



## Chapter 3: Reparations and Independence Days

What are reparations, and how do we address them in the United States now? What does independence mean without being accountable for slavery? Learn about laws created to address centuries of systemic racism.

### Conversation Questions

1. How might reparations be used to specifically address structural racism in U.S. society?
2. What strategies could be used to make reparations more than symbolic gestures?
3. What would an alternate holiday to celebrate the founding of the United States look like?

### Key Definitions (adapted from *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*)

- *Reparations* – the act of making amends, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury; the payment of damages
- *Emancipation* – the act or process of freeing from restraint, control, or the power of another, especially to free from bondage
- *Juneteenth* - celebrated on June 19th, this holiday observes the date in 1865 on which 250,000 people who were enslaved received word that they had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, two and a half years earlier

### Read

**“What Is Owed” by Nikole Hannah-Jones for *The New York Times Magazine***

<https://nyti.ms/3eSQ9r1>

This longform article examines the history of previous attempts to create legislation formalizing reparations for Black persons, and how failures to help this legislation pass led to further marginalization, poverty, and disenfranchisement for Black communities.





**“Examining the Black-white wealth gap”** by Kriston McIntosh, Emily Moss, Ryan Nunn, and Jay Shambaugh for The Brookings Institution

<https://brook.gs/2NfelHQ>

Researchers provide an analysis of the wealth gap between Black and white people in the United States, demonstrating generations of inequality as one factor for the disparity and suggesting a higher wealth tax as one means of reform.

**“Reparations mean more than money for a family who endured slavery”** by Tracy Jan for *The Washington Post*

<https://wapo.st/31vBCh6>

This article focuses on reparations from the lens of a daughter whose Japanese American maternal grandparents were incarcerated during WWII and whose paternal African American ancestors were enslaved at Mount Vernon.

**“Rest as Reparations”** by Sandra E. Garcia for *The New York Times*

<https://nyti.ms/30VzEGA>

This article looks at the different ways Black people use restorative and holistic health practices to deal with intergenerational trauma lingering from enslavement, poverty, and structural racism.

**“Why Juneteenth Matters”** by Jamelle Bouie for *The New York Times*

<https://nyti.ms/2YTe3f5>

Journalist Jamelle Bouie describes the urgency of commemorating Juneteenth without falling to symbolic changes that push aside true freedom for Black people in contemporary times.

**“This is How We Juneteenth”** by Gina Chereus for *The New York Times*

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/juneteenth-celebration-history.html>

This article discusses making Juneteenth an official paid holiday, how some major brands did so this year, and what





legislation to make this a state and/or federal holiday is currently in the works.

## Watch

**“Can reparations help right the wrongs of slavery?” from PBS *NewsHour***

<https://bit.ly/3dRXtSt>

This ten-minute video from August 2019 summarizes how reparations might be used to account for the socioeconomic and psychological toll experienced by Black people whose ancestors were enslaved, and how this issue may affect the 2020 presidential election.

## Listen

**“A Call For Reparations: How America Might Narrow The Racial Wealth Gap” for *Fresh Air***

<https://n.pr/3eTUaM4>

This interview between *Fresh Air* host Terry Gross and *New York Times Magazine* writer Nikole Hannah-Jones reviews recent protests following the murder of George Floyd, how they feel different from previous protest movements, and what these events mean in relation to reparations.

**153 Years of Juneteenth from *The Takeaway* of WYNC Studios**

<https://bit.ly/3dMbKQK>

This short podcast episode provides an overview of Juneteenth and how ABC’s show *Black-ish* included the topic in 2017 to raise awareness and bring Juneteenth into the mainstream.

