ISSUE BRIEF

PUBLIC HEALTH AND REPARATIONS FOR STATE VIOLENCE

Introduction

This issue brief examines reparations for state violence with a focus on police violence. Whether policing is viewed as its own social determinant of health (SDOH) or not, police violence is a form of state violence that warrants reparations. It can cause death as well as significantly harm the health of individuals directly subjected to violence, their family members, and communities in ways that can span generations. When the state is the agent of harm, repair can be challenging because the state is also being called on to create the conditions for repair. Nonetheless, reparations have the power to create the conditions for healing and justice, in part because it is a form of repair that centers victims' needs and holds the state accountable for ensuring the end of such structural violence. It is not only the health impacts that make reparations relevant to public health advocates. It is also the reality that many work for the state and, therefore, governmental entities, such as health departments must examine how they may foster state violence. But, just as important, providing reparations aligns with public health goals including to create healthy, thriving communities, and eliminate structurally driven health disparities.

The case for reparations in the U.S. is contentious. Moreover, we are living in a time when the federal government and the U.S. Supreme Court are taking direct action to suppress and eradicate governmental use of race classifications if doing so results in a benefit to underrepresented people of color.[1] This legal backdrop is important because state violence is disproportionately, although not exclusively, directed against certain populations of color. But to abandon reparations work because it contains a racial justice component is to abandon the hundreds of public health commitments to address the public health crisis of racism—commitments made after one of the most publicly shared violent police murders in recent history.[2] As a society, not only have we continued to witness more of the same but there has been an increase in public acts of state violence in the name of immigration enforcement. As such, it is a public health problem that has generally worsened, not improved.

Despite the current atmosphere there is cause for hope that reparations for state violence are achievable. State support for reparations does exist. California recently released a comprehensive report on reparations for slavery.[3] In some jurisdictions local power may be a source for advancing this work. In fact, this resource builds on legal technical assistance (TA) provided to members of The Network's Racial Health Equity Legal and Policy Cohort. The TA that facilitated this resource involved working closely with a non-profit organization and local health department to assess local truth commissions and reparation actions for state violence.[4] These and other examples show that reparations work has continued at state and local levels.

This issue brief starts with an overview of how to define reparations to create mutual understanding on what reparations entail. It next examines health impacts of state violence to demonstrate how reparations are squarely a core public health issue. It then assesses the problem of limited data and transparency on police violence along with some implications for fact finding and truth telling in the context of reparations.

The last section concludes with tables that provides practical guidance on what reparations for police violence look like in practice, focusing primarily on the local level. It examines four reparations actions: (1) providing direct financial compensation; (2) funding services; (3) funding and providing technical support for education, art, and memorials; (4) and reviewing policies and practices that enabled state violence to occur.[5] Additionally, each table examines why the reparations action matters as well as opportunities and barriers related to the specific action. This is to help provide insights to guide discussion on process and implementation of the reparation action at issue.

Defining Reparations

The U.S. lacks a single definition of reparations. In contrast, international human rights frameworks have developed a comprehensive concept of reparations. In fact, when the California legislature directed the creation of a reparations report "for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States" it required that recommendations must demonstrate how they satisfy international human rights reparations standards.[6] Drawing on these frameworks this section examines some of the key components of reparations.[7] It demonstrate how reparations are distinct from general public health programs to benefit communities without redress for specific harms against identified individuals or groups.

Under international human rights frameworks reparations contain at least five distinct elements. Reparations must include: (1) restitution—which involves restoring victims to the circumstances they were in before the harms occurred or a close approximation; (2) compensation—for material damages, such as actual and future lost earnings, as well as for moral damages, and any physical or mental harms; (3) rehabilitation—by providing medical, legal, and other services that are "'specific to the victim'" which can include multiple services from correcting criminal convictions to job training; (4) satisfaction—which involves restoring victims' dignity through public apologies, memorials, or other public acknowledgement of truths in ways that do not further harm victims and that reflect the state's "acknowledgement of responsibility and fault;" and (5) guarantees of non-repetition—which requires large-scale reforms such as implementing mechanisms to protect certain groups (e.g., journalists and medical providers) educating other sectors (e.g., law enforcement and the military), and "reviewing and reforming laws contributing to or allowing gross violations of international human rights law."[8]

International human rights frameworks answer other important questions, such as:

- **What type of actions are eligible for reparations?** Reparations can include acts or omissions by the state. For example, when the federal government sat idly by while observing state police assaulting and harassing civil rights activists attempting to register to vote, both constituted reparation eligible actions.[9]

- **Who is the "state" for purposes of reparations?** This generally refers to governmental actors but may include non-governmental actors acting under the formal or informal authority of the law (e.g., citizen organized militia groups or the Ku Klux Klan). The Tulsa Massacre of 1921 is illustrative. Tulsa police coordinated with the National guard and "'deputized hundreds of white residents" as they, along with thousands of white residents, violently attacked a thriving Black business district in Greenwood.[10] Here, the "state" includes the police, the National guard, and the white residents (deputized or not) who participated in the massacre.

- **Who is eligible for reparations?** In the international context the concept of victim is construed broadly without distinction between direct and indirect victims, thus, family members of individuals subject to police violence can be eligible for reparations. Victims may also be persons collectively harmed as members of a targeted group.[11]

- **What do reparations look like?** Because by definition reparations are multi-faceted, they can take a variety of forms such as direct financial compensation "granting access to land, housing, health care, or education" as well as "apologies, memorials, and commemorations."[12]

The concept of reparations is robust in the international human rights context and implementation requires understanding this framework. Even though the U.S., generally tends to reject the language of human rights in the domestic context, reparations are a part of U.S. history. In fact, experts have compiled an extensive historical timeline of reparations payments in the U.S. from 1773, judicially or legislatively implemented, by federal, state, and local governments, as well as by religious institutions, universities, corporations, and communities.[13] Thus, reparations in some form—more loosely construed than what is described above—are not new. Knowing this history can help build support for reparations and dispel opposition based on misinformation about this history.

Health Impacts of State Violence in the United States

Police violence is typically justified by the state's stated interests in maintaining order and safety. What constitutes police violence should be broadly construed because numerous actions or in-actions can cause harm or death. It can manifest as lethal (deadly) or non-lethal physical and psychological violence. Examples include spraying tear gas into crowds or in people's eyes, beating people with police batons, punching, kicking, slamming a person's head or body into the ground, pulling a person's hair, putting an individual into a chokehold, forcing a person into a position that causes suffocation, and shootings.[14] Police violence also includes refusing to provide aid or medication to a person in medical crisis, which can cause death, distress, or other harms.[15] It can encompass unethical technological surveillance that contributes to "'racialized policing'" by using "unchecked technological experiments on human subjects," to unjustifiably surveille Black and Hispanic communities which also facilitates higher rates of police interactions in these communities.[16] Many of these actions, reflect every day state violence—which is the most ignored form of violence when it comes to reparations for police violence. Instead, in the U.S. reparations have focused on distinct time limited atrocities, such as the Tulsa Massacre, usually decades after the violence occurred.

> "Many immigrants and people of color were so terrorized by the government's racial profiling, arbitrary arrests, and violence that they restricted their movement or completely sheltered in their homes for weeks or months. As a result, people delayed or went without health care, including prenatal and postnatal care and treatment for chronic conditions."
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> *Human Rights Watch, A Manufactured Crisis: Minnesota Communities Terrorized by the Federal Government (June 18, 2026)*

Police violence also includes immigration enforcement, which is an exercise of state power. Immigration-related encounters have recently become public displays of violent, dehumanizing, and dangerous actions under the guise of immigration enforcement. Physicians for Human Rights and the Human Rights Center at Berkely University documented misuse of crowd control weapons and found waves of misuse that generally corresponded to cities recently targeted for immigration "enforcement" which caused: "burns, bruising, and abrasions to contusions, lacerations, serious factures, as well as ocular and brain injuries" and other serious injuries.[17] Justice Sotomayor describes the repeated pattern of unwarranted physical and psychological terror in her dissent to Supreme Court's 2025 order in *Noem v. Perdomo* when discussing the federal government's Operation at Large's race-based immigration actions that targeted

Latinos in L.A. Citing the district court record, she describes "'nearly a dozen masked agents with guns [who] 'jumped out of . . . cars' at a Home Depot, and began 'chasing' and 'tackl[ing]' Latino day laborers without 'identify[ing] themselves as ICE or police, ask[ing] questions, or say[ing] anything else.'" Similarly, "agents pulled up in four unmarked cars to a bus stop in Pasadena; 'the doors opened and men in masks with guns started running at' three Latino men who were having their morning coffee, waiting to be picked up for work."[18] These tactics are indicative of the psychological terror that state violence can inflict.[19]

State violence in the form of policing perpetuates mental health inequities for individuals and communities that are over policed. An assessment of police violence identified the nature of the violence (state sanctioned), the pervasiveness of police, and the positive social standing of police which can lead to stigmatization of victims as some of the factors that contribute to these impacts.[20] One study found that the type of police violence an individual is subjected to can also shape its mental health impacts which can range from psychological distress, suicide ideation, and suicide attempts.[21] One need not be a direct victim of police violence to experience increases in poor mental health days.[22]

Public health departments and other governmental organizations are state agents, and they must be a part of the process of repair.

Police violence also impacts health by creating economic instability, a SDOH.[23] This includes by generating health care costs to address its physical and psychological harms. This is especially worrisome as policing has become more aggressive towards some groups at the same time when many people have lost health insurance.[24] For instance, refugees and asylees will soon lose eligibility for Medicaid as aggressive policing of immigrants (or perceived immigrants) has become more widespread.[25] Such examples underscore the intersectional nature of discriminatory state violence and its impacts on health.

People who are arrested also face significant costs regardless of innocence including legal fees (e.g. bail, attorneys fees, and record expungement), medical bills, and lost employment opportunities.[26] The UCLA surveyed the cost of policing in Louisianna and concluded that policing contributes to economic insecurity—noting "[a]fter an arrest, legally innocent people in Louisiana must pay an average of $24,000 in cash bail or else remain in jail without having been convicted of a crime."[27] This means less money for meeting basic needs like food, housing, and transportation—all of which are SDOHs shaped by structural racism and that impact the very individuals who are over policed and brutalized. These are only a few examples of the costs of being a victim of police violence, but they illustrate how the financial harms of policing are deeply interlinked with health.

The health impacts of police violence become grimmer when considering disparities in fatalities. People of color, including Black and Hispanic people are killed at disproportionate rates by the police relative to White people and their population size.[28] People with a mental illness or who are experiencing a mental crisis are also vulnerable to fatal police shootings.[29] Similarly Native American and Alaska Native people face higher risks. One study concluded that Native American and Alaska Native people are killed by police at disproportionate rates in and around reservations.[30] Black women are more likely to be killed by the police relative to other women.[31] Moreover, it is women who are also often left to fill the gaps of caretaking, grief support, and advocacy created in the aftermath of state backed police violence.[32] These differences show that factors like race, political status, gender, and disability status influence who will be killed by the police.

This section has identified some uneven impacts of police violence that establish that state violence is an intersectional public health issue. Police violence erodes the health of its victims (or ends their lives), and its health impacts reverberate out to communities—even to people who will never meet, but who see themselves in victims' experiences. As a public health issue, all remedies must be on the table including reparations. Public health departments and other governmental organizations are state agents, and they must be a part of the process of repair.

State Violence: Transparency, Truth, and Trust

The U.S. does not have a uniform system for tracking police violence. The Federal National Use of Force Registry is "open to all federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and investigative agencies" but reporting is voluntary, and only limited data is released to the public.[33] Police actions that cause a person's death are more commonly tracked than other forms of police violence, but primarily by non-state actors.[34] Despite calls for police reforms, transparency is waning. The current administration issued an executive order to rollback prior executive actions to create more transparency around police misconduct.[35] Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has agreed to start wearing body cameras with the condition that the director of ICE may restrict public release of footage "'unless it is in the best interests of the agency'"—a standard that undercuts the point of body cameras which is to provide a public recording of the state's actions.[36]

Movement away from transparency has also impacted the non-governmental sector, with at least one non-state actor who has been a pivotal source of information pulling back from tracking fatal police shootings.[37] Knowledge of police violence comes from private individuals using their cell phones—and even then governments have tried to enact laws to criminalize these activities.[38] It is no wonder that police violence has caught the attention and concern of international human rights bodies that monitor this type of abuse of state power.[39]

Lack of transparency and data is itself harmful because it allows state abuses to continue on in private. But it also speaks to at least one important aspect of reparations: eligibility. Given the lack of transparency, reparations proposals should make eligibility for reparations for police violence easy not burdensome. This is similar to what others have argued with respect to reparations for slavery: eligibility requirements should be easy as it is the state's lack of accountability, documentation, and transparency that creates barriers to establishing eligibility.[40]

It is also important to acknowledge that state actors are not homogenous, and state, local, and Tribal governments can play a role in increasing transparency. One governmental tool is to create official forums for people to tell their truths and the stories of what happened to loved ones who have been killed and cannot share their experience. Truth telling can happen at the local level. Problems that governments must solve are how to build trust so that these forums are not just performative but allow for open ongoing dialogues that are supportive of victims? Why show up if your experience is that the government is often the wrongdoer? Why show up when you face potential further targeting and victimization by the state? Why think that the state is the solution when it has been the agent of harm?

While the lack of state transparency calls for other avenues of truth collecting, calling on victims to fill the gaps can be transformative but also disappointing and burdensome on victims. In assessing prior endeavors by Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs), Inga Laurent argues that ethical components of official truth telling forums require informed consent from victims. This includes sharing information on process, any limits on expected outcomes, and on what resource will be available during truth telling initiatives.[41] She cautions that victims (survivors) often reasonably expect material support when the show up and that TRCs should, "stop expecting something for nothing."[42] TRCs should view "the process of truth telling as an exchange" in which victims share their truth and receive aid, or, if that is not possible, are at minimum fully informed of this before deciding to participate.[43]

Moreover, the state must also resist the tendency to smooth over disagreement and push reconciliation in ways that can disallow space for continued disagreements—instead they should create forums in which victims can choose not to forgive perpetrators.[44] Truth telling can be a powerful tool for transparency but requires nuance and thoughtfulness. These represent only a few considerations that governments should be mindful of. Having clarity on successes and setbacks can help governmental entities create better victim centered processes for answering what might initially seem like a very simple question: what happened?

Lastly, the U.S. legal system makes it difficult to establish that police have acted unlawfully. As such, what constitutes police violence should be construed broadly to encompass actions beyond what a court or investigatory body finds to be excessive or unlawful.[45] Legal "innocence," as we have witnessed too many times in the age of social media through the eyes of witness cell phone footage, does not determine whether the experience of victims of police violence constitutes unwarranted state violence. As such legal innocence, should not be the standard for whether reparations are warranted. Police violence is state violence—and in the U.S. it is everyday discriminatory policing that receives the least attention by the state, perhaps because it has become so normalized.

Tables: Reparation Actions Addressing State Violence

Below are tables that address four types of reparations: compensation; services; public art and memorials; and structural reforms of policies and practices that foster state violence. Each contains select examples of reparations that focus primarily, but not exclusively, on local actions and legislatively enacted reparations. In cases where a reparation document (e.g., legislation, order, or a report) contains multiple reparation recommendations, the table lists only the portion applicable to the specific reparation action that is the subject of the table. This helps to focus on why the specific reparation matters, opportunities and barriers connected to that reparation action, as well as examples of the reparation in practice.

REPARATION: Provide Direct Financial Compensation to Survivors of State Violence
WHY IT MATTERS: Police violence contributes to economic instability by creating legal, medical, and other expenses for victims who experience physical, emotional, financial and other harms. It is clear that police violence directly impacts victims' health and that these impacts ripple out to adversely impact multiple SDOHs. As such, being a victim of police violence carries significant costs. Direct financial compensation speaks directly to restitution as well as the compensation elements of reparations.
OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS: Too many people are one unexpected bill away from financial ruin including homelessness.[46] Victims of police violence can incur multiple unexpected healthcare and other costs. Direct financial compensation helps repair by putting the costs of harm where it belongs—with the state, not its victims. Potential barriers are that this form of compensation appears to be rare in the U.S. Often when provided it has been for distinct time-limited egregious acts of violence as opposed to systemic ongoing police violence. Moreover, who is a "victim" for purposes of reparations is often defined very narrowly by governments in the U.S. The first two examples illustrate this approach. The third example compensates victims of "everyday" police violence; although not governmental reparations it illustrates a compensation and eligibility structure that addresses some of these barriers.
Reparations for Burge Torture Victims Ordinance (2015): Chicago ordinance establishing a reparations fund for specific individuals tortured by the police, by and under Captain Burg, that provides up to $100,000 in financial reparations from a $5.5 million fund. Required potential victims to establish a credible claim to receive compensation.
Rosewood Massacre Compensation, Florida (1994): State law that provided up to $150,000 in direct compensation to survivors of the 1923 Rosewood Massacre but allowed only six months for victims to be identified.
Truth & Reconciliation Pilot (2023): A pilot program by the ACLU of Louisiana that provided a monthly guaranteed income of $1000 a year plus $5,000 to police violence victims in Louisiana who did not receive court restitution.

REPARATION: Fund Services to Survivors of State Violence

WHY IT MATTERS: Given the multiple harms generated by police violence, state funded services are critical to repair. Scholarships, job training, legal aid to correct erroneous criminal histories and health services including culturally appropriate healing modalities are all examples of the kind of support that victims may require to be made whole, or as close to possible as restitution requires. It also speaks directly to rehabilitation which "seeks to mend the harm suffered, usually through medical and psychological care as well as legal or social services" related to the SDOH.[47]

OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS: This provides governments with an opportunity to create processes that align with victims' priorities and provide supportive services in ways that can create broad benefits for individuals and populations who disproportionately experience police violence. It acknowledges the expansive nature of harms generated by police violence and the numerous services that may be needed for repair. Governments, however, may create unnecessary barriers and new harms by prioritizing their own agendas in funding services, such as relying on their own budgetary priorities to determine what services will be provide.[48] Reparations require governments to be accountable to victims which means providing services that are responsive to victims' expressed needs and priorities. Governments must also be transparent about what is feasible early on and throughout the process, so that victims are fully informed of what options are actually viable.

Tulsa City Council Resolution (2021): Established a community process for examining reconciliation with respect to the 1921 Tulsa Massacre, which led to the creation of a report "Beyond Apology: A Series of Community Conversations Rooted in Education and Repair and Reparation in Tulsa, OK," that ranked community priorities: education, financial compensation, community/economic development, housing/home ownership, land, health/wellness, systems change, and cultural identity.

Chicago "Resolution" (2015): Includes commitments to providing services and stating an intent to offer Burge victims and certain family members free tuition at city colleges, job training, specialized counseling for substance use, and counseling; the resolution also supported prioritizing victims' access to food assistance, housing, transportation and other services.[49]

City and County of San Francisco Office of the District Attorney, Policy Directive (2020): Created a discretionary fund covering funeral, medical, and mental health costs for victims, loved ones, and witnesses of police violence in San Francisco.[50]

REPARATION: Fund and Provide Technical Support for Education, Art, and Public Memorials

WHY IT MATTERS: Public acknowledgement of the harms of police violence can facilitate healing for victims if it centers victims' voices. Funding community-centered activists, advocates, and artists to provide technical assistance can help facilitate equity in decision making such as who, what, when, where, and how harms are remembered. The state's public acknowledgement of harms of policing can be a powerful tool for de-stigmatizing victims of police violence as education, art, and memorials create opportunities for dialogue and reflection on the abuse of state power. These actions speak to the victim satisfaction and non-repetition elements of reparations.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS: These activities are complex, but meaningful. For instance, some have pointed to potential benefits of memorials that serve a dual purpose of creating space for healing and civic engagement.[51] Similarly, others have demonstrated the positive impacts of memorials that activate and engage viewers, rather than making them passive viewers of an already given meaning.[52] However, governments can cause further harm by imposing their own priorities on aspects like design, location, and who should be remembered.[53] Governments are also more likely to prefer large memorials that convey neutrality or unity compared to "[c]ivil society groups [who] are often

behind local, community-based projects rooted in the experiences of specific people and places."[54] This is why funding the latter is important: it can help with bringing in voices that challenge official narratives.[55]

Chicago "Resolution" (2015): A local government ordinance that committed to building "a permanent memorial for Burge victims" in partnership with a non-profit formed by survivors and advocates. The memorial is "the first state sponsored monument" in the U.S. "to commemorate law enforcement violence," and will include a list with the names of Burge torture victims, messages written by family members and surviving victims, and spaces for healing and civic engagement.[56]

Manzanar Historical Site (H.R. 543) (1992): A memorial created by the U.S. federal government in one of the places where Japanese people were forcibly interned by the State during World War II. It also illustrates how shifts in government can turn reparative actions into further state harms: the federal government recently placed QR codes here and at other sites calling on the public to help re-write history by reporting memorials that "disparage Americans past."[57] Such actions, along with public pushback and legal challenges, underscore the ongoing nature of memorialization and the type of tensions created by governments with victims and the public.[58]

Monument Quilt (U.S. & Mexico): A large-scale moving art project created by a collective of artists and people impacted by sexual and intimate partner violence with thousands of quilted squares that allowed individuals to express their experiences in their own words. The final showing of the complete quilt was at the National Mall spread out to spell "*No Estás Solx" and "You Are Not Alone"* during *a* multi-day of healing event.[59] It shows the unique skills of non-governmental entities to include victims in creative expression through multiple points of engagement.[60]

REPARATION: Review Policies and Practices that Enabled State Violence to Occur

WHY IT MATTERS: In the U.S., reparations for police violence tend to occur for distinct events (e.g., Burge torture victims) and often decades later. However, the systemic and disparate impacts of everyday policing reveal that it is an unjust use of state sanctioned violence that warrants reparations. The expansive health harms that result from this form of violence show the need for a public health approach that also ensures public health agencies are part of the solution, not the problem. Public health departments can, at minimum, examine their own policies and practices, which align with their mission to support healthy communities and populations. Community-driven policy reforms must be at the heart of these activities. Such actions speak to non-repetition and victim satisfaction.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS: There is a real opportunity to ensure that public health priorities are responsive to how state violence impacts health and health equity. Governmental organizations, like public health departments, can examine how their policies and practices contribute to these harms, such as supporting criminal penalties during COVID-19 that police disproportionately wielded against people of color or increasing police contacts by partnering with police for crisis response.[61] One challenge is that state violence can involve multiple actors, e.g., federal, state, local, and Tribal police, and even civilians. But local government agencies and others are not powerless. Even small reforms can shift power and move the needle on reparations by eliminating policies and practices that facilitate state violence. For members of some populations, reducing police contacts may be the difference between life and death. Agencies must not neglect their duty to repair harms they contribute to because the problem is bigger than their scope of power: they must act within their power.

City of Cleveland Health and Equity Assessment: An equity assessment tool that is designed to be a short, easy worksheet to measure health equity impacts of reforms to statutes, regulations, ordinances, organizational policies, and other practices. Public health agencies can use this tool to assess policies that may contribute to state violence. Examining and reforming internal policies and practices that facilitate state violence is a space in which agencies can exercise some control.

The California Reparations Report (2023): Focused on reparations for slavery in the U.S., this report contains relevant law and policy reforms to reduce the harms rooted in racially biased policing (e.g., ending cash bail, reimbursing individuals who are acquitted or exonerated, decriminalizing public disorder offenses, and ending the school to prison pipeline).[62] It can help public health entities identify policies and practices that contribute to state violence, connect the dots on health-centered work they may already be doing, and make the case for reparations.

Maryland Lynching and Truth and Reconciliation Commission: The first state commission to investigate lynchings of African Americans. It provides insight into how white mob violence constituted a form of state violence. The commission's report makes the case for why the state "must address the institutional structures and state actors who enabled, encouraged, or failed to prevent these murders . . . [including] law enforcement agencies, courts, [and] local governments" that endure today who, at best, did nothing.[63] It contains numerous reparation recommendations that provide insight into how governments collectively create state harms, and processes for how localities may engage in targeted reforms of policies and practices.

CONCLUSION

Reparations for state-violence rooted in policing are essential for advancing justice, health, and ending long-standing health disparities. Reparations are one mechanism in which localities can begin to shift from punitive systems toward healing approaches that are driven by victims' needs. Reparations in various forms have already been implemented in the U.S. It is time to build on these models, dismantle structures that perpetuate harm, and invest in the well-being of victims impacted by state violence. Repair is not a one-time act, but a sustained commitment to justice. Now is the time to imagine, create, and build something better. The U.S. is experiencing one of the greatest onslaughts of police violence in recent history, and not everyone is impacted equally. As the state becomes more embolden to enact violence publicly, advocates must also become more embolden to push towards the conditions that support repair.[64] State violence and repair have long been a part of our history—and health is at the center of both. As such, reparations work lies squarely within the mandate of public health professionals and other health advocates to protect the publics' health.

This document was developed by April Shaw Ph.D., J.D., Deputy Director, Health Equity, Network for Public Health Law with assistance from Kaylee Romilus, Georgia State University College of Law (class of 2026), former Network Health Equity Law Clerk. The Network promotes public health and health equity through non-partisan educational resources and technical assistance. These materials provided are provided solely for educational purposes and do not constitute legal advice. The Network's provision of these materials does not create an attorney-client relationship with you or any other person and is subject to the Network's Disclaimer.

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[1] *Compare* Exec. Order No. 14398 Fed. Reg. 16147 (March 26, 2026) (targeting disparate impacts of "racially discriminatory DEI activities" in federal contracting) *with* Exec. Order No. 14281 Fed. Reg. 17537 (April 23, 2025) (deprioritizing disparate impact liability characterizing it as inconsistent with merit and equal opportunity); *See, also Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard*, 600 U.S. 181 (2023) (striking down affirmative action programs in higher education; this case has been widely used as a justification by the federal government to aggressively target so-called DEI programs); U.S. Attorney General, *Guidance for Recipients of Federal Funding Regarding Unlawful Discrimination* (July 29, 2025) (identifying race-neutral criteria typically associated with underrepresented populations of color as unlawful).

[2] George Hernandez, *Read This Powerful Statement From Darnella Frazier, Who Filmed George Floyd's Murder*, NPR (May 26, 2021), https://www.npr.org/2021/05/26/1000475344/read-this-powerful-statement-from-darnella-frazier-who-filmed-george-floyds-murd.

[3] California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, *The California Reparations Report* (June 29, 2023), https://oag.ca.gov/ab3121/report.

[4] ONE LOVE GLOBAL, *2022-2026 Impact Report*, p. 24 (2026), https://111e4c1c-fc20-408e-82ff-85a5e736bddf.filesusr.com/ugd/0a7010_08eacee3846749738e6e0a3d9019323b.pdf#page=24. The issue involved legal and policy questions on what a local BREATHE Act might look like. The draft local act was modeled on a federal omnibus bill The BREATHE Act (ACT) introduced by the Movement for Black Lives Matters "to reimagine public safety proactively and as a public health imperative for Black communities." M4BL, *One Year of Breathe: Celebrating one year after the launch of the BREATE Act* (July 7, 2021), https://m4bl.org/the-movement-for-black-lives-celebrates-breathe-act-anniversary/. A copy of the ACT is no longer publicly available.

[5] These actions were drawn from the draft local BREATHE Act, which is not publicly available.

[6] Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, AB 3121, California Legislature, Assembly (2020), https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB3121.

[7] The California Report adopted a definition of reparations as defined by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 and further refined by the International Commission of Jurists. CALIFORNIA TASK FORCE TO STUDY AND DEVELOP REPARATION PROPOSALS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS, *The California Reparations Report: Chapter 14 – International Reparations Framework* (June 29, 2023), https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ch14-ca-reparations.pdf.

[8] *The California Report* provides a more comprehensive discussion of these elements including their history and how it has shaped the concept of restitution. *Id.*

[9] This is just one example of how this works from Selma, Alabama. Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral On A Moving Train*, BEACON PRESS BOSTON, p. 57-65 (2018).

[10] EQUAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE, *Justice Department Finds Tulsa Massacre was a "Coordinated, Military-Style Attack"* (Jan. 13, 2025), https://eji.org/news/justice-department-finds-tulsa-massacre-was-a-coordinated-military-style-attack/.

[11] *The California Report*. CALIFORNIA TASK FORCE TO STUDY AND DEVELOP REPARATION PROPOSALS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS, *The California Reparations Report: Chapter 14 – International Reparations Framework*, p. 513 (June 29, 2023), https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ch14-ca-reparations.pdf; U.N. GEN. ASSEMBLY, *Adopted Resolution, 60-147: Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Laws* (Dist. March 21, 2006), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/N0549642.pdf (see definition of victim).

[12] ICTJ, *Reparations* (2026), https://www.ictj.org/reparations.

[13] Allen J. Davis and Valentino Di, *An Historical Timeline of Reparations Payments Made Since 1773 by the United States Government, States, Cities, Religious Institutions, Universities, Corporations, and Communities*, https://guides.library.umass.edu/reparations. While that tracking document provides a quick review of the years, the most recent tracking document allows users to navigate by topics. Reparations.org, *Reparations History* (2026), https://www.reparationshistory.org.

[14] Official use of force documents provide insight into how force is organized on a continuum, although the continuum may misalign with the victims' experience. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE, *The Use-of-Force Continuum* (August 9, 2009) (archived), https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/use-force-continuum.

[15] Julie Ciccolini, Madeline de Figueiredo, Ida Sawyer et al., "*Kettling" Protesters in the Bronx: Systemic Police Brutality and Its Costs in the United States*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (September 30, 2020), https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/09/30/kettling-protesters-bronx/systemic-police-brutality-and-its-costs-united-states.

[16] Elizabeth E. Joh, *Police Technology Experiments*, Vol. 25 Colum. L. Rev. No.1, 1-28 (2025), https://www.columbialawreview.org/content/police-technology-experiments/.

[17] The report also illustrates the numerous State actors were involved in these violent actions including ICE, local and state law enforcement, Federal Protective Services Agents, Customs and Border Patrol agents, and US. Department of Homeland Security agents. PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER, UC BERKELEY, *Charting the Crackdown: The misuse of crowd-control weapons in immigrant enforcement protests across the United States, June 2025-June 2026* (July 2026), https://phr.org/charting-the-crackdown/?dm_i=4GV7,RLFC,73LRW2,3CUTA,1,0,0,0&utm_campaign=1287480_FY27%20CCWs%20Investigation%20Part%20II_Rohini_July%202026&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Physicians%20for%20Human%20Rights#findings.

[18] *Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo*, 146 S. Ct. 1, 7(2025) (Sotomayer, J. dissenting from grant of stay) (alternations in the original).

[19] HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, "A Manufactured Crisis": Minnesota Communities Terrorized by the Federal Government (June 18, 2026), https://www.hrw.org/report/2026/06/18/a-manufactured-crisis/minnesota-communities-terrorized-by-the-federal-government.

[20] Jordan DeVylder, Lisa Fedina, and Bruce Link, Impact of Police Violence on Mental Health: A Theoretical Framework, Am J Public Health 110, 1704-1710 (Nov. 2020), https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7542293/.

[21] Jordan E. DeVylder, Hyun-Jin Jun, Lisa Fedina, et al., *Association of Exposure to Police Violence with Prevalence of Mental Health Symptoms Among Urban Residents in the United States*, JAMA NETW OPEN (Nov. 21, 2018), https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2715611.

[22] Reginald Young-Drake, Temitope Aladetimi, Alexis Chambers, et al., *How Police Brutality Affects Mental Health in Black Communities*, THE MOVEMENT LAWYERING CLINIC: HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, p. 15 (2024), https://thurgoodmarshallcenter.howard.edu/sites/tmcrc.howard.edu/files/2021-05/A%20Growing%20Dilemma%20-%20How%20Police%20Brutality%20Affects%20Mental%20Health%20in%20the%20Black%20Communities.pdf.

[23] U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, OFFICE OF DISEASE PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION, *Healthy People 2023*, https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health. (last visited Sept. 25, 2026).

[24] Part of this is occurring through the federal government implementing new onerous work requirements. Christina Piecora, *OBBA's Unprecedented Attack on Medicaid and the Impact on Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care*, NATIONAL HEALTH LAW PROGRAM (Aug. 22, 2025), https://healthlaw.org/obbbas-unprecedented-attack-on-medicaid-and-the-impact-on-access-to-sexual-and-reproductive-health-care/.

[25] Akash Pillai, Alisha Rao, Samantha Artiga, *Implementation of Medicaid Immigrant Eligibility Restrictions Under the 2025 Reconciliation Law: Issues to Consider*, KFF (Sept. 22, 2026), https://www.kff.org/immigrant-health/implementation-of-medicaid-immigrant-eligibility-restrictions-under-the-2025-reconciliation-law-issues-to-consider/.

[26] FUND FOR GUARANTEED INCOME AND ACLU OF LOUISIANA, *The Cost of Freedom: Truth & Reconciliation Guaranteed Income Program: Piloting paths to reparations*, p. 14-17 (June 19, 2025), https://www.laaclu.org/app/uploads/drupal/sites/default/files/the_cost_of_freedom_truth_reconciliation_guaranteed_income_program_final_report.pdf.

[27] *Id*. at 15.

[28] Two of the most well-known trackers the Washington Post and Mapping Police Violence support this conclusion, though they track different types of fatalities: with the former tracking fatal shootings while officers are on duty and the latter tracking fatal encounters with officers who are on or off duty. THE WASHINGTON POST, *Fatal Force* (Updated Dec. 31, 2024), https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/; MAPPING POLICE VIOLENCE https://mappingpoliceviolence.org.

[29] THE WASHINGTON POST, *Fatal Force* (Updated Dec. 31, 2024) (showing that from 2015 to 2024 these individuals represented 20% of all fatal shooting victims), https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/.

[30] Gabriel L. Schwartz, Theresa Rocha Beardall, and Jaquelyn L. Lahn, *Heightened risk of fatal police violence in and around reservations for American Indian/Alaska Native peoples in the United States*, Vol. 123(11) PROC. NATL. ADAD. SCI. (March 9, 2026) (also finding that location e.g., inside or just outside a reservation is a factor for which law type of law enforcement agency caused the fatality), https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2521002123.

[31] Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, *Black women are the unseen victims of police brutality. Why aren't we talking about it?*, LOS ANGELES TIMES (July 21, 2023), https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-07-21/black-women-police-brutality-violence-racism-sexism.

[32] Alyasah Ali Sewell and Rashawn Ray, *The collateral consequences of state-sanctioned police violence for women*, BROOKINGS (June 11, 2020), https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-collateral-consequences-of-state-sanctioned-police-violence-for-women/.

[33] FBI, *National Use-of-Force Data Collection*, https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/ucr/use-of-force. (last visited Sept. 26, 2026); *see also* April Shaw, *Meeting the Promise of Racial Health Equity by Reducing Police Intervention in Suicide Prevention Activities: Law and Police Solutions*, THE NETWORK FOR PUBLIC HEALTH LAW, p. 3 (Dec. 2021) (further discussing the limitations of the database), https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/meeting-the-promise-of-racial-health-equity-by-reducing-police-intervention-in-suicide-prevention-activities-law-and-policy-solutions/.

[34] April Shaw, *Meeting the Promise of Racial Health Equity by Reducing Police Intervention in Suicide Prevention Activities: Law and Police Solutions*, THE NETWORK FOR PUBLIC HEALTH LAW, p. 3 (Dec. 2021), https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/meeting-the-promise-of-racial-health-equity-by-reducing-police-intervention-in-suicide-prevention-activities-law-and-policy-solutions/.

[35] The Exec. Order No. 14148 Fed. Reg. 18237 (Jan. 28, 2025) (rescinding Exec. Order. 14074 Fed. Reg. 32945 (May 25, 2022)). Section five of the 2022 Executive Order had established a National Law Enforcement Accountability Database a "centralized repository of official records documenting instances of law enforcement officer misconduct" including "criminal convictions, suspension of a law enforcement officer's enforcement authorities . . . related to official duties and resignations or retirements while under investigations for serious misconduct" among other factors. It is worth noting that, aside from federal law enforcement agencies, reporting was optional.

[36] Richard Luscombe*, ICE will not reveal body-camera footage unless in agency's 'best interests,'* THE GUARDIAN (Aug. 7, 2026), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/aug/07/ice-body-cameras-footage-release.

[37] The Washington Post started tracking fatal police shootings during duty starting in 2015 to fill the gap left due to any systemic state tracking system. But as of 2025 The Washington Post will no longer track deaths that occurred after 2024. THE WASHINGTON POST, *Fatal Force* (Updated Dec. 31, 2024), https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/.

[38] An Arizona law directly targeting video recordings made it a misdemeanor for "'a person to knowingly make a video recording of law enforcement activities if the person making the video recording is within eight feet' of the activity and has been directed to stop recording by law enforcement,'" *Arizona Broadcasters Ass'n v. Brnovich,* 626 F. Supp. 3d 1102, 1105 (D. Ariz. 2022), which challengers alleged was unconstitutional under the First and Fourteenth Amendments. After temporarily blocking the law, the district court later permanently blocked the law on First Amendment grounds when the parties stipulated to its unconstitutionality. CIVIL RIGHTS LITIGATION CLEARINGHOUSE, *Arizona Broadcasters Ass'n v.* Mayes (2023), https://clearinghouse.net/case/44208/. Other states have enacted laws to limit how close the public can come to police officers, including Louisiana and Florida (25 feet), *Deep S. Today v. Murrill*, 779 F. Supp. 3d 782 (M.D. La. 2025) (temporarily blocking the law on First Amendment grounds); and Florida (25 feet). SB 184, https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=78745.

[39] INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS, *At UN ICJ urges action on racists police violence in US and elsewhere* (June 18, 2020), https://www.icj.org/hrc43-urgentdebate/.

[40] HIGHER EDUCATION WITH DR. B FRAN, *Three Countries Voted Against Slavery Being a Crime Against Humanity. America Was One.*, (podcast guest Dr. Mary Basset makes the argument that anyone classified as Black in the U.S. should be eligible for reparations for slavery given, among other reasons, that the state did not keep adequate records of slaves given that they were viewed as property), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ut8ox_wVL7c.

[41] Inga N. Laurent, *Addressing the Toll of Truth Telling*, 88 BROOK L. REV. 1073, 1123-1124 (2023), https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2350&context=blr.

[42] *Id*. at 1123.

[43] *Id*. at 1124.

[44] *Id*. at 1089-91; Sebastian Brett, Louis Bickford, Liz Šev enko, et al., *Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action*, p. 26 (2007), https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Memorialization-Democracy-2007-English_0.pdf.

[45] Jordan E. DeVylder, Deidre M. Anglin, Lisa Bowleg, et al., *Police Violence and Public Health*, 18 ANNU REV. CLIN. PSYCHOL., 527-552, 530 (2022) (adopting the term "police violence" because it "acknowledges that violence may affect health and well-being regardless of whether or not it is viewed as appropriate or legitimate in the eyes of the police or even in the eyes of the recipient of these violent acts.").

[46] UNITED STATES INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS, *Homelessness Data & Trends*, https://www.usich.gov/guidance-reports-data/data-trends (last visited, Sept. 30, 2026).

[47] U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, *Diplomacy in Action*, https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/gcj/transitional/257571.htm (archived).

[48] In Tulsa impacted individuals surveyed on reparations priorities identified education as the top priority but the government prioritized housing (ranked fourth) because it had already set aside money for housing via "sales tax revenues," upsetting participants and others. STANDPIPE HILL STRATEGIES AND WORLD WOND DEVELOPMENT, THE PUBLIC WORK PROJECT AT OSU-TULSA, *Beyond Apology: A Series of Community Conversations Rooted in Education on Repair and Reparation in Tulsa, OK* (2023) (showing community rankings), https://www.beyondapology.org; Max Bryan, *City commission urges $24.9 million for housing reparations in Tulsa*, PUBLIC RADIO TULSA (Feb. 19, 2025), https://www.publicradiotulsa.org/local-regional/2025-02-19/city-commission-urges-24-9-million-for-housing-reparations-in-tulsa; BMORE NEWS, *Beyond Apology 'Reparations' Commission Ignores Tulsa Race Massacre Survivors* (Oct. 2024), https://bmorenews.com/beyond-apology-reparations-commission-ignores-tulsa-race-massacre-survivors/.

[49] Natalies Y. Moore, *Payback*, THE MARSHALL PROJECT (Oct. 2018) (discussing how the Chicago Torture Justice Center shares space "with a public health clinic" and they offer "clinical space to treat physical traumas" and "case managers to coordinate public services as well as private therapy rooms stocked with warm drinks and soft lighting" representing the U.S.'s "first official trauma center for victims of its own police forces" and exemplifying healing aspects of Chicago reparations), https://www.themarshallproject.org/2018/10/30/payback.

[50] OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY, CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO, *Victims of Police Violence and Officer-Involved Shootings* (June 2020), https://sfdistrictattorney.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Victims-of-Police-Violence-and-Officer-Involved-Shootings.pdf.

[51] Although this can require navigating challenging questions. Sebastian Brett, Louis Bickford, Liz Šev enko, et al., *Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action*, 1, 5-10 (2007), https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Memorialization-Democracy-2007-English_0.pdf.

[52] Robin Adèle Greeley, Michael R. Orwicz, José Luis Falconi, et al., *Repairing Symbolic Reparations: Assessing the Effectiveness of Memorialization in the Inter-American System of Human Rights*, 14 INT'L NAT'L. J. OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, 165-192 (2020).

[53] *Id*. at 171-172; 177-179.

[54] Sebastian Brett, Louis Bickford, Liz Šev enko, et al., *Memorialization and Democracy: State Policy and Civic Action*, p. 23, 26 (2007), https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Memorialization-Democracy-2007-English_0.pdf.

[55] *Id*.

[56] CHICAGO TORTURE JUSTICE MEMORIALS FOUNDATION, *Reparations are coming to Chicago's South Side and you can be part of it*, https://ctjmfoundation.org/about-ctjmf/the-memorial/ (last visited Oct. 1, 2026).

[57] Exec. Order No. 14523 Fed. Reg. 14563 (March 27, 2027) (targeting "public monuments, memorials, statues, markers, or similar properties" potentially removed or changed since January 2020 under the jurisdictions of the Secretary of the Interior); The Secretary of the Interior Washington, Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History (May 20, 2025) (encouraging public participation to report "any signs or other information that are negative about either past or living Americans or that fail to emphasize the beauty, grandeur, and abundance of landscapes and other natural features."), https://www.doi.gov/libraries/pdf.js/web/viewer.html?file=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doi.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fdocument_secretarys_orders%2Fso-3431-restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history-2025-05-20-final_508signed.pdf.

[58] Uwa Ede-Osifo, *Judge orders restoration of national park plaques removed under Trump directive*, THE GUARDIAN (June 12, 2026), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jun/12/judge-national-park-trump-displays.

[59] THE MONUMENT QUILT, *The Monument Quilt is the first memorial to survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence,* https://themonumentquilt.org/ (last visited Oct. 1, 2026).

[60] Although not specific to police violence, it should not be assumed that the quilted squares do not include victims of who have experienced sexual violence by such state actors.

[61] April Shaw, Emily Carey, Elyse Pendergrass et al., *How can Public Health Advocates Grapple with the Dual Challenges of Systemic Racism and Discriminatory Policing?* THE NETWORK FOR PUBLIC HEALTH LAW, p. 6-4 (July 2020), https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/issue-brief-systemic-racism-and-policing/; April Shaw, *Meeting the Promise of Racial Health Equity by Reducing Police Intervention in Suicide Prevention Activities: Law and Police Solutions*, THE NETWORK FOR PUBLIC HEALTH LAW, p. 5-9 (Dec. 2021), https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/meeting-the-promise-of-racial-health-equity-by-reducing-police-intervention-in-suicide-prevention-activities-law-and-policy-solutions/.

[62] California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, *Policies Addressing the Unjust Legal System*, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (2023), https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ch28-ca-reparations.pdf.

[63] Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Final Report, p. 4 (Revised December 9, 2025), https://msa.maryland.gov/lynching-truth-reconciliation/reports/MLTRCFinalReport.pdf.

[64] Here I draw on insights from the historian Howard Zinn who, in discussing the civil rights movement, talks about pushing "for" equality because the movement is a long process, and such framing does not "suggest[] completion." He also argues that even small acts are transformative, stating "no pitifully small picket line, no poorly attended meeting, no tossing out of an idea to an audience or even to an individual should be scorned as insignificant. The power of a bold idea uttered publicly in defiance of dominant opinion cannot easily be measured." This also applies to how to approach reparations work in the U.S., which is an extension of that movement. Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral On A Moving Train*, BEACON PRESS BOSTON, p. 33 (2018).