



BlackEconomics.org[®]

“Reparations and Procrastination”

What evidence gives rise to Black America’s expectation that Reparations are forthcoming?

On the one hand, we have argued [here](#) that, if a sound strategy for building support for Reparations is adopted and implemented by Black Americans, then Reparations could be forthcoming within one generation.

On the other hand, the following evidence is countervailing:

- The US Government, the party responsible for extending Reparations payments, is already heavily indebted. The imposition of more and sizeable debt related to Reparations could further jeopardize the sustainability of US Government debt and would likely roil financial markets dramatically. We make this argument despite Modern Monetary Theorists’ claims to the contrary.¹
- The value of Reparations cited by Darity and Mullen is in the USD 12-

to-14 trillion range.² However, we have argued for an even higher level of Reparations [here](#) and [here](#). Therefore, the value of Reparations due may be irreconcilable.

- Different positions among the three eligible Black Americas concerning the value, nature, and method of Reparations payments could preclude an effective Reparations agreement with the US Government.³
- As explained [here](#), a bit of trickery caused Black American Congressional officials to not exploit an open opportunity to ensure approval of legislation (H.R. 40 and S. 40) that would have initiated the Reparations process during 2021. This could occur again in the future.
- History is replete with cases too numerous to mention where the US Government has passed laws that were ostensibly designed to improve outcomes for Black Americans.⁴ However, in almost all cases, implementation of the legislation did

¹ Modern Monetary Theorists argue that the upper-bound on government borrowing and spending is significantly higher than previously understood. See Paulina Likos’ article, “[What Is Modern Monetary Theory \(MMT\)](#),” in *US News and World Report*, January 8, 2021 (Ret. 012222).

² William A. Darity, Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen are co-authors of *From Here to Equality: Reparations for*

Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century, University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill (2020)

³ The three Black Americas are: (1) The rich; (2) the middle-class; and (3) the poor.

⁴ Two popular examples are the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) and the [Fair Housing Act of 1968](#) (both Ret. 012022).

not produce the intended results. In many cases, other groups in the nation benefitted more from the legislation than did Black Americans. Often, insufficient appropriations for enforcement of the legislation were key factors that prevented Black Americans from benefitting as expected. There are other cases, where the US Government passed laws that were designed intentionally to harm Black Americans.⁵ In these cases, there was no dearth of resources for implementing or enforcing the legislation. This history makes clear that the US Government has not acted generally in the best interest of Black America. Therefore, we should ask the logical question: “Why should it begin to do so now?”

If the foregoing is not instructive concerning the low probability of receiving Reparations payments, then take a walk in White America’s shoes. As a White American, would you invite your government to pay a Reparations claim that is based mainly on your dead ancestors’ actions? The answer is NO! By extension, we rarely hear about a White American transferring wealth to Black Americans (individuals or institutions) unless the transfer represents a very small portion of the former’s wealth and, usually, the transfer is motivated by tax benefits.

But what does this have to do with procrastination? Everything! The foregoing mirrors the thought process of many Black Americans. Clearly, the evidence is stacked against receipt of Reparations payments. Yet we keep calling for Reparations knowing that they may never come. In our estimation, we adopt this *modus operandi* as a way of delaying the day when we finally decide to perform the painful and grueling process (read “work”) of claiming our Black Liberation by any means necessary.

The realization that we have been procrastinating should alert us to the possibility that we may have procrastinated too long. There is much evidence that the rich and superrich have exploited the poor—especially poor Blacks—to the hilt, have endangered the planet in their lust for wealth, and have ensured their future without regard to the non-wealthy. Therefore, Black America has no option now but to plan quickly and strike out against the exploiters to secure our Black Liberation and salvation.

If we do not begin to minimize our expectations about receiving Reparations and begin to move toward Black Liberation, then we will permit Reparations to become the equivalent of a promised paradise (pie in the sky) that never comes. By taking no liberating action and awaiting Reparations, we guarantee our own damnation.

B Robinson
020422

--

⁵ At the top of the list of such laws are laws to increase and improve safety and security in the nation (e.g., the [Violent Crime Control and Law](#)

[Enforcement Act of 1994](#) (Ret. 012022)), which have contributed to the expansion of the “prison-industrial complex.”