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The case for reparations for Black Americans

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PROCEEDINGS

DEWS: Welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria, the podcast about ideas and the experts who have them. I'm Fred Dews. Is it time to pay reparations to the descendants of enslaved Black Americans? That's the topic of a new Big Ideas paper from the Brookings Policy 2020 Initiative titled "Why We Need Reparations for Black Americans." The authors Rashawn Ray and Andre Perry are my guest today for what I know will be a fascinating and perhaps challenging conversation.

Ray is a David M. Rubenstein Fellow in Governance Studies at Brookings and also an associate professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, where he serves as executive director of the Lab for Applied Social Science Research. Perry is a fellow in the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings and a scholar in residence at American University. He is also author of the just released book from Brookings Institution Press titled "Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America's Black Cities."

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And now on with the interview. Rashawn, Andre, welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria.

RAY: Thank you for having us.

DEWS: I'm delighted to be able to have this conversation even remotely with you about your new paper published for the Brookings Policy 2020 Initiative. Let me start with you, Rashawn, if you could say what the top line argument is, as the paper asks, for reparations for Black Americans.

RAY: I think one of the central arguments is that Black Americans have been the only group to be systematically discriminated against by the federal government to not receive reparations. We see reparations for Native Americans, for Japanese Americans, even today during the COVID crises. Trump actually insinuating that the Chinese government should pay reparations to the United States for the coronavirus. And still we haven't seen that come to fruition for Black Americans. And I think there are a couple of big disparities that really play out. Today, the average white family has roughly 10 times the amount of wealth as the average Black family. The disparities when it comes to college graduation are similar. Why? College graduates have over seven times more wealth than Black college graduates. So part of thinking about reparations is dealing with the fact that we can go back to slavery and link it to current inequities that exist between Blacks and other groups.

PERRY: And also, just add on to that that there's this longstanding myth that the conditions [of] Black people and Black cities and neighborhoods are a direct result of the individual behaviors of the people within them. And it's clear from my research, from Rashawn's research and research from all across the globe that structural inequality makes people vulnerable. And again, this has been exposed by the disproportionate amount of death resulting from the COVID crisis. But there has been a policy epidemic for decades, for a generation, that's also killing people in health and education and housing. And it ties back to the narrative, this false narrative, that conditions of Blacks are the result of their own doing. No, it's because of policy, including the policy of slavery that has robbed Black Americans from the wealth that they should have had.

DEWS: You make a very strong connection in your paper between wealth and the American Dream itself. Can you focus on why you make that particular connection to the American Dream?

PERRY: Again, that narrative that Black Americans are saddled with is countered with the American Dream that we all have an equal opportunity to generate the kind of wealth that brings meaning to the words life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And we hope that in the piece, and we know that we hear it all the time, that if you work hard, you do everything that you're told, you go to school, you go to college, then you will be afforded that American Dream. But we also know that the individual wealth for Black collegians is less than white high school graduates. And the reason being is because we were not allowed to accrue the kind of wealth over time because of the denial of policy that's rooted in a hierarchy of values based on race. So throughout time we said, hey, Black people are not worthy, they do not deserve because they don't do all the things required of the American Dream. When in fact, Black people are doing all that others do. But we're not reaping the benefits and we can draw a direct link to slavery from that.

DEWS: One of the principal objections that you'll hear from people, especially white people, about reparations to the descendants of slaves is that slavery ended one hundred and sixty five years ago, and "my ancestors did not own any slaves." And even if they did own slaves, "I did not inherit any of their wealth" for whatever reason. "I'm not responsible for slavery." That's an argument that people do make. Can you address those kinds of objections to the reparations argument?

RAY: Yeah, I think white people need to stop thinking that this is about being blamed or being ameliorated from slavery. I don't think that I'm to blame for Japanese internment or Native American exile. But these just not stop me from thinking that the United States as a nation is responsible for state sanctioned discrimination and abuse. For those who view reparations through the lens of blame, need to actually do some soul searching and realize this isn't about them. What it's about is the fact that one group of people oftentimes benefited from white supremacist policies while another group of people was discriminated against by

those same exact policies. This is about atonement. This is about a correction for something that was done to a group of people. This doesn't necessarily have to do with whether or not certain people have benefited more so than not, even though we know that that's played out.

What this has to do with the fact is that in 1860, for example, Blacks who were enslaved were worth about three billion dollars. Their physical bodies were worth three billion dollars. This was more than the railroads. This was more than the factories. And that free labor, those bodies, helped to build the United States to be what it is today. And that hasn't been atoned for.

PERRY: I don't fault my white contemporaries for anything. I fault the American government.

RAY: Exactly.

PERRY: And that's the frame we need to take. This is the government's fault. The government must atone. The government should pay. And that's what we're charging. Again, I could care less about an individual. I deserve what the federal government took away from—the wealth, the income, the opportunity—that was structurally barred from me. And it was morally bankrupt. It was legal, but it was wrong. So, we're looking for that kind of atonement. But again, this is not about individuals. This is about a government.

DEWS: You'll also hear an objection from many white people who say that their ancestors were enslaved, especially if they had Irish ancestors. And they're not asking for reparations. Can you talk about that?

PERRY: I mean, I think there are two important points here. First, these people should actually go read the book, "How the Irish Became White." That is a great book that actually puts people on a chronology to realize how whiteness comes about in the United States, similar to how it's corollary, blackness, comes about in the United States. I think that's the first thing. I think that'll give people that history.

Part of realizing that history, then, is twofold. First, let's go back further, let's go back to the first time when people came to the United States from the Americas. And what we've seen was that there were Europeans and Africans who were quote-unquote indentured servants. But then we had a switch where they realized that they were making so much money—because the indentured servitude was supposed to be work seven years and then you're free to go. They would give you something for your time. That happened for Europeans who were white, who we now call white. It did not happen for Africans who we now call Black. That's the first thing.

Second thing is, of course, people point to particularly when a second big wave of European immigration in the late 1800s, early 1900s is the other big phase people point to. But as you'll probably hear us talk about in a second, there was another big wave that deserves another auto correction, one of these misses as we call them, the deals with post-World War II and the G.I. Bill. And there were whites who were in the United States at that time who were recent immigrants who did benefit from those policies in ways that Black Americans didn't. We're actually seeing this now with these stimulus packages for COVID-19. I mean, there are huge disparities in who is actually reaping the benefits from this. These packages are not equitable. And this is once again another opportunity that the United States is missing to do a correction for past wrongs.

PERRY: Throughout time there's been anti-Black legislation that has shaped the Constitution, has shaped policies and housing and employment. It hasn't been anti-Irish policy that divided us in our housing. It wasn't anti-Irish policy that locked people out of banks and not being able to marry. It was anti-Black policy that came about from the evolution of slavery. And so when people make these arguments, is this defies the reality that we live in. And then again, it goes back to this blaming of Black people, that if we were clear eyed, we would see unequivocally that Black people are suffering from these policies because

that's what the policies were directed to do. And there are certainly people who were affected by that. Redlining, for instance, the policy that was implemented by the Home Owners Loan Corporation. There were certainly Jewish people in redlined areas and there were others in the redlined areas. And to this day, people living in those areas suffer because of the past discrimination. But overwhelmingly, the impact of those negative policies disproportionately impacted Black people.

One of the studies that we've talked about on earlier shows that I've done is on housing, in which I compared housing prices in majority Black neighborhoods where the share of the Black population was 50 percent or higher compared those to the neighborhoods where the share of the Black population was less than a percent. And we controlled for all those reasons why people say home prices are lower in Black communities. We control for education and crime, walkability and all those fancy Zillow metrics. And what we found is sound, that home prices in Black majority neighborhoods are devalued by about 23 percent, about \$48,000 per home. Accumulatively that amounts to about \$152 billion dollars in lost equity. And that's the money that should be used to start businesses, to send your kids to college, for municipalities to fund education and to improve infrastructure. In other words, that's the money that people use in order to uplift themselves.

Now, that study was done using 2017 data. Only 2017 data. Can you imagine the accumulative losses year after year of being devalued? Now going to slavery, when people say, oh, my Irish ancestors was enslaved again, we're talking about a period of time where people were certainly hurt. I acknowledge that. But we're talking about a policy framework that constantly punished you just because we were Black over hundreds of years. it's not the same whatsoever.

DEWS: Rashawn, a couple minutes ago, you talked about misses, missed opportunities for the U.S. government to atone for slavery, to enact a reparations program for

descendants of enslaved African-Americans. One of them was the construction of the G.I. Bill. You talk about some of the other misses that you and Andre describe your paper.

RAY: Yeah, sure. So obviously, the first big one deals were 40 acres and a mule. People know part of that legacy, that supposedly Blacks were supposed to be given 40 acres and a mule. However, that never happened. And I think that history is important. We laid it out in the report that Union leaders, including General William Sherman, actually concluded that each Black family should receive these 40 acres. There was a bill signed, Field Order 15, that allocated 400,000 acres of confiscated Confederate land to Black families. However, it never came to pass because after President Lincoln was assassinated, President Andrew Johnson actually reversed that field order.

Not only that, he reversed that order, he actually returned land back to former slave owners. And instead of giving Blacks the means to support themselves, the federal government actually empowered former enslavers. In Washington, D.C., for example, slave owners were actually paid reparations for lost property—that lost property was actually the formerly enslaved. This practice was also common in nearby states. So, part of thinking about this, and this is a very important point, is that many Blacks ended up with limited work options, ended up returning as sharecroppers to the same land by which they were enslaved on, and then ended up working off of that.

And we also know there was a continuation, particularly in the South, that relates to convict leasing. In Alabama, convict leasing represented a substantial percentage of Alabama's state economy. Convict leasing was essentially where Blacks will be arrested for extremely petty crimes, jaywalking and the like, speaking to a white person, particularly white women. And then they would be incarcerated. And they would do the same work that they were doing while on the plantation. There is still a connection there with current prisons.

I think the next big miss deals with the New Deal. Of course, people know: 1929 stock market crashed, unemployment skyrockets. And there was an opportunity to do what was right as veterans were returning from World War II—white and Black veterans who ended up fighting together, fighting for our country and our freedom—what happened was the G.I. Bill did a few main things first. It allowed for veterans to attend college or gave them grants to go to college. Money to send their children to college. Grants to start up small businesses. And also grants to put down on homes. This essentially established the middle class we know to exist today. The problem, though, similar with COVID-19 policies, that G.I. Bill money was mandated federally and implemented locally. So Black veterans never get these same resources that white veterans did. This is one of the reasons why we have so many historically Black colleges and universities in the country today. Mind you, universities and colleges that have been underfunded for a century have still lasted and should actually get kudos for that in an economy that they weren't necessarily meant to sustain themselves. When put all that together and it was another big miss.

There was another part of the New Deal, though, that deal with Social Security. Of course, people know Social Security has allowed people to retire and do other sorts of things. Well, President Roosevelt made a bargain to get the New Deal through. He excluded two primary occupations: that was domestic and farm work. Both of those occupations were highly represented among Blacks. Seventy-five percent of Blacks in the South worked in these occupations, 60 percent across the country. So, we've seen at every single turn that Blacks have been excluded. Of course, there are others. I mean, we have the Homestead Act, redlining, restrictive covenants, convict leasing, as I mentioned, that you put these together, and as Andre mentioned, it leads to a devaluing of Black bodies and Black life that needs to be corrected for it.

PERRY: And let me just add this. This COVID moment is another opportunity to do the right thing. It's never too late to do the right thing. The overrepresentation of Black death is a direct result of these past policies. We know that COVID does not discriminate, but our past policies have, making Black Americans more vulnerable. If we do not correct for these past errors and atrocities, then we will be back in the same position when the next inevitable crisis occurs. So time and time again, we are presented in times of tragedy an opportunity to do the right thing and give what is owed and what is deserved for people. But more importantly, if we want the country to heal, we must have a program for reparations.

RAY: Let me quickly add on this point that Andre made about COVID. Because as he's making his point, we're at another juncture when this can be corrected for. But we have continuously seen misses. Not only is it about the lack of health care access and the neighborhood locations that we're in in that structural conditions undergird these preexisting health conditions.

It's also the fact that recent reports of came out as statistics showing that about 90 percent of Black small businesses were denied funding for [Paycheck Protection Program] funding. That is astronomical. Some of the analysis that I've done that I'm currently writing on is when you look at states that have larger percentages of Blacks, those states were less likely to receive that funding. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. And now you are restricting the same communities that actually need those types of opportunities in them. So we once again, not only is it a situation where things are inequitable. It's also the fact that it was simultaneously with an opportunity where some people are actually getting a leg up while other people are getting the legs taken out from under of them, and those people happen to be Black Americans.

PERRY: And then I want to add one more point. If there's any lesson we should learn from COVID, [it] is that when our neighbors are sick, we are vulnerable. And in order to

make us all healthy, we must help those who are sick. The same is true with our economy, our social morays, and all that stuff, that we must address the vulnerability if we want to be made whole.

Now, in the economy, we don't see the manifestation of hurt in the same way we're seeing it in this epidemic. You don't see people necessarily dying as a result. But over time, you see lower life expectancy, you see worse education, you see worse health overall. The inability for us to recognize the vulnerabilities in our society—it's killing people, throttling the economy, but it's burdening Black people the most.

DEWS: I'm glad you both brought up the connection with coronavirus because that will give me a chance to point out to our listeners that Brookings scholars like yourself and across the institution are doing a lot of research and analysis about various aspects of COVID-19, of coronavirus. But I know that two of you are participating in that with a particular view to what happens after we emerge from this pandemic phase, from this lockdown phase in terms of social equity and justice and other kinds of structural issues. So, thank you for that.

I want to turn to some of the practical aspects of a reparations program that you discuss in your paper. For example, who would be eligible for such a program and how would they demonstrate that eligibility?

RAY: So, the way we think about it when it comes to eligibility—birth records can initially be used to determine if a person was classified as a Black American. Economist Sandy Darity, who we just had at Brookings, this is one of the main ways he's talked about providing a consistent pattern of identification. Census records as well can be coincided with that. I mean, we also think that in some cases DNA testing, not necessarily to identify whether or not a person identifies as Black, but more so to actually help with the healing and atonement process, because there's so many Black Americans in the United States who have

no idea where their family is from, from the continent of Africa. Of course, there are a lot of Black Americans who come from Western Africa, but they have no idea which country, potentially which tribe, and the like. So we think that identification can be used.

So what this means is, let's give some examples. Senator Cory Booker, for example, would qualify. His parents are descendants of slaves. President Barack Obama, for example, would not qualify. He has a white mother. He has an African immigrant father, which was after slavery. However, his wife Michelle Obama would qualify. And I think there is one very, very important point to make with this that I think people miss oftentimes. This isn't about whether or not people have recovered or not. So this isn't about whether or not a person is successful. Importantly, though, most people haven't been able to recover. I actually think we reach true equality when a Black woman in particular, how we think about intersectionality and the intersection of race and gender, that we reach true equality, and when a Black woman can be average and still be successful, I think that becomes our metric.

But, what this is about is atonement for the past and systemic wrongs. This isn't about whether or not people have been able to recover or something. I mean, you don't necessarily say that right now with the COVID bailout and the fact that there are companies, universities in particular, that still have billions of dollars in endowments and people don't necessarily say that they're not entitled to those funds, even though some people feel some kind of way about that. And I think that's the point, is that this is about atoning for something that was wrong, not necessarily what people have done since that point.

PERRY: This is important because this is a controversial topic about who should get reparations, particularly for slavery. It should be those descendants of the enslaved. Now, certainly, I think if America does the right thing and issues reparations to those descendants, then other descendants from other countries who participated in the slave trade should also pay reparations. So Britain, France and other countries that certainly participated in the slave

trade, there should be movement afoot in those countries in which they were enslaved to demand reparations. But again, this demand for the American government to pay back the losses caused by the harm of slavery.

DEWS: How would the program be paid for? I mean, is it a federal program or the southern states that enslaved people?

PERRY: It's a federal program. What's interesting, and we keep going back to today, right now, the COVID payments, or PP program, for instance, they run through banks. We're depositing checks using direct deposit. But every individual, in my opinion, should have some type of government bank account in which we are depositing money, particularly during times like this. And so each individual should have an account for moments like this. And that also can be used to pay reparation directly from the Treasury into those account. So, we can come up with mechanisms. That's never been the issue. The issue has been will. Do we have the will to do it?

DEWS: I want to bring in a case that you mentioned in the paper, because it's of great personal interest to me. And that's the case of Georgetown University. I'm a graduate of Georgetown University, a proud graduate of Georgetown. And you mention in the paper the recently uncovered historical fact of the Jesuit fathers, I think in the 1830s, selling their enslaved population to raise funds to continue the operations of the school. Now the university is grappling with that. Can you talk about that history and what the university is doing and kind of what that tells us about the structure of a reparations program?

RAY: I think Georgetown is a really good example because what we see in Georgetown is a link to history, in a sense, where we know that there were slaves that were sold that helped Georgetown to stay afloat and actually built their endowments to become with Georgetown is today. You also had students electing, voting, to actually pay an additional fee so that the descendants of those slaves can get tuition to go to Georgetown. So

in this case, this reparations program is directly linked to something that happened, a positive outcome for other people in another entity, that being the university. And then obviously the people who were most impacted were the slaves as well as their descendants. So now funding can be allocated for them to be able to go to college. Princeton has done the same thing. I think other universities will start to follow as well as this sort of history starts to come to light.

I also think this will take the shape, you ask a second ago about what does this look like or who pays it is a federal is it states, definitely I think it's going to end up being a federal policy. But I testified in the state of Maryland, specifically for bill that's called the Harriet Tubman Community Investment Act. That was about the slaves in the state of Maryland. So I definitely know the states are taking a big interest in this.

And I think similar to other forms of civil rights, human rights types of policies that will start to be a precedent that over time. And of course, there have been other examples of families that have actually won suits, whether it be in Florida or elsewhere for their families as it relates to reparations. So we see with Georgetown a pathway to now proceed with other universities, corporations, also at the state level to build a precedent for what will ultimately happen at the federal level.

PERRY: And what the Georgetown example also illustrates is how the institutions and states were complicit in the federal government's failing. So they all need to hold themselves accountable. And it also shows that if we really want to, we can track this stuff, that we know where people lives, where they're from. We know who owned who in many cases. This idea that, oh it was too far back and we can't possibly account for this. This is inaccurate. There's too much technology, too much history, too much knowledge within our institution, we can actually develop a system at institutional level, at a state level, and at the federal level.

DEWS: Rashawn, you mentioned that Georgetown is implementing a program of tuition support for the descendants of enslaved African Americans. Are there other forms of reparations could take? What about a straight up cash payments?

RAY: Yeah. So we propose five specific types of reparations in our overall package that we think all are viable and also happen in some form. First is individual payments for descendants of enslaved Blacks. And I think one key point we highlight, and again we talked about the wealth disparity and the wealth gap and again, the fact that we go back to the 1860s and we take those metrics that Blacks were worth billions of dollars, \$3 billion in fact, and they were producing millions of dollars just in cotton alone. So in 1861, \$250 million dollars they produced in cotton. When we talk about individual payments, it's dealing with the gap in wealth that exist today, which is essentially about \$170,000 for white families and about a tenth of that for Black family.

Second thing is we just talked about as it relates to tuition and we think that tuition should be for four year colleges as well as two-year college and universities. Everyone isn't going to go to a four-year college, but they should be able to get funding for a trade and associate degree, vocational and technical degrees. This will help to continue to form a working base.

Third thing deals with student loan forgiveness. We think that's a big deal. One big thing we know is that Black Americans are more likely to receive subpar loans for education. There was a recent study that came out showing that students who attend historically Black colleges are particularly more likely to get these subprime loans. So student loan forgiveness for descendants of enslaved Blacks is key.

We can also look at down payment grants and housing revitalization grants, which Andre could talk about that he's highlighting in his book.

And then also business grants. And if you think about these policies that we're proposing for reparations, we're doing it right now with COVID-19. I mean, we look at the state of Michigan and the Michigan governor, Gretchen Whitmer, she just said that frontline workers are going to get tuition. And so we are throwing around currently trillions of dollars. But yet and still the argument is that some kind of way we can't find money to pay for the fact that there were a group of people that helped build this country off of free labor.

PERRY: Only thing I want to add to that is the reason why we added things like education and housing, because these are central to building wealth, prosperity, and for self-actualization. It's harder for you to own a home, meaning that access is more difficult, it's going to be harder for you to have prosperity. Access to an education that's harder is going to make life that rich harder. And so we included in our solutions those areas that are absolutely critical to thriving in the United States.

DEWS: So what's the ultimate goal of a reparations program and how do we know if over time it's been successful?

PERRY: Reparations is owed. It's a moral debt. So part of this is not necessarily what will happen in the future. I'm sure if reparations take hold and we address the structural inequalities that currently exist, we're not going there right now, but you certainly have to do both. But this is what is owed. This is necessarily in earnest of trying to achieve some ultimate goal. This is what is owed. And with that said, I do believe once you cut the check, you provide educational services, you provide housing services, you'll see a raising of the quality of life over time. But for me, this is something we have a moral and financial and legal obligation to do, not because we want some outcome, but it's something we should do because it's right. It certainly says we acknowledge that we did an unbelievable harm to millions.

RAY: This is about atoning for a past wrong. If someone is murdered, and then years later—One of the reasons why we don't have a statute of limitation on murder—and then the person who did that crime is convicted, we don't judge whether or not that's successful based on how well the family of the person who was murdered does. It doesn't work like that. This is about atoning for a past wrong. And again, what's important is that Black Americans are the only group to have been systematically discriminated against by the federal government who have not received reparations. Japanese Americans received reparations. Native Americans received reparations. Of course, we have a European example where there are people who are Jewish Americans in the United States who are still receiving reparations from the Holocaust. We have these examples. You don't hear Germans, and I spent time in Germany—quite a substantial amount of time—you don't hear Germans going around say, oh, I didn't have anything to do with the Holocaust, I wasn't around then. Jews shouldn't still be getting money. In what world does that exist? Black Americans are the only group that will use these divisive narratives to try to justify it. And unfortunately, as Andre was saying, that deals on one hand with anti-Blackness and it also deals with the fact that white supremacy is still firmly embedded in our country. I mean, we see this from the fact that Black men are getting stopped at the entrances of stores for wearing a mask and white men with KKK hoods are allowed to go in and purchase apples. So we even see how these sort of things play out today. And we have a long pattern of history to try to deal with it.

DEWS: Bring us to a close by going to the end of your essay. There you reference Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, but not the really famous parts about not judging each other by the color of our skin, but by the content of our character. You pick another passage to talk about. Can you walk us through what that is.

RAY: Yeah. So this is an often forgotten aspect of MLK. And I think part of it is we have a warped perception of Martin Luther King, Jr. Part of what he talked about in his "I

"Have a Dream" speech is he noted that we, meaning Black Americans, have come to the nation's capital to cash a check. And he said that that check has been marked with insufficient funds. He was directly talking about reparations in that statement. But that isn't something that we highlight because it's not something that we necessarily want to discuss.

I think the other thing is that just how people view MLK is also skewed. I mean, MLK was for a guaranteed income. He was for universal health care. He was for a lot of what people will consider to be liberal, far left even radical policies that now, interestingly, are helping to bail out the United States during this COVID-19 pandemic. But part of looking at that, I would advise people to go read "Letters from a Birmingham Jail." I would actually suggest that people read the "I Have a Dream" speech.

And this is very, very important because in the United States, we have a very selective memory, a very selective collective memory of what's going on, not only about MLK, but also about what happened after the Civil War, for example, that even led to MLK having to do what he did and all the other people did what he did, from Jesse Jackson and John Lewis and Rosa Parks and the like. And it's important to note that not only after the Civil War did Blacks not get 40 acres and a mule, and not only did Southern slave owners get that land back, but the Confederacy was also—the leadership—was firmly integrated back into the United States is one of the reasons why, as a Southerner, one thing I know is that in the South, people act like that the Confederacy won.

These are the warped ways we think about history and MLK—we just wanted to end with that and let people realize that he talked about this. He talked about this in his famous speech that people some kind of way really forget.

I just make two final points on. The first is that Lyndon Johnson said that if you can make the lowest white man think he's better than the highest Black man, then you've won. And unfortunately, in the United States where people should be joined together, oftentimes

because of economic oppression and marginalization, each race then becomes the main thing. And I would see that all the time as a student at the University of Memphis, where every year in January and April, we will go to the Lorraine Motel. We would start off at a slave auction block by the Mississippi River. And we would have a program at the Lorraine Motel where MLK was assassinated. Then on my way back to campus, I will see a statue of Nathan Bedford Forrest who helped found the KKK. And I would just think that this is the juxtaposition of living in the United States. That statue is no longer there.

I think part of thinking about reparations is not only financial compensation to Black Americans, but also a healing and reconciliation process for all of America to make sure that we fully understand the history, and MLK is part of that history.

PERRY: I'm going to leave it there. I want to leave it there. I'm not going to follow that.

DEWS: Well, then I will leave it there, too. Rashawn Ray, Andre Perry, this has been a fascinating and important conversation and I direct listeners' attention to your paper on the Brookings website, [Brookings.edu/Policy2020](https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020). Again, thank you. I appreciate your time.

RAY: Thank you.

PERRY: Thank you.

DEWS: The Brookings Cafeteria podcast is the product of an amazing team of colleagues, starting with audio engineer Gaston Reboredo and producer Chris McKenna. Bill Finan, director of the Brookings Institution Press, does the book interviews and the Lisette Baylor and Eric Abalahin provide design and Web support. Finally, my thanks to Camilo Ramirez and Emily Horne for their guidance and support.

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Until next time, I'm Fred Dews.