

NEW JERSEY REPARATIONS COUNCIL

The New Jersey Reparations Council is the first-of-its-kind council to finally confront and repair New Jersey's deep and often overlooked involvement in slavery and its lasting impact on the contemporary life of Black people in our state.

Co-chaired by Taja-Nia Henderson (Rutgers Law School) and Khalil Gibran Muhammad (Harvard Kennedy School), the Council will seek not only to make recommendations to end the harm to Black people from slavery and what followed, but also to answer the affirmative question: What kind of reparative systems does New Jersey need to build and invest in for Black people to thrive?

WHY WE NEED THE NJRC

- New Jersey has been called the “slave state of the North” for its deep involvement in slavery. A direct line can be drawn from that history to today, when despite being one of the most racially diverse states in America, we are home to some of the worst racial disparities in the areas of wealth, health, education and incarceration.
- New Jersey benefits from a self-generated halo of progressivism, often clouding our understanding of our troubling history and current challenges.
- Our difficult reality was designed during our founding as a colony when English settlers were given 150 acres of land plus an additional 150 acres for each enslaved African they brought with them – while enslaved and free Africans were barred from owning land.
- When slavery finally ended in New Jersey in 1866, its impact did not. Generations of racist policies followed, including the cottager system; racially restrictive deeds; denial of GI benefits to Black people; redlining; and mass incarceration.
- These practices compounded over time, leading to, among other inequities, New Jersey's staggering \$300,000 racial wealth gap, itself designed during slavery.
- Because this racial inequality was created by policy design during slavery and into the present, so must be its repair.

THE ROLE OF THE NJRC

- The New Jersey Reparations Council will be the first comprehensive step in acknowledging and repairing the enduring harm from slavery in the Garden State.
- In this unique collaboration between leading experts from various disciplines, the Council will be comprised of nine committees, each of which will address an aspect of the enduring impact of slavery in New Jersey, including: History of Slavery in New Jersey; Public Education & Narrative; Economic Justice; Segregation in New Jersey; Democracy; Public Safety & Justice; Health Equity; Environmental Justice; and Faith and Black Resistance.
- Each committee will meet over a two-year period, hold an open session that includes public comment and produce a written piece laying out its research and proposing ambitious and forward-thinking policy and investment recommendations. These bold reparations proposals, which can include programs and direct payments, will be designed to build systems in which Black people are empowered to thrive in New Jersey.
- The committees' writings will be combined into the Council's final comprehensive report, to be released on Juneteenth 2025. The report will serve as a blueprint for New Jersey's path forward and as a national model for how the challenging but critical work of reparations can be done.
- The NJRC is the next phase in the Say the Word: Reparations campaign, which led to the introduction of state legislation to form a state-based reparations task force. The Council's work can be used as a vast resource for that task force once it is established as well as stand on its own as a foundational roadmap for reparative justice in New Jersey.



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