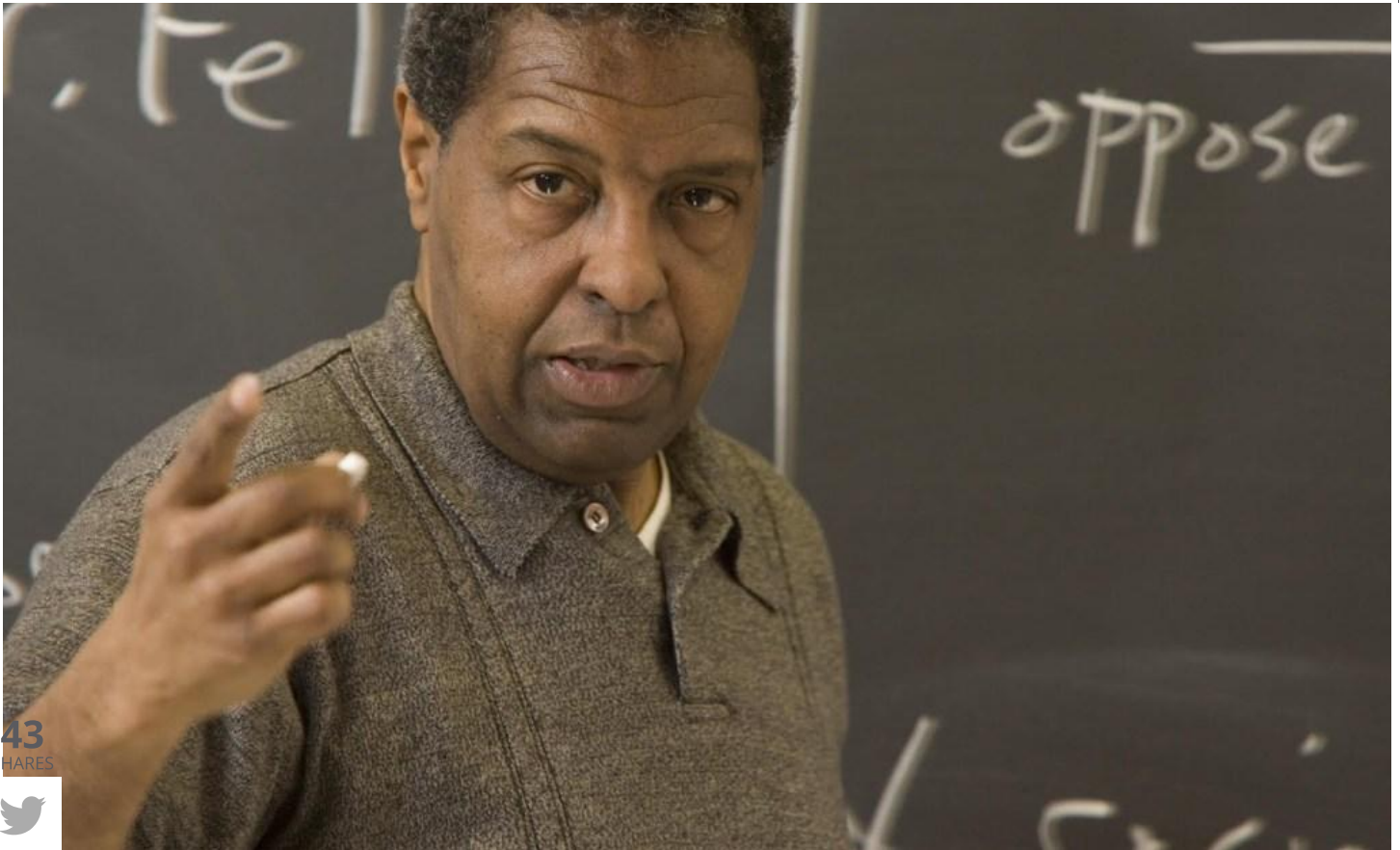


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f The "Ways & Means" podcast recently looked at slave reparations in an interview with reparations activist Duke University Professor Sandy Darity.



The "[Ways & Means](#)" podcast recently looked at slave reparations. In an interview with economist and [reparations](#) activist Duke University Professor [Sandy Darity](#), the episode, "S5E1 Reparations: How it Could Happen," looked at ways reparations for Black Native people could actually happen.

"Ways & Means" is hosted by Emily Hanford and is produced by the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University.

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Here are 10 takeaways from the episode, which first aired Feb. 1, 2020.



GHOGH with Jamarlin Martin

Episode 69: Was Obama The First Political Anti-Christ T...

Jamarlin goes solo to unpack the question: Was Barack Obama the first political anti-Christ to rise in Black America?

00:00:00



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✉ pack the question: Was Barack Obama the first political anti-Christ to rise in Black America?

Wealth gap traces back to slavery

The wealth gap continues to grow. African Americans account for 13 percent of the national population but hold only 3 percent of national wealth and the reasons why go way back.

Darity argues the racial wealth gap can be traced to a series of policies that denied economic opportunity to African Americans and provided opportunities to many white Americans. "The idea is that wealth begets wealth — that wealth is something that is acquired cumulatively. And so you can either get on the path of accumulation or you can be on the path of decumulation," he said.

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One example of a policy that drove the wealth gap, according to Darity, is when America reversed General William T. Sherman's promise to set aside 400,000 acres of confiscated Confederate land for free slaves (aka, 40 acres and a mule). This exclusion kept many freed slaves from benefiting from the Homestead Act, which provided land ownership to more than 1.6 million white families compared to only 4,000-to-5,000 Black Americans.

Homestead Act not for all

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Homestead Act was signed into law by President Lincoln in 1862. White immigrants to the in the late 19th century, as well as landless southerners, were given substantial tracts of land in the western part of the country, typically up to about 160 acres of land, Darity said. "They essentially received free equity. And so that was a tremendous starting point for building wealth or accumulating wealth.

"Approximately 45 million white Americans today are folks who were beneficiaries or descendants of the recipients of the Homestead Act land grants," said Darity, citing historian Keri Leigh Merritt. Freed Black people were left out.

A plan for reparations

Darity has created a team called the Reparations Planning Committee whose focus is to "flesh out the details of how you might actually execute a reparations program." On the team are an economic historian and a genealogist who specializes in African-American history among other

fully justified and morally required,” said Darity. “The fact that we may still be in a moment where the odds of it occurring appear to be low, that’s not a reason to not be engaged in the struggle to make it happen.”

Darity changed his mind about reparations

Initially, Darity said he never believed that slave reparations could happen. That was until he was asked to write the foreword to a book about reparations some 30 years ago. Doing the forward changed his mind and he is now one of the foremost experts on reparations. He provided testimony to the [Congressional hearing](#) on reparations on Juneteenth, 2019.

Bill Exclusion

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Continuously, Black people have been denied opportunities that lead to wealth building. Another example is the GI Bill, a federal program launched following World War II to help returning veterans. Under the GI Bill, the government paid for school bills up to \$500 annually, and living expenses of \$50 a month (or \$75 a month if there were dependents). The GI Bill also helped returning vets purchase homes by guaranteeing low-cost loans.

“Individual states had a great deal of discretion over whom would get the benefits and also how much the benefits would be. And I believe there is an estimate that in the state of Mississippi, there were only two Black veterans who received benefits from the G.I. Bill,” said Darity.

Reparations Payment Plan

According to Darity, as the government has done with other groups, the descendants of slaves can be paid directly. “Whether we’re talking about the German reparation payments to victims of the Holocaust, we’re talking about the payments the U.S. government made to Japanese

direct payments," he pointed out.

How Much Money?

"I've tended increasingly to think that the measure of the funds should be dictated by the amount that would be required to eliminate racial wealth differences in the United States. That amounts at least to something in the vicinity of 10 to 12 trillion dollars," Darity said.

Criticism Of Reparations

Darity said he realizes there is a lot of criticism about slave reparations. He said: "Well, I think

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What takes away self-reliance is the lack of resources that permit you to fully participate in the

🐦 ety. And so that's what we need to correct. It's also interesting, I think, when people have

f n subjected to subjected to harms, traumas, and the like, we don't normally say that the way

which you address that is by ignoring it. We usually insist that the perpetrators in some way

✉ mpt to make the situation right. It's not best handled by saying, 'Well, you know, just get over

it.'"

Has It Been Too Long For Reparations

The question that continually comes up in regard to slave reparations is, was it too long ago?

"So, I have two responses. One is that I don't think of this as a matter of personal or individual guilt. I think of this as a matter of national responsibility. And the culpable party is the federal

government, not any particular individual organization, institution, or person. But the second

thing is, I think that kind of comment is predicated on the view that the case for Black

reparations is tied exclusively to slavery, which people say happened so long ago. There is an

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argument that could be made that if you think about this from a generational perspective, it

where we have mass incarceration, police executions of unarmed Blacks, sustained economic discrimination. And then, of course, the thing that I've been talking about a lot is this enormous wealth disparity," Darity said.

Why Darity Continues To Fight For Slave Reparations

Darity said he's not going to give up the fight for slave reparations. "You know, if somebody was anti-slavery in 1815 and had taken the position that, well, there's no point in fighting slavery because it's never going to end then you would not have had the full development of an abolition movement. So similarly, since I think reparations for Black American descendants of slavery in the United States is something that is fully justified and morally required, the fact that may still be in a moment where the odds of it occurring appear to be low, that's not a reason not to be engaged in the struggle to make it happen," Darity said.

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