

# A VISION FOR BLACK LIVES:

## POLICY DEMANDS FOR BLACK POWER, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE

### Reparations for the Cultural and Educational Exploitation, Erasure, and Extraction of Our Communities in the Form of Mandated Public School Curriculums That Critically Examine the Political, Economic, and Social Impacts of Colonialism and Slavery and Funding to Support, Build, Preserve and Restore Cultural Assets and Sacred Sites to Ensure the Recognition and Honoring of Our Collective Struggles and Triumphs

#### What is the problem?

- The United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent [reported](#) after their country visit to the U.S. that they were “concerned by an insufficient recognition in the present day of the influence of the baggage of the past, which necessitates specific institutions and programmes tailored to the situation of people of African descent.” Stories of African American history are often left untold or are under-told, and many individuals have no understanding of the extraordinary sacrifices that were made and hardships that were overcome. We need cultural reparations to publically acknowledge the history of mass violence in the U.S. in order to begin to heal from the trauma.
- School curriculums often whitewash the history of slavery and the state’s role in oppressing Black people, such as through textbooks that refer to [slaves as immigrant workers](#), [claim thousands of Blacks fought for the South during the Civil War](#), or otherwise [downplay the horrors of slavery](#).
- Even in states and cities that require Black history education, the subject is often [taught sporadically](#) or only during Black History Month or Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. Teachers at D.C.’s Howard Middle School were even [fired for teaching Black history beyond the curriculum](#).
- There are too few acknowledged and preserved historical sites commemorating Black history. Of the 412 National Park Service sites in the U.S., only 25 (or 6 percent) are specifically devoted to Black history. According to the Institute of Museums and Library Services, there are 35,000 museums in the U.S., but only about 300 (or less than 1 percent) of these are specifically devoted to Black individuals or history. Despite their valuable programming and exhibitions, these organizations [do not receive adequate funding](#) from state legislatures or philanthropic organizations. The Smithsonian will open the [National Museum of African American History & Culture](#) in September 2016, making it only the second Black history museum to date after The [Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History](#).

#### What does this solution do?

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- Demand a thorough and accurate public education curriculum on Black History, including not only slavery and civil rights, but also contributions of African and African American heritage at the local, national and global level. This must be integrated throughout the school year and taught in a way that presents the history as part of an ongoing narrative of oppression and resilience, not as historical artifacts.
- Funding for cultural assets and sacred sites such as Black burial grounds; Black towns (e.g. Mound Bayou, Mississippi); houses of worship; meeting halls; one-room schools; and other significant institutions that speak to the triumphant quest of a determined people to create a new African community in this hostile land.
- These Black sacred sites, monuments, and museums must be preserved as permanent memorials to continuously inform and inspire future generations of people of African descent about this legacy of trials, tribulations and triumph, and to remind America of the white supremacist terror employed to obstruct the path to freedom of African Americans.

### **Federal Action:**

- Target: Executive, U.S. Congress (especially Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs), U.S. Department of the Interior
- Process: The President of the United States has the power to designate important natural, cultural, and historical sites for permanent protection under the 1906 Antiquities Act. While the President can designate national parks or monuments, congressional approval is needed to create a national park. The federal government (via the National Parks Service) should erect markers on every site where a Black person was lynched, where a massacre of Black people was committed, and sites where Black towns or neighborhood were destroyed.
- Target: U.S. Congress
- Process: Pass a bill authorizing funding for the preservation of Black burial grounds and other significant cultural and historical sites. Additional funds should be appropriated to conduct research on the impacts and legacy of slavery and to identify previously unknown Black sacred sites and monuments.

### **State Action:**

- Target: State Legislature
- Process: Pass a bill requiring instruction in Black History from elementary through high school. State legislatures should form a commission to research how Black history is taught in their schools, identify inconsistencies, and make recommendations for improved instruction.
- Target: State Departments of Education and State Boards of Education
- Process: Develop statewide curriculum standards for a robust Black History curriculum.

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- Target: State Legislature
- Process: Pass a bill authorizing increased funding to existing Black museums and appropriate funds to erect markers on sites where a Black person was lynched, where a massacre of Black people was committed, and sites where Black towns or neighborhood were destroyed.

### Local Action:

- Target: Local School Boards (and possibly individual school Principals)
- Process: Develop and implement a robust Black History curriculum.

### How does this solution address the specific needs of some of the most marginalized Black people?

- By expanding Black history education, monuments, museums, and recognized heritage sites, the stories of those who were marginalized and forgotten will be elevated. As we expand the knowledge and understanding of this history with depth and breadth, we can honor the diverse experiences of Blacks in America, including the history of, for example, our trans, queer, and gender nonconforming brothers and sisters.

### Model Legislation

- [Illinois House Resolution 1011](#) “Requests President Obama to commission a study to detail the economic impact of the slave trade and the use of slave labor; and how Emancipation, while freeing them of their literal bonds, and ending an immoral practice, did not guarantee equality in education, employment, housing, and access to quality affordable health care; that this study also include an analysis for how reparations for past harms have benefited ethnic groups that have received them during the course of U.S. history; and a proposal for reparations to the descendants of slaves in the U.S., and how those reparations can help overcome obstacles that still exist today in education, employment, housing, health care, and justice.” This does not specifically call for development of heritage sites or monuments.
- [H.R. 40](#) requests a federal commission to study slavery and its impact on descendants of slaves today, including the role of the Federal and State governments. It further requests that the commission make recommendations based on its finding, including an apology to descendants of slaves and reparations. It requests \$8 million for the commission, but does not specifically call for development of heritage sites or monuments.
- [105 ILCS 5/27-20.4](#) requires every public elementary and high school curriculum to include a Black history unit, but does not require an all-year integration of Black history into the curriculum.
- The [City of Chicago](#) created a reparations package for victims of police torture under Jon Burge, including a [\\$5.5 million fund](#) (the torture victims originally requested [\\$20 million](#));



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a formal apology from the Chicago City Council; creation of a permanent memorial recognizing the victims; an agreement to teach public school students about the case in their 8th and 10th grade history classes; free city college tuition and job training to victims, their immediate family members and their grandchildren; and funded psychological, family, substance abuse, and other counseling services to victims and their immediate family members.

- [Philadelphia](#) was the first city to impose a Black history graduation requirement in 2005.

## Resources:

- [Do's and Don'ts of Teaching Black History](#)
- [Beyond Black History Month](#)
- [Lawyer for Chicago Torture Victims: A Model for Responding To Police Brutality](#)
- [Relevant Federal Laws for National Historic Places and Landmarks](#)

## Organizations Currently Working on Policy:

- [Equal Justice Initiative Community Remembrance Project](#)
- National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC)
- National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA)
- Alliance of African American Museums
- [African American Experience Fund](#)

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