

Reparations for African Americans in Champaign County

By Jeffrey Trask, PhD

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About me...

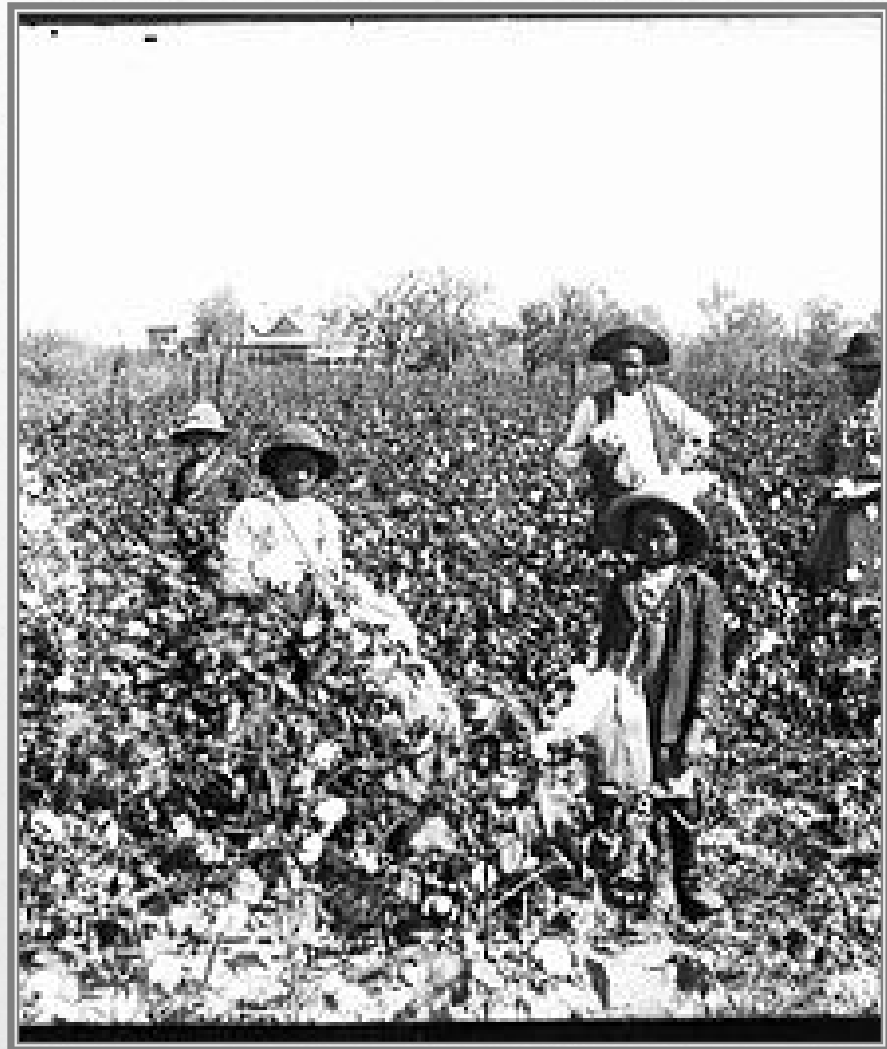
- Champaign-Urbana Reparations Coalition, Founding Member
- First Repair, Midwest Regional Leader
- African Descent Citizens Reparations Commission (ADCRC), Commissioner
- Global Circles – Working Group – Partnerships and Agreements
- Champaign County Christian Health Center, Founder/Operations Director
- New Covenant Fellowship, Adjunct Pastor
- MLK Advocacy for Justice Committee, Treasurer

The Why

- Centuries of enslavement, discrimination, prejudice, inequities, disparities, and racism
- Lost opportunities in land acquisition, home ownership, employment, education, fair representation, and even sports
- Slavery, Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration, Healthcare Disparities, Wealth Gap, etc.

Crazy Reparations - Is it that far fetched?

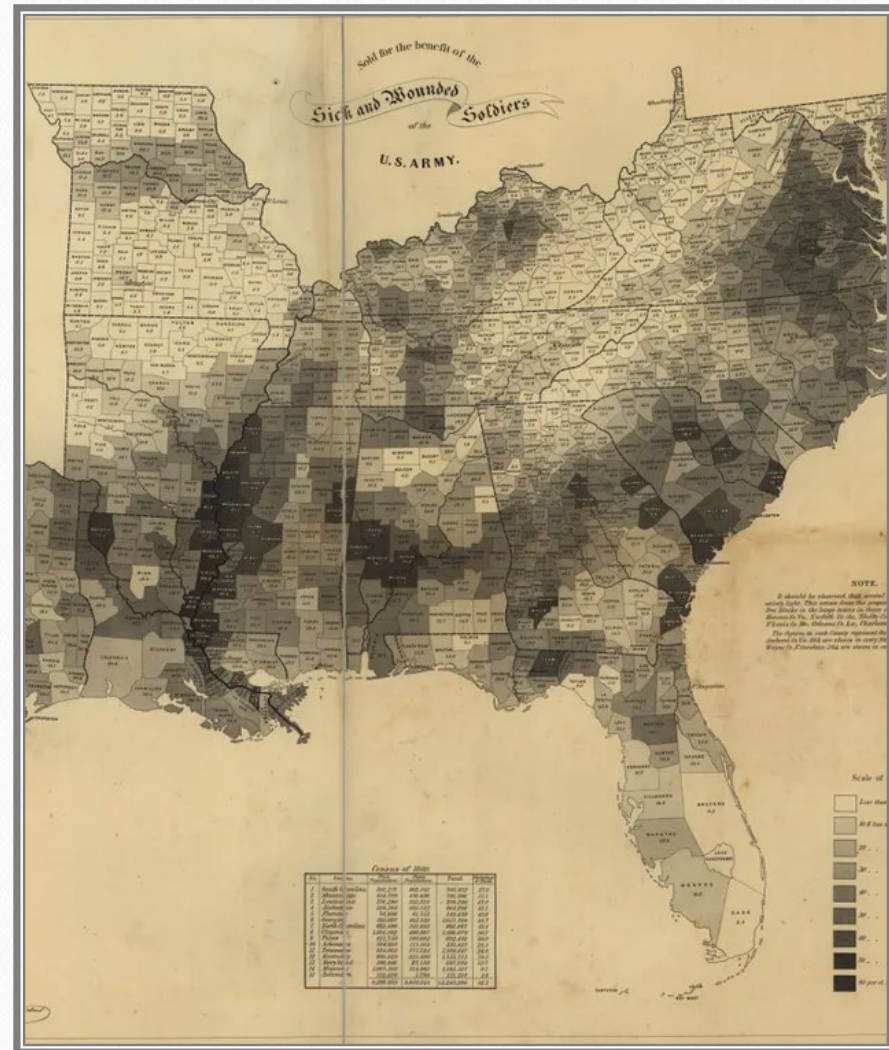
- Grocery Store story (Bigger than Walmart)
- Free labor from 1619 until 1865 – 246 years
- Cheap cotton sold all around the world. US put all other cotton producers out of business by the 1830s
- Cotton became the dominant driver of US economic growth. 1802 Cotton comprised of 14% of the value of all US exports; by 1820, consisted of 42%;
- 1820-1860 over half of all money received by the US from overseas comes strictly from cotton. It was the oil/petroleum of the 19th century.



LEGACY

Lasting Impact

- Foundation that led to the richest country in the world: the Mississippi Delta region had the only millionaires in 1860. Now literally the poorest state in the US.
- Life expectancy for a black man in this region as low as 60 years of age



What Are Reparations?

- Cessation, Assurances and Guarantees of Non-Repetition (stop the harm)
- Restitution and Repatriation (make it right)
- Compensation (address the stress)
- Satisfaction (address the ripple effects)
- Rehabilitation (make whole generationally)

Examples of Reparations?

- Japanese Americans WWII camps (1941) – reparations in the 1980s
- Native Americans
- Jewish victims of Nazi persecution
- Former owners of enslaved people in Washington DC



The First Reparations

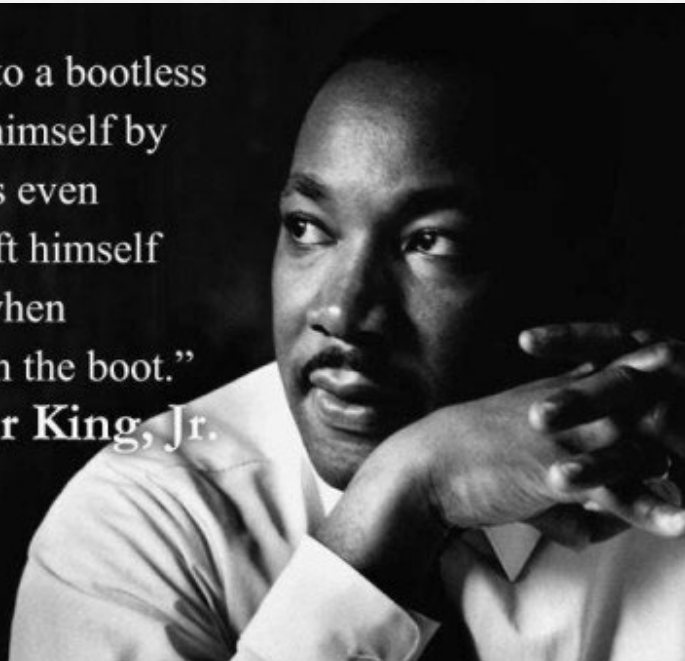
- Exodus 12: 35-36
- ³⁵ The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing.
- ³⁶ **The Lord** had made the Egyptians **favorably disposed toward the people**, and they gave them what they asked for; so they **plundered** the Egyptians.

Dangerous Ideologies

Why Reparations?

“It is a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he should lift himself by his own bootstraps. It is even worse to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps when somebody is standing on the boot.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.



Thinking Differently

- Along with a financial investment, reparations can include...
 - Policy and legislative changes – ex. Diverse business requirements (not goals)
 - Reduced utility costs
 - Hospital discounts
 - Criminal Justice Trust (account for unfair policing)
 - Educational investments (ex. NCF)
 - Corporate investment – **“Enslavement-Era Disclosure and Redress Ordinance”**

The How

Lend an EAR

- **Education**
- **Acknowledgement**
- **Reparations**

Goals of CURC

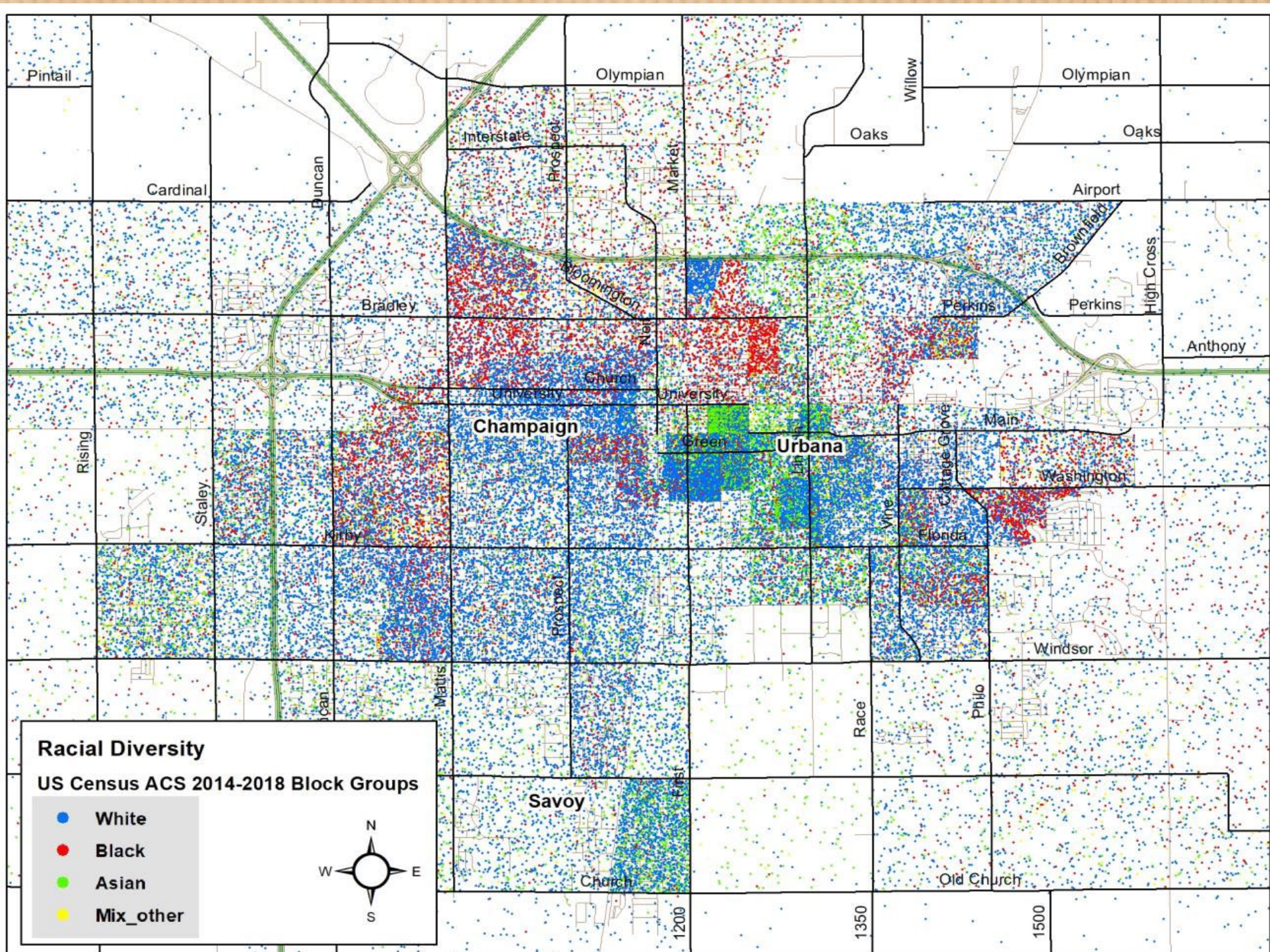
- Educate the community
- Attend and host events to promote reparations
- Create a Champaign County Reparations Commission comprised of a representative of the City of Urbana Council, City of Champaign Council, Champaign County Board, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with the remaining members being community residents from CURC and other relevant organizations and individuals striving towards reparations

Early Segregation in Champaign County

- Racially restrictive covenants were the primary mechanism used to segregate African-Americans. Between 1941 and 1950 in Champaign County, 18 racially restrictive covenants were written into new subdivision deeds. The total number of parcels affected was 774 (65 in Rantoul, 50 near Savoy and 587 in CU) (Schwarzlose, 1965).
- The covenants were all worded exactly the same, **“no part thereof will be sold or leased, either in whole or in part, to or permitted to be occupied as owner, or tenant by any person or persons not of the Caucasian race”** (Frank, 1990).

Early Segregation in Champaign County

- In 1951, Champaign built 70 public housing units for whites and 70 units for blacks. The African-American project in Champaign was called Birch Court (locally known as Burch Village, new mixed income development re-named Douglass Square in 2005). The cost of Champaign's two projects was \$1,470,000, but only 21% went towards constructing Birch Court. (League of Women Voters)
- In 1965, about 52 percent of spaces in uncertified homes and 80 percent of the apartments that were offered to students through the Housing Division listing service were not listed because of the operator's failure to sign the pledge of nondiscrimination. (Frank, 1990).



Reparations Efforts

- Evanston Update –\$21 million – over \$5 million paid out
- Illinois State Commission - **African Descent-Citizens Reparations Commission – Sat, Sept 20th Public Hearing in Champaign at Krannert**
- Asheville, NC and Shelby County, TN - \$5 million from each towards reparative work
- Tulsa, OK City holiday and fundraising goal of \$105 million for reparations
- California Reparations Taskforce – 2020
- H.R. 40 and ongoing national efforts
- Other efforts: Kansas City, MO, Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; St. Paul, MN; Atlanta, GA; San Francisco, CA; Palm Springs, CA (multi million \$ settlement); many others

The ASK

- Vote to approve the ordinance establishing a reparations commission for African Americans of Champaign County
- Sponsor the commission with \$25,000 to gather information from the community, conduct a harms report, and provide recommendations on how to work towards healing those harms
- Have a representative from the city council on the commission

Thank You!

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- QUESTIONS???