



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on December 26, 2020

NYU Prof, on Reparations, Suggests Investigating White Americans' Taxes for Slavery Ties

Fresh on the heels of a professor suggesting that blacks' votes should be worth twice whites' as a form of [reparations](#), comes news of another bright idea from academia's hallowed halls:

White people should perhaps be forced to submit their taxes to a check for ties to slavery.

Though just hitting the news recently, the idea was proposed during a November 18 *Berkeley Conversations* [panel event entitled](#) "The Future of Freedom: Reparations after 400 Years." Live-streamed, the video description states that "a distinguished panel of scholars [uh-huh] will consider what the question of reparations means for this freedom's fulfillment and what kind of future could follow for African-Americans beyond 400."



Illustration: duncan1890/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images

Panel participants were law professor [Bertrall Ross](#) and assistant geography professor [Jovan Scott Lewis](#), both of UC-Berkeley; law professor [Katherine Franke](#) of Columbia Law School; and associate anthropology professor [Michael Ralph](#) of New York University.

"Each professor provided past examples of reparations given to marginalized people, and said these could be examples of how to pay reparations to African Americans for 400 years of 'systemic and violent racism,'" [reports](#) Campus Reform.

Franke, for instance, "presented the story of the people of the Sea Islands, a string of islands along the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, who, after emancipation in the 1860s, received from the U.S. government titles to thousands of acres of land where they had been enslaved," [related](#) the Berkeley News.

Of course, whether the example is the above, formerly interned Japanese-descent Americans after WWII, or Jewish families compensated by the German government, those given reparations have, in all the cases I'm aware of, been victims *who were still alive*.

With respect to American slavery, however, there's a chasm-like disconnect between the victims/victimizers and those who would be compensated and do the compensating. The slaveholders and slaves are long dead.

They have descendants, of course, but forget about that because this is just a color thing, apparently. Saying that "not just the descendants of enslaved people" but all blacks should get reparations, Franke even rejected DNA tests to determine the, let's say, who's who of slavery.



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"Leaning on science to resolve what are the harder moral questions also leaves too much money on the table and exonerates too many people," she said, calling it "impractical and not the moral thing to do."

Of course, "exonerates" implies that there are people charged with a crime. So who are these Americans walking among us who owned antebellum slaves? Moreover, does Franke also think DNA tests exonerate too many rapists and murderers? She should have a talk with the [Innocence Project](#) people.

This skin-color standard continued, with Michael Ralph suggesting towards the panel's end that white people could be compelled to submit their tax records for examination so that "someone" could determine if they had slavery ties.

"I also think in terms of, you know, the flip side of the question of who is the injured party, who is the victims, is like who must pay for this and who is accountable," said the strikingly articulate Ralph. "And I was thinking, like, as my other panelists were talking, what if there was, like, a financial version of 23 and Me, where every white family had to submit their tax records over the generations and someone could figure out if they were tied/involved with slavery somehow?"

My, and I just thought the average white family kept tax records for the IRS's required three to seven years. Could you imagine someone exclaiming, after rummaging through the attic, "Wow, look, it's our favorite family heirloom: great-great-granddad's first 1040"?!

But Ralph elaborated. "What we'd find, probably, is that so many people are connected to the history of slavery who don't think of themselves or their ancestors as having been slave holders or something, you know?" he continued. "And I think that in the same way that the overwhelming majority of white people in this country have benefited from slavery, the overwhelming majority of black people in this country have suffered somehow and been injured by enslavement and its legacy" (video below).

"Ralph said that he would be okay with going ahead with this proposed research because he feels it's something more widespread than DNA," Campus Reform tells us.

Now, perhaps proving Orwell's observation that some "ideas are so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them," the "common people" expressing common sense in the comments sections weren't impressed with the "distinguished panel of scholars."

For example, an apparently puzzled poster under the Campus Reform piece wrote, "I tell 'em, good luck proving that my great-grandparents owned slaves when US federal income tax was ratified on February 3, 1913." (One can only guess that, if there is method to Ralph's madness, he's thinking that certain Americans might have profited off companies that themselves benefited from slavery.)

A commenter under the YouTube video embedded above exclaimed, "Wow. They'll let anyone in their cult be a professor at nyu." Another quipped, "So if you're half black then does your white half have to pay your black half reparations?"

And the racialism among the panelists is profound. Ralph singles out whites for (implausible) tax scrutiny, but does he even know that literally thousands of blacks and thousands of American Indians in America owned slaves? Moreover, given that only a minority of Southern whites were slaveholders and that many whites' ancestors (mine, for example) arrived on these shores post-1865, relatively few whites today are descended from slave-owners.

Yet the reparations crowd's racial guilt-and-benefits system would put an onus on all whites, including those with no slaver ancestors. It would also give "compensation" to people such as vice-president-



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suspect Kamala Harris — who claims to be black and, by her father’s admission, had an ancestor who owned slaves.

Of course, all this obscures the reality that we don’t punish people for their fathers’ sins and that no American today has ever been a slave or slave owner (except perhaps for a few Third World immigrants).

If this matter is going to be assessed racially, however, and there can be collective blame, there also can be collective credit. We should thus then note that whites might not have been the first to practice slavery.

But they sure were the first to end it.

That may not be taught at NYU. But what is — which you’ve now had a taste of — can be had for the paltry sum of [\\$76,614 a year](#), do note.

Really, though, the Berkeley panel is a testimonial as to the dangers of idle minds — and to how low “higher education” has sunk.



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