



State of Illinois
African Descent-Citizens
Reparations Commission

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ILLINOIS AFRICAN DESCENT-CITIZENS REPARATIONS COMMISSION RELEASES LANDMARK REPORT ON HARMS TO BLACK ILLINOISANS

First-of-its-kind report documents historic and ongoing inequities for Black Illinoisans

Springfield, IL— The Illinois African Descent-Citizens Reparations Commission (ADCRC) today released “[Taking Account: A History of Racial Harm & Injustice Against Black Illinoisans](#),” the State’s first comprehensive, evidence-based report examining how slavery and its vestiges produce historical harms and continue to generate inequities for Black Illinoisans.

Commissioned by ADCRC and in partnership with the University of Illinois Chicago’s Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy, the report traces racial injustice from colonial enslavement and early statehood through Reconstruction, Jim Crow, urban renewal, and mass incarceration. Drawing on scholarly research, historical archives, government data, and community perspectives, the report documents the impact of deliberate policies that structured opportunity along racial lines.

“Confronting the truth of our state’s history is a necessary first step toward building a more equitable future,” said **ADCRC Chair Marvin Slaughter, Jr.** “By grounding our work in historical evidence and the lived experiences of those who have experienced harm, we are laying the foundation for informed and meaningful reparative action. The Commission is proud to release this during the 100th anniversary of Black History Month, a commemoration of the contributions of Black Americans to American society. We are proud to continue the legacy of Carter G. Woodson in honoring the resilience and strength of Black Americans.”

The findings will guide the African Descent-Citizens Reparations Commission’s recommendations to the Illinois General Assembly on pathways toward reparative action.

“The idea that racial inequity simply dissolved after the end of formal segregation is a myth,” said **Dr. Terrion L. Williamson, project leader and associate professor of Black Studies and Gender & Women’s Studies at the University of Illinois Chicago.** “Redlining, chronic school underfunding, discriminatory lending, and over-policing were not isolated injustices. They were policy decisions that structured opportunity along racial lines and continue to shape the experiences of Black residents in Illinois today.”

The report identifies nine broad categories of harm and documents how each continues to share disparities across Illinois:



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- **Enslavement and Servitude:** Although Illinois entered the Union as a free state in 1818, legal exceptions, indenture systems, and restrictive laws allowed slavery and slavery-like arrangements to persist for decades, embedding racial hierarchy into the state's early economic and legal foundations.
- **Racial Terror:** From lynchings and race riots in Springfield (1908), East St. Louis (1917), and Chicago (1919) to the proliferation of Sundown Towns, racial violence and intimidation enforced segregation and exclusion well into the 20th century.
- **Political Disenfranchisement:** The Illinois Black Codes (1819–1865) barred Black residents from voting and civic participation. Later tactics — including violence, gerrymandering, and prison-based districting — diluted Black political power and representation.
- **Stolen Economic Labor:** From enslavement and exclusion from unions to discriminatory hiring practices and present-day income disparities, Black labor has been systematically exploited and undervalued, contributing to a persistent racial wealth gap.
- **Policing and the Legal System:** Early systems that monitored Black mobility evolved into modern forms of policing, punitive sentencing, and mass incarceration that disproportionately impact Black communities and destabilize families.
- **Housing:** Redlining, racially restrictive covenants, contract selling, exclusionary zoning, and public housing segregation created an architecture of segregation that limited Black homeownership and concentrated disinvestment and environmental harm in Black neighborhoods.
- **Education:** Segregation, inequitable school funding, and housing policy have produced enduring educational disparities.
- **Family:** Policies that sanctioned family separation, economic exclusion, and disproportionate surveillance have destabilized Black households across generations, even as Black families built resilient community-based systems of mutual aid and support.
- **Health:** Historical exclusion from quality healthcare, environmental degradation, housing instability, and systemic bias contribute to higher rates of chronic illness, maternal and infant mortality, and premature death among Black Illinoisans.

To review the full report and learn more about ADCRC and its upcoming events—including a public hearing on April 25 at the DuSable Black History Museum and Education Center in Chicago—visit: <https://adcr.illinois.gov/>.



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About ADCRC

The African Descent-Citizens Reparations Commission is a State of Illinois-appointed commission committed to advancing equity and opportunity for African Americans with lineage to the American Slave Trade. The commission was created to research Illinois' historical involvement in slavery and its enduring impact, and developing legislative recommendations to promote restoration and reparative justice. ADCRC's mission is to prioritize preserving and strengthening historically Black communities, fostering economic empowerment through vocational training and workforce development, ensuring equitable access to state contracting, and advancing accountability through the Illinois Slavery Era Disclosure Bill.

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