

Reparations Finally Come to America

"That is the beginning of the healing process."

SAN BERNARDINO, CA, UNITED STATES, April 1, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A Chicago suburb recently became the first city in the United States to agree to pay [Black](#) residents reparations for slavery and past discriminatory policies and practices.

That decision shows that some communities are beginning to recognize and acknowledge the harm caused by America's systemic racism, an expert on race relations said.

"It's a historic decision to do this, and we're hoping that this is the beginning of people being able to open their minds, open their eyes to what's happened in the past and the consequences today," said Kathleen Dameron, an internationally recognized cross-cultural trainer.

The City Council of Evanston, Illinois, recently voted to distribute \$400,000 in housing assistance and mortgage relief to eligible Black households. The city will provide \$25,000 for down payments on houses or property, home repairs, and interest or late penalties on property in Evanston.

To qualify, residents must either have lived in the city between 1919 and 1969 or be a direct descendant of a black Evanston resident from that time. Those who experienced housing discrimination in Evanston after 1969 are also eligible.

The \$400,000 comes from a \$10 million reparations fund created in 2019 using tax money from the city's recreational marijuana program.

"When you look at the history of redlining, the history of denying Black people and Native Americans the right to housing, this is a significant step in saying, 'Yes, we did do wrong,' and when you do someone wrong, you apologize and you make amends," Dameron said. "That is the beginning of the healing process."

Even though \$25,000 is not enough to pay for a house, paying reparations is still important for the city, said Dameron, a Black American now living in Paris.

"It's not reparations in the sense of, 'We denied you a house, so we're going to give you a house now,' but it is acknowledgement of the damage done, of the impact on the generations of that damage," Dameron said. "It recognizes and it acknowledges that we did harm consciously, in

policy, in law and in practice and we're seeking to recognize it and to make amends."

Dozens of other U.S. cities are also considering reparations. On March 29, Providence, Rhode Island, released a 194-page report on racism, another step in the city's efforts to pay reparations to Black and Native American residents.

Dameron said that getting national reparations or getting some areas to agree to reparations is still a difficult process.

"One of the problems we have is that there are some people in the United States – and this happens consistently across the United States – they would rather close the swimming pool and have no swimming pool in the community than to have Blacks have access to the swimming pool, so as desegregation started throughout the South, public swimming pools disappeared, public parks disappeared," she said.

"Some people thought, "I'd rather have nothing than have Black people share in this," she said.

"That mentality makes it extraordinarily difficult to say, 'We did you wrong. As human beings, we did not give you a fair environment. We persecuted you. We banned you. We burned your houses down and we killed people.' "

So even though Evanston is making amends and recognizing and acknowledging that they caused harm, "that acknowledgement is still difficult for many Americans to make," Dameron noted.

Dameron is currently leading a series of seminars on "Healing the Collective Trauma of Racism." In her sessions, she helps participants recognize the difference between interpersonal and institutional racism.

Participants build a feeling of community and energy to create social justice.

To introduce people to her sessions, she is offering a free, self-paced, one-hour course. You can learn more by going to www.KathleenDameron.com

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