Cuomo**

BY RON KIM

**Red Carpets Are the Only Thing We'll Miss About Award Shows**

BY ANNA RAHMANAN

**Domestic Violence Is a Pandemic Within a Pandemic**

BY STACEY RUTLAND

**Biden Must Not Lead from Behind on Iran**

BY ABRAHAM COOPER AND JOHNNIE MOORE

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >](#)**You have 5 free articles remaining this month**

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

SUBSCRIBE >



Abortions Can Happen Safely—and Entirely—at Home

BY LEAH COPLON AND CLAIRE BRINDIS



Did Evangelicals Make a Mistake in Supporting Trump?

BY PENNY NANCE



The Biden Administration and the China Challenge

BY PETER BERKOWITZ

START YOUR DAY WITH OUR TOP 5 ARTICLES

Our Community



4,398

Comments posted on

Comment

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >

You have **5** free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

SUBSCRIBE >

AdChoices 

Sponsored

CHOOSE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION

PREMIUM

Newsweek magazine delivered to your door
Unlimited access to Newsweek.com

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

Email address

SUBSCRIBE >

DIGITAL+

Unlimited access to Newsweek.com
Ad free Newsweek.com experience
iOS and Android app access
Personalized daily newsletter

GET YOUR FREE TRIAL >

NEWSLETTER

THE STARTING 5

See why nearly a quarter of a million subscribers begin their day with the Starting 5.

Email address

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

Email address

SUBSCRIBE >

[Privacy Policy](#) [Cookie Policy](#) [Terms of Sale](#) [Archive](#) [Announcements](#)

Unlimited 30 Day Ad Free Trial

SUBSCRIBE NOW >

You have 5 free articles remaining this month

Sign-up to our daily newsletter for more articles like this + access to 5 extra articles

Email address