

About the *Reparations* Movement



Clockshop

Clockshop's mission is to work with artists to deepen the connection between community and public land. We cannot do this without acknowledging that the land we occupy is originally and still inhabited and cared for by the Native First Peoples of this region. **Read our full statement and how we are going beyond land acknowledgement on our website under "Location and Land Acknowledgement."**

As a resource for our series *Dreaming Land Back into Reality*, Clockshop compiled this info sheet from resources created by Black individuals and coalitions. We offer these as we strive to expand our relationships with the land we live on and connect to the intersectional movements that work to repair the generational historic harms of settler colonialism. **Please refer to our info sheet on the Indigenous-led LandBack movement for more on land return.**

What is the Reparations movement and what should we know?

The Reparations movement seeks repair, healing, and compensation for the violence inflicted upon Black diasporic peoples; the incalculable wealth produced by stolen Black labor due to chattel slavery; and the ongoing systemic racism instituted by the United States government. It is a validation of the humanity of the affected peoples and is fundamentally a process of repair and restoration.

Forty Acres and a Mule

In January 1865, after the Civil War, a group of Black ministers in Georgia presented the plan "forty acres and a mule" to General William T. Sherman to redistribute property confiscated from Confederate landowners to newly freed Black families in 40-acre plots as reparations. Sherman issued Special Field Order 15 to enact this plan, but President Andrew Johnson soon overturned it and returned the land to slaveowners. By some estimates, the value of the dispossessed land would be worth billions of dollars today.

Housing Discrimination

Under Jim Crow, a racial caste system in operation from the Reconstruction era (1860s–70s) through the 1960s, Black Americans further contended with barriers to property ownership, such as redlining and racial covenants that prevented the accumulation of real estate wealth down generational lines. Eminent domain was employed by governmental agencies under the guise of urban renewal to seize and raze communities, disproportionately Black and Brown, for public projects. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed housing discrimination, but the effects continue to be felt. Systemic racism persists in the denial of loans and Black homeownership rates have stagnated at 42 percent, identical to what they were in the 1970s.

Community Advocacy for Property Justice and Reparations

H.R. 40, the "Reparations Remedy Bill," was revised and introduced by Representative John Conyers in 2017 to identify and redress the crimes against descendants of the African diaspora in the United States. In 2020, California lawmakers created a **Reparations Task Force** whose

primary objectives parallel that of H.R. 40, which resulted in a report issued in 2022 with recommendations.

Through momentous advocacy work and community mobilization by Black organizers and community members, there have been successful campaigns and cases of property justice and reparations, such as the Bruce family who owned and operated a beachside resort in Manhattan Beach, CA for Black residents and vacationers before it was seized through eminent domain. In 2022, the land was returned to the heirs of the Bruces by LA County Supervisors. Right to Return policies are mandated to rehouse individuals, mostly minorities, who have been driven out of neighborhoods by gentrification, though this has been criticized as a race-neutral denial of due recognition of the effects on Black communities. Through applied pressure, there is a growing acknowledgment of past wrongs committed, such as in jurisdictions where a white population was preserved through violent and systemic means — called “sundown towns” — that have made public apologies and vows to correct past wrongs.

Vocabulary

Reparations: To make amends for a wrong that’s been done; the act of repair.

Property Justice: The return of property that has been unjustly or illicitly seized from its original owners, accompanied by restitution for the wealth and security those subjected to theft have been deprived of.

Eminent Domain: The power of a state, provincial, or federal government to seize private property with compensation and convert it for public use.

Redlining: A discriminatory lending practice in which loans are systematically denied or services restricted based on the racial demographics of a community. This term emerged from organizations like the federal Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) to highlight African American and other minority neighborhoods as undesirable lenders in “red.”

Racial Covenants: A restrictive clause in a recorded document, such as a property lease or deed, prohibiting the sale and/or rental of a property to certain racial minorities. This process was legal until the passage of the Housing Rights Act in 1968.

Sundown Town: Municipalities or entire counties with an all-white population maintained through discriminatory legislation, intimidation, or force.

Questions

We invite you to consider your own relationship to the harms of systemic racism:

What forms can reparations take, and how do you envision reparations?
How are you positioned within this history? How have you or your family profited or been harmed by it?

What is the history of the land you live on?

How can you support local efforts to rectify unjust land seizures?

What can you do to support legislation to codify reparations?

What does a world look like that enables the healing of communities impacted by systemic racism?

Resources

- [National African American Reparations Commission — Reparations Plan](#)
- [Reparations Reports — State of California Department of Justice](#)
- [Segregation in the City of Angels: A 1939 Map of Housing Inequality in L.A.](#)
- [African-American Redress Network](#)
- [N'COBRA HR 40 Primer](#)
- [Black Land Ownership Resources Timeline](#)