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***“No African Americans take to the streets in protest to demand Whites to love us more. We demand a behavior change!”*** Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.

## March 2024 Newsletter

### Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh - Shares his Observations and Thoughts from Bethlehem, Palestine



The rich history of genocides does not show us combination like the one we have today:

1) Overwhelming evidence of intent broadcast and available to everyone on instant communication devices (phones, tablets, computer) and based on a messianic model of Chosen-ness linking to biblical mythologies of conquest of Canaan, wiping out other nations etc.

2) Wanton destruction of people and their livelihood. Destroying all their means of livelihood denying them food, medicine, water, fuel etc. Man made famine of this scale and meanness never happened

before. Added to direct bombing of civilians, hundreds die daily and so far 1 in 20 people in Gaza are killed or injured.

3) Wanton destruction of property to make life unlivable even after the genocide stops. 70% of all building are destroyed so far: homes, hospitals, mosques, churches, civil defence, police buildings, water facilities, trees etc.

4) Wanton attack and destruction of humanitarian aid organizations and their facilities(e.g. the UN agencies)

5) Never in history do we see such division between the wishes of hundreds of millions of people standing to support human rights but at odds with subservient governments that are blackmailed or bribed to support genocide

6) And the US again was the sole vote against a UN Security Council resolution for a ceasefire (the third time in a row to prevent an end to the genocide). The UN should be changed to prevent such imperialist countries from having veto power on other countries. The US continues also to fund and arm the genocide

7) Today, a group of German lawyers - representing Gaza families- is filing a criminal complaint against German Government officials, for the crime of aiding and abetting genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza by providing Israel with weapons and issuing related export permissions. They are supported by civil society organisations ELSC (European Legal Support Center), PIPD (Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy) and Law for Palestine under the Justice and Accountability for Palestine Initiative. The charges are being filed at the Office of the Federal Prosecutor in Karlsruhe ('Generalbundesanwaltschaft').

This mass destruction is part and parcel of colonization as happened in other areas of the world like North America and Australia but in those other areas we were talking about people spread over huge areas (continents). Here it is a tiny area in which natives are squeezed. Gaza is 2.3 million people (most refugees) squeezed in an area of 360 square kilometers. And while major cities globally have similar or higher densities, cities are parts of countries with natural resources and integrated economies. The Gaza strip is a closed concentration camp and has been like this for decades. Same for other ghettos/people warehoused in the West Bank.

Israel engineering deep pockets of starvation in Gaza:

<https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/israel-engineers-deep-pockets-starvation-across-gaza>

Eating grass and weeds to survive  
<https://youtu.be/C0ZsBzNeYfM>

Beaten, stripped and used as a human shield. One of thousands of horror stories:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/2/23/beaten-stripped-used-as-a-human-shield-gaza-man-recounts-israel-terror>

What happened to 6 year old Hind Rajab:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/birds-eye-view/2024/2/22/the-killing-of-6-year-old-hind-rajab>

What Israelis think: Kill more civilians:

<https://time.com/6333781/israel-hamas-poll-palestine/>

Apartheid and racism:

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/578434957771508>

On March 2, millions across the world will march for Gaza! The conditions in Gaza are increasingly dire & Israel continues its onslaught on 2+ million Palestinians. ACT NOW: everyone must be on the streets March 2! If you wish to "endorse/participate" in the event contact Palestinian Youth Movement or [ShutItDown4Palestine.org](https://ShutItDown4Palestine.org)

Stay Human and keep Palestine alive  
Mazin Qumsiyeh,  
A bedouin in cyberspace, a villager at home/Professor, Founder, and (volunteer) Director, Palestine Museum of Natural History/Palestine Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainability/Bethlehem University, Occupied Palestine  
<http://qumsiyeh.org>  
<http://palestinenature.org>

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# **WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**



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**NOTHING IS TOO SMALL!!!**

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## **An about-face**



President Biden has come to recognize that the surge of undocumented immigration during his presidency is a threat to his re-election. He knows that most voters are unhappy about the increase. So are mayors and governors who have been left to deal with an expensive and often chaotic situation — such as in Denver, the subject of a recent Times story.

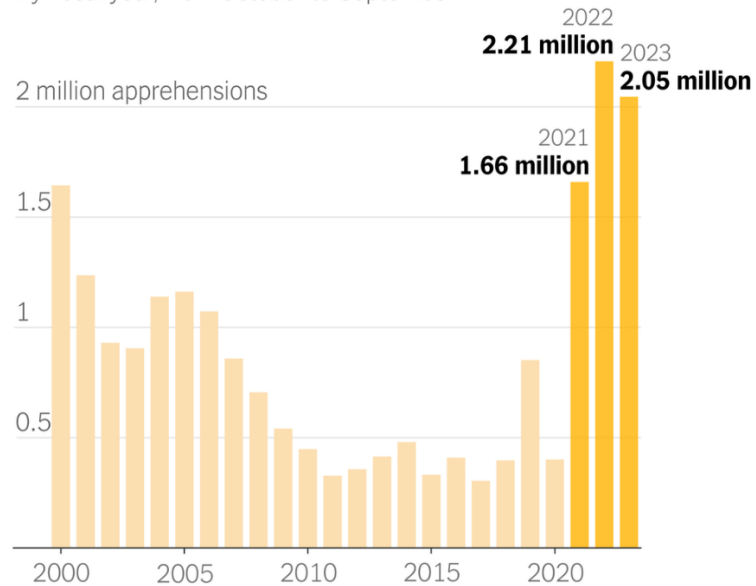
Biden and his advisers have already settled on one strategy to reduce his political vulnerability. They plan to remind voters that congressional Republicans this month blocked a bipartisan bill that would have strengthened border security. Even though many Republicans favored the bill's policies, they defeated it at Donald Trump's behest, largely to avoid solving a problem that has hurt Biden politically. Given the blatantly partisan nature of the Republicans' decision, it's reasonable for Biden to emphasize it during his campaign. But I would be surprised if he could eliminate his vulnerability on immigration

merely by criticizing Republican intransigence. Why? Biden is the president, after all, and a president has significant authority to shape immigration policy even without new legislation. Biden himself has been aggressive about using this authority — albeit to loosen immigration policy rather than tighten it. During his first months in office, he expanded asylum and paused deportations. He also expanded a policy known as parole, which the law says should be used “only on a case-by-case basis.” Last year, Biden used parole to admit more than 300,000 people.

These policies, combined with Biden’s welcoming rhetoric during the 2020 campaign, contributed to the migration surge. (John Judis went into more detail in a recent Times Opinion essay, as did David Ignatius in a Washington Post column.) The changes signaled to migrants that their chances of being able to enter and remain in the U.S. had risen. Many migrants, as my colleague Miriam Jordan has written, are “certain that once they make it to the United States they will be able to stay. Forever. And by and large, they are not wrong.”

### Annual southwestern border apprehensions

By fiscal year, from October to September



Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection | By T

At times, Biden administration officials have tried to downplay or even deny that their policies have contributed to the migration increase. Yet the officials’ recent actions suggest that they may not even believe their own denials. The clearest sign is that the administration is now considering policies that would undo some of its initial loosening of immigration rules. One potential policy would restrict people’s ability to claim asylum if they first crossed into the U.S. illegally, rather than using the established asylum process. To justify the policy, Biden would likely cite the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, which allows the president to suspend immigration for anyone “detrimental to the interests of the United States.” Whatever

Biden decides, I suggest you keep in mind three pieces of context.

## **Presidential power**

First, recent history suggests that a president's immigration policies are significant enough to matter. Migration surged after Biden took office — and it has fallen when he has put in place more modest policies to restrict undocumented immigration. One example: After the Biden administration persuaded Mexico to enforce its own immigration laws more forcefully in December, the number of people illegally crossing the southern border fell 50 percent in January. Policy changes like these have both direct and indirect effects on migration. When migrants believe they are unlikely to be able to enter the U.S. and remain in the country, fewer attempt to do so.

## **Legal challenges**

Second, if Biden acts to restrict migration, advocates for a more open immigration policy will probably challenge him in court. Many of these advocates believe that the U.S., as a rich country, has a moral obligation to admit migrants from poorer countries even if the migrants don't have legal permission to enter. The outcomes of these legal challenges would be uncertain, but there is reason to believe at least some of Biden's actions would stand. The

Supreme Court, when upholding some Trump immigration restrictions in 2018, ruled that the 1952 law “exudes deference to the president in every clause.” Even if judges block some measures, the initial announcement of the policies could still slow migration by signaling to people that the Biden administration had become more serious about border security.

## **Republican claims**

Third, you should still be skeptical of Republican claims that Biden can do whatever he wants about the border. Mike Johnson, the speaker of the House, has suggested as much on several occasions. In truth, while a president has significant flexibility to set immigration policy, that's not the same as complete autonomy. The policies passed by Congress matter, too. The bipartisan bill that Republicans defeated would have paid for, among other things, the hiring of border agents and immigration judges who could have reduced the enormous backlog of cases. These resources would have allowed the government to evaluate asylum applications more quickly — and reject applicants without good claims. Without the additional resources, more migrants will remain in the U.S. for months or years while their cases slowly wind through the courts.

**The bottom line:** Biden does have the power to reduce the very high migration levels of the past three years. And it's true that he has been slow to do so. It's also true that an enduring solution to the country's immigration problems will require Congress to pass legislation.

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## **Black History/White Lies: 5 ways Black people built America**

*OPINION: Part three of theGrio's Black History Month series explores Black people's contributions to the group project called America (Spoiler alert: slavery is not included).*

**MICHAEL HARRIOT**



If you survived the American education system's social studies curriculum, you might believe that Black people have slowly but generously achieved full citizenship into a country that white people created with their own hearts, hands and imaginations. Even the suggestion that America does not belong to white people will elicit consternation or a chuckle. When confronted with the idea that their beloved nation couldn't

exist without Black people, Erasure-Americans might tacitly acknowledge the small part that slavery played in America's origin story, but that's it.

That is not it.

To close out Black History Month, we decided to dispel some of the mythology around white history by explaining exactly how Black people built this country.



## 5. All Lives Matter

Although the United States has a mediocre ranking when it comes to life expectancy and access to health care, America is still the most medically advanced country in the world because Black doctors and scientists made America great at medicine. Their innovations form the foundation of America's public health system and medical research, and the way medicine is practiced around the world are Black

creations. In fact, one could argue that four Black American entities may have saved more lives than all of the white doctors combined.

- **How Charles Drew won World War II:** Whether it is a car accident or cancer treatment, every two seconds, Dr. Charles Drew's process for collecting and storing blood saves an American life. After creating blood banks and the Bloodmobile, Drew served as the head of the Blood for Britain Project and prepared the U.S. for World War II by developing a system to collect, package and store dried blood plasma. Not only did Drew's innovation save the lives of Allied soldiers, British civilians and Nazi concentration camp survivors but, according to the surgeons general of the U.S. Army and Navy, Drew's innovation was "the greatest lifesaver of World War II."
- **Henrietta Lacks saved the world:** You likely know the story of how the nonconsensual harvesting of Henrietta Lacks' cancer cells led to innumerable medical innovations, including hormone replacement, radiation treatment and many other drugs. Black scientists at Tuskegee University created the process of mass-producing the HeLa cells used in Jonas Salk's

polio vaccine. The Nobel Prize-winning scientists at the Human Genome Project used that same process. We wouldn't have a COVID vaccine without HeLa cells. Speaking of vaccines ...

- **The pro-vaxxer who saved America:** If an enslaved man named Onesimus had not saved the city of Boston from smallpox by introducing inoculation to American medicine, George Washington's immunization requirement wouldn't have turned the American Revolution in the Continental Army's favor. Onesimus' gift directly led to the creation of the smallpox vaccine, which caused Thomas Jefferson to support America's first vaccine mandate, which led to smallpox being declared the first infectious disease to be eradicated from earth. During its 3,000 years of existence, smallpox caused an estimated 400 million deaths.
- **The first ride-or-dies:** In 1965, a team of Black delivery drivers in Pittsburgh stopped taking vegetables to needy people in their community and, instead, began providing rides to medical appointments. After taking emergency medical classes, one

member, Nancy Caroline, wrote a textbook on their training, which became the national standard for Emergency Medical Services. The availability of professional emergency medical care and transportation created a significant drop in mortality rates in nearly every statistical category – from heart disease and gunshot wounds to car accidents and pregnancies. And it's all because Black people were America's first paramedics.

#### 4. Democracy



In 1932, 21-year-old minister Tunis Campbell founded an anti-colonialism society and vowed "never to leave this country until every slave was free on American soil." Before the Civil War, he worked alongside abolitionist Frederick Douglass organizing conventions to create a "Black agenda." He helped free slaves. He funded Black schools. You know what? You can just listen to "TheGrio Daily" episode about Campbell.



Even though Campbell's name is not widely known, his words are. In 1868, after white terrorists expelled Campbell and 32 elected Black officials from the Georgia legislature, he traveled to Washington, D.C., to speak to lawmakers about protecting Black people's right to vote. Sen. Charles Sumner was already working to change the Constitution by adding a list of things that people could not do to deprive freedmen of their voting rights. Campbell, however, knew that white people would always find a loophole. Instead, he suggested that they just needed to specify that voting rights "shall not be denied on the basis of race or former servitude."



Cambell's suggestion didn't just form the basis of the 15th Amendment, according to historian Russell Duncan, the Supreme Court may have used his specific wording to declare poll taxes, racial gerrymandering and grandfather clauses unconstitutional. It

gave Hawaiians the right to vote and ended the all-white primary, causing a shift in national politics. If you include the Civil Rights Movement and Black women's contributions to white women's fight for suffrage, one fact becomes abundantly clear.

America was not a democracy until Black people made it one.

### 3. Resistance

Although the First Amendment protects the press, freedom of speech and religion, the "freedom of association" is not specifically guaranteed. While protest is considered a form of speech, the government has historically silenced those brave enough to threaten the power and beliefs of the majority (white people).

Black people changed that.

In 1956, Alabama's attorney general demanded to see the list of members of the secret organization that was tearing the state apart. The secret organization had already crippled buses in Montgomery and was stirring up trouble in Selma. The group refused, so an Alabama judge did what any law-abiding racist would do. After the judge levied a

\$100,000 fine, the organization sued, and on June 30, 1958, the Supreme Court decided *NAACP v. Alabama*. The decision explained that “Freedom to engage in association for the advancement of beliefs and ideas is an inseparable aspect of the ‘liberty’ assured by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.” As the justices saw it, every American had the right to organize without the threat of “economic reprisal, loss of employment, threat of physical coercion, and other manifestations of physical hostility.”

White people were not done.

On March 2, 1961, hundreds of Black college and high school students marched six blocks from a Columbia, S.C., church to the state Capitol to protest racial segregation. They had acquired a permit from the city and marched on the sidewalks and observed every single traffic law. Instead of chanting, they sang gospel hymns, patriotic songs and the national anthem. When police told them to disperse after 45 minutes, they began singing the negro spiritual “I Shall Not Be Moved.” Frustrated by the Black students’ peaceful, lawful, nonthreatening actions, the cops arrested 190 of the students. The protesters were charged with “breach of peace” because, according to the state,

the nonviolent, orderly demonstration could incite violence by *white people* who were opposed to desegregation. The students sued, arguing that they had not violated a single law.



The Supreme Court reversed the convictions on Feb. 25, 1963. *Edwards v. South Carolina* didn’t just affirm the right to peacefully assemble, it forbade states from considering the public’s opinion of the protest, explaining: “The Fourteenth Amendment does not permit a State to make criminal the peaceful expression of unpopular views.” Interestingly enough, if you look at the *Edwards v. South Carolina* case, you may notice there are actually 187 names listed. That’s because three of the students were not old enough to join the lawsuit, including the youngest two arrestees — 15-year-old twins Issac and Rebecca Williams — my aunt and uncle.

These rulings didn't just affect Black Americans. If not for *Edwards v. South Carolina*, red states could outlaw abortion marches, Klan parades or Stop the Steal rallies at the U.S. Capitol (which is also kinda like a Klan parade). *NAACP v. Alabama* is why you have the freedom to join a union or Black Lives Matter — or, yes, the Ku Klux Klan.



Resistance is *not futile*.

## 2. The Black economy

You probably think I'm gonna tell you how slave labor helped America become a global economic superpower.

Nope.

It wasn't just free enslaved labor that transformed this country into an economic juggernaut in one generation. It

was the stuff that Black people taught to *white people*. The European aristocrats that first came to America didn't know how to grow things. Juan Garrido, a free Black man, introduced wheat to the Americas. Before 1616, the Jamestown settlers only exported 2,300 pounds of tobacco, mostly because it was terrible. The strain that became a cash crop was cultivated in Trinidad by enslaved laborers and grown by the Africans who arrived in 1619. By 1630, America was exporting 1.5 million pounds of the Black strain.

By the 1750s, Virginia was the third-largest producer of iron on the planet, based solely on the skills of African blacksmiths and ironworkers. Enslaved blacksmith Stephen Slade invented the bright leaf tobacco strain that fuels the nation's \$107 billion tobacco industry. Captives from the West Africa "rice coast" engineered the dams, levees and tools that gave Charleston's "Carolina Gold" rice growers the highest per capita income in the 13 colonies.

Eli Whitney didn't invent the machine that gave this country its most important agricultural export, Whitney simply mechanized the cotton gin that a Black man had already created. Cyrus McCormick's mechanical reaper was

likely invented by a Black man. To be fair, white slaveowners often claimed credit for things they didn't create because, according to an 1850 U.S. attorney general's opinion, slaves could not technically invent things.



Early America did not have an “agrarian economy.” The white “agrarians” received free land based on enslaving Black people. White people did not plant things. They did not harvest stuff. Black people created the tools, methods and technology to grow and harvest the crops that Black people sowed. And since the *Black people* who picked the cotton, cured the tobacco, milled the rice and worked on the ships that transported the products across the world were not technically American citizens, there was no “American economy.”

It was a *Black economy*.

## 1. Historically Black education

The next time your friendly neighborhood racist tries to explain away inequity by suggesting that Black people could achieve more “if only they valued education,” tell them to answer these three questions:

1. **Why were the first Americans so uneducated?** In the 1600s, 40% of New Englanders were illiterate. If that sounds low, in the 1800s, barely half of Virginians could read. Even by the Civil War, the white literacy rate in the South was abysmally low.
2. **Why were they afraid of literate Black people?** If Black people didn't value education, why would enslaved people risk their lives to learn how to read and write? Why did states pass laws against educating slaves?
3. **Where did illiterate slaves come from?** By the time white people emerged from the Dark Ages to introduce race-based slavery to West Africa, the Islamic Golden Age had spread literacy, medicine and science throughout the continent.

In early America, education was largely a private enterprise only available to wealthy people and whites who lived in urban

areas. As the country grew, some cities and states built public schools that were taxpayer-funded. By 1860, public education was widely available to whites. Some states had segregated schools while states like Massachusetts legislated free public education for all, but it wasn't *guaranteed*.

In 1868, the white supremacist secessionist states had to rewrite their state constitutions to gain admittance back into the Union. In majority-Black South Carolina, the new constitution gave *every man* – not just white, male landowners – the right to vote. They decriminalized poverty, extended women's rights and gave aid to the poor. While other states had similar provisions, historian Michael Boulware Moore notes that South Carolina's majority Black constitutional delegation decided to create something that had never existed in American history:

The "first, free, compulsory, statewide public school system in America."

The constitution split the state into "school districts and created a powerful statewide executive-level office called the "Superintendent of Education." The system was funded by the state and

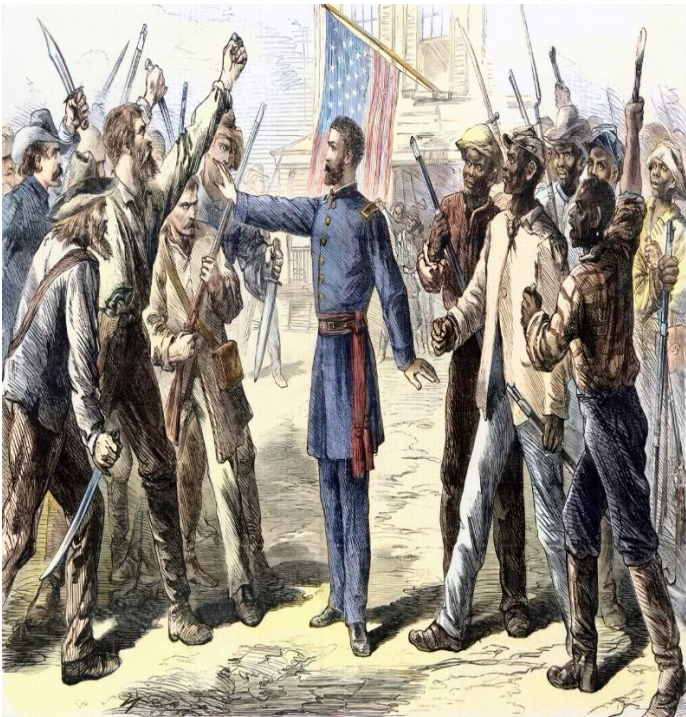
provided for a "liberal and uniform system of free public schools throughout the State." Black elected officials also pushed the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1890, which not only created HBCUs but also funded institutions for poor whites.

Black people *created* the American education system as we know it. It did not exist before we imagined it. We didn't just fight to educate Black Americans, we provided educational opportunities for *all Americans*. But, to be fair, white people also contributed segregation, unequal funding and a school-to-prison pipeline.

If only they valued education.



# Reclaiming History: The Freedmen's Bureau and Reparations in 2024



By Donald Smither

The Freedmen's Bureau, an emblem of resilience and hope in post-Civil War America, holds profound significance in the ongoing quest for reparations for American Freedmen descendants of slavery. Established in 1865, the Bureau was instrumental in providing critical support to newly freed individuals, predominantly American Freedmen, as

they navigated the tumultuous aftermath of emancipation. Today, as the discourse surrounding reparations gains momentum, the historical legacy of the Freedmen's Bureau offers invaluable insights into addressing eligibility issues and fostering equitable solutions for American Freedmen communities.

## The Historical Legacy:

Following the Civil War, millions of formerly enslaved American Freedmen faced daunting challenges as they sought to rebuild their lives in a society fraught with racial prejudice and economic disparity. The Freedmen's Bureau emerged as a beacon of hope, offering essential assistance in the form of education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Moreover, the Bureau played a pivotal role in facilitating the transition from bondage to freedom by providing legal representation, negotiating labor contracts, and overseeing land redistribution.

## Reparations Eligibility:

In the contemporary context, the question of reparations for American Freedmen descendants of slavery remains a pressing issue. Central to this discourse is

the determination of eligibility criteria. Drawing upon the historical records of the Freedmen's Bureau, one approach to addressing this challenge involves tracing lineage back to individuals who received assistance from the Bureau. By utilizing archival documentation and genealogical research, descendants can be identified, thus establishing a basis for reparations eligibility.

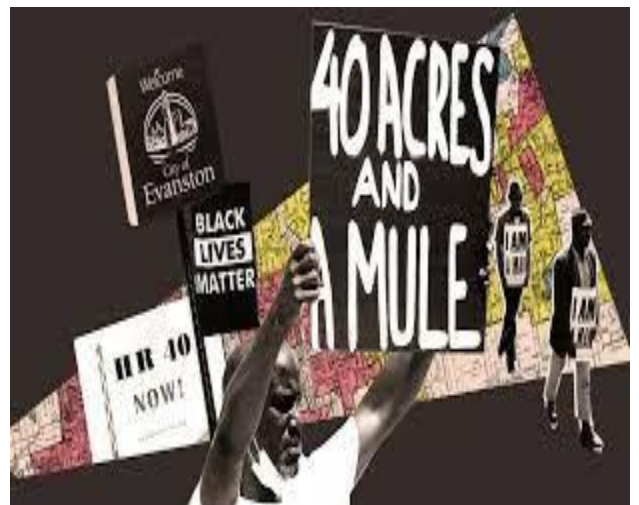
#### Functioning in 2024:

In 2024, the implementation of reparations programs guided by the legacy of the Freedmen's Bureau would involve the establishment of modernized Offices of Freedmen Affairs. These offices would serve as administrative hubs tasked with researching lineage, verifying eligibility, and disbursing reparations funds. Leveraging technological advancements, such as digital archives and genealogical databases, would streamline the identification process while ensuring accuracy and transparency.

Moreover, Offices of Freedmen Affairs would collaborate closely with community stakeholders, including American Freedmen advocacy groups and cultural organizations, to ensure that reparations

programs are tailored to address the specific needs and priorities of American Freedmen communities. From educational initiatives to economic empowerment programs, these offices would play a central role in fostering holistic and sustainable reparative measures.

#### Lobbying State Legislators:



Each state must take proactive steps to establish Offices of Freedmen Affairs and advance reparations initiatives. State legislators hold the key to enacting legislation that allocates resources and mandates the creation of these offices. Through targeted advocacy efforts, including grassroots mobilization, public campaigns, and engagement with elected officials, American Freedmen communities can effectively lobby state

legislators to prioritize the establishment of Offices of Freedmen Affairs.



Furthermore, emphasizing the historical significance of the Freedmen’s Bureau and its enduring relevance in addressing contemporary issues of racial justice can resonate with legislators across party lines. By framing reparations as a moral imperative rooted in the principles of equity and restitution, advocates can build bipartisan support for legislative action.

In conclusion, the history of the Freedmen’s Bureau serves as a guiding light in the pursuit of reparations for American Freedmen descendants of slavery. By leveraging its legacy to inform eligibility criteria and establishing modern Offices of Freedmen Affairs, states can take meaningful strides towards rectifying historical injustices and fostering a more equitable society. Through concerted advocacy efforts and legislative action, the vision of reparative

justice envisioned by the Freedmen’s Bureau can be realized in 2024 and beyond.

