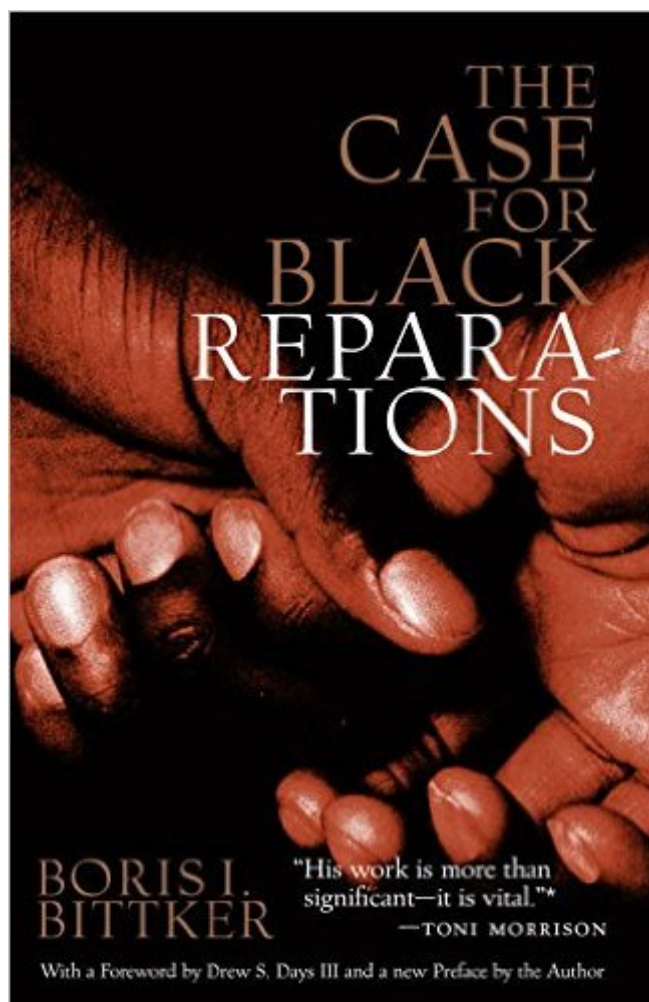


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The Case For Black Reparations



Synopsis

The groundbreaking first book on black reparations, essential reading for the twenty-first century. Originally published in 1972, Boris Bittker's riveting study of America's debt to African-Americans was well ahead of its time. Published by Toni Morrison when she was an editor, the book came from an unlikely source: Bittker was a white professor of law at Yale University who had long been ambivalent about the idea of reparations. Through his research into the history and theory of reparations—namely the development and enforcement of laws designed to compensate groups for injustices imposed on them—he found that it wasn't a 'crazy, far-fetched idea.' In fact, beginning with post-Civil War demands for forty acres and a mule, African-American thinkers have long made the case that compensatory measures are justified not only for the injury of slavery but for the further setbacks of almost a century of Jim Crow laws and forced school and job segregation, measures that effectively blocked African-Americans from enjoying the privileges of citizenship. The publication of important recent books by black scholars like Randall Robinson and the growth of a highly vocal reparations movement in the beginning of this century make this book, long unavailable, essential reading. Bittker carefully illuminates the historical provisions and statutes for legitimate claims to reparations, the national and international precedents for such claims, and most important, the obstacles to a national policy of reparations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"There is neither wealth nor wisdom enough in the world to compensate in money for all the wrongs in history" Bittker quotes the New York Times's response to James Forman's Manifesto demanding

Black Reparations. To which Bittker replies in a counter-question: "Should no wrongs be corrected unless all can be?" The book doesn't view the problem of reparations in a "should we, shouldn't we" perspective. Instead, it views it as how we would provide reparations, from a legal standpoint, and what laws and other cases have set precedents that could guide us in Black Reparations. Many folks focus on slavery when they speak of reparations, which ignores Jim Crow, which ignores segregation, it ignores today's disproportionate poverty levels among African Americans, and the disproportionate amount of funds allocated to White predominant schools and communities. This book clarifies what reparations could look like, which I think an intelligent person will want to know before dismissing the prospect immediately.

This is an important book historically, though probably not the most relevant if you're interested in contemporary arguments for and about black reparations. Written by a Yale law professor less than a decade following passage of the Civil Rights Act, Bittker's radical proposal was to pay reparations to all living black individuals who had received their education in segregated schools. He proposed Section 1983 of the U.S. Code as the legal basis for black reparations. If you're interested in understanding the history of black reparations debates/movements in the US, a must-read. If you're interested in something more general, check out Randall Robinson's *The Debt*, a 2007 volume called *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States*, the book *Reparations: Pro and Con* by Alfred Brophy, *Atonement and Forgiveness* by Roy Brooks...

So dumb and terribly weak arguments.

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