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Long Overdue: The Politics of Racial Reparations

Charles P. Henry

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Ever since the unfulfilled promise of “forty acres and a mule,” America has consistently failed to confront the issue of racial injustice. Exploring why America has failed to compensate Black Americans for the wrongs of slavery, **Long Overdue** provides a history of the racial reparations movement and shows why it is an idea whose time has come.

Martin Luther King, Jr., remarked in his “I Have a Dream” speech that America has given Black citizens a “bad check” marked “insufficient funds.” Yet apart from a few Black nationalists, the call for reparations has been peripheral to Black policy demands. Charles P. Henry examines Americans’unwillingness to confront this economic injustice, and crafts a skillful moral, political, economic, and historical argument for African American reparations, focusing on successful political cases.

In the wake of recent successes in South Africa and New Zealand, new models for reparations have recently found traction in a number of American cities and states, from Dallas to Baltimore and Virginia to California. By looking at other dispossessed groups — Native Americans, Holocaust survivors, and Japanese internment victims in the 1940s — Henry shows how some groups have won the fight for reparations.

As Hurricane Katrina made apparent, the legacy of racial segregation and economic disadvantage is never far below the surface in America. **Long Overdue** provides an up-to-date survey of the political and legislative efforts that are now breaking the surface to move reparations into the heart of our national discussion about race.

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