



BlackEconomics.org

“Beware of Leadership and Prospects for Lost Opportunities”

At some point in the future, reparations for Black America will come! Then what?

In thinking about reparations, we should not think about reparations first. Rather, we should first consider long-term strategic objectives for Black America’s future that might be facilitated by reparations.¹

The objective is to not obtain resources to produce a temporary amelioration of income and wealth inequality in America. No! On the contrary, the objective is to produce a secular and permanent change in the economic, political, and social conditions of Black America in a global context.

We stand on the threshold of being able to achieve the latter outcome. Just as in the 1860s before the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, a proposal was floated to enable Black Americans to find our way to our own homeland in the Americas—what is now known as Central America.²

However, the “learned” leadership of the day rejected the opportunity for self-determination partly because it was fraught with uncertainty of outcomes. If the leadership had been wise and opted for self-determination (i.e., nation formation), we argue that Black Americans would have been better off today. When we say “better off,” we are bundling the entire spectrum of variables: economics, politics, social, and so on. Arguably, we might not be as well off today with respect to certain variables, but it is highly likely that we would be much better off today with respect to other important variables. Think about it: If we had opted for nation formation over 150 years ago, then we could have avoided many of the evils of American History that we have endured. You know them well. It is true that it is impossible to prove an historical counterfactual. But knowing some of the details of the history of Black people in America, we are more than comfortable in believing that the failure to opt for nation formation in the 1860s was an incredible lost opportunity.

We are on the precipice of another incredulous lost opportunity. Leading Black economic scholars of the day (the “learned”) are moving in the correct direction by calling for reparations. There is no doubt about this. However, the form in which they are requesting that reparations take will produce the lost opportunity to which we refer.

¹For well over 10 years, the **BlackEconomics.org** website has sought input on the development of a long-term strategic plan for Black America.

² For one account of this historical fact, see Clarence Lusane (2011), *The Black History of the White House*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, CA (pp. 185-191).

We have long followed the historical and wise Black leaders who advised that reparations should take the form of land, material resources, and international support.³ Given these reparation components, wise Black leadership can help enable our nation formation—albeit fraught with uncertainty of outcomes. By no means should we rather be “door keepers in the house of our lord.” No! We should rather have our own house.

On the other hand, the “learned” scholars of today call for reparations in forms that will guarantee that Black Americans continue to serve as door keepers in White America’s house. For example:

- Why take reparations in the form of education that will be delivered by our former and current masters? Is this opting for our continued miseducation?
- Why take reparations in the form of small but significant sums that may be used to start businesses, when America is a nation of monopolies where small enterprises cannot compete, and Black-owned enterprises are generally doomed to fail?
- Why take reparations in the form of small but significant sums that may be used to acquire a residential property, when it guarantees the income and wealth of White construction firms and their employees that build the house, and guarantees that you will be held a captive slave in the American economic system because you owe a bank for the value of the house not covered by reparations?
- Why take reparations directly in the form of currency at all because the value of currency is subject to the fortunes of nations that may rise and fall in an increasingly volatile world market, while land is a key and fundamental factor of production and allows nations to control their destiny?

These are qualitative arguments against reparations in the form of direct benefits denominated in US dollars for education, entrepreneurship, housing, or just cash. If scholars, or non-scholars for that matter, have countervailing arguments, then bring them forward along with substantiating evidence and let us all debate them. In this way, we can begin formulating a long-term strategic plan that can help Black America experience a bright future.

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³ We build a case for this approach in Brooks B. Robinson (2015), “A Broad Three-Point Reparations Program for US Afrodescendants Versus CARICOM’s 10-Point Program;” <http://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/BTPRP.pdf>. Also, see Brooks B. Robinson (2009), “Essay 3: Point Zero Nation Formation,” in *Chosen: Black America’s Calling*, **BlackEconomics.org**, Honolulu, HI, (p. 52-102). Finally, see Brooks B. Robinson (2015), the section “A Third Freedom” in *A Third Freedom*, **BlackEconomics.org**, Honolulu, HI, (p. 38-9).