

XIV. Key Findings

- From colonial times forward, governments at all levels adopted and enshrined white supremacy beliefs and passed laws in order to maintain slavery, a system of dehumanization and exploitation that stole the life, labor, liberty, and intellect of people of African descent. This system was maintained by, and financially benefited, the entire United States of America and its territories.
 - This system of white supremacy is a persistent badge of slavery that continues to be embedded today in numerous American and Californian legal, economic, and social and political systems. Throughout American history and across the entire country, laws and policies, violence and terror have upheld white supremacy. All over the country, but particularly in the South during the era of legal segregation, federal state and local governments directly engaged in, supported, or failed to protect African Americans from the violence and terror aiming to subjugate African Americans.
 - Government actions and derelictions of duty have caused compounding physical and psychological injury for generations. In California, racial violence against African Americans began during slavery, continued through the 1920s, as groups like the Ku Klux Klan permeated local governments and police departments, and peaked after World War II, as African Americans attempted to move into white neighborhoods.
 - After the Civil War, African Americans briefly won political power during Reconstruction. Southern states responded by systematically stripping African Americans of their power to vote. Racist lawmakers elected from southern states blocked hundreds of federal civil rights laws and edited other important legislation to exclude or discriminate against African Americans. These coordinated efforts at the federal level harmed Black Californians, particularly when coupled with discrimination at the state and local levels.
 - Government actors, working with private individuals, actively segregated America into Black and white neighborhoods. In California, federal, state, and local governments created segregation through discriminatory federal housing policies, zoning ordinances, decisions on where to build schools, and discriminatory federal mortgage policies known as redlining.
- Funded by the federal government, the California state and local government also destroyed Black homes and communities through park and highway construction, urban renewal and by other means.
- Enslavers denied education to enslaved people in order to control them. Throughout American history, when allowed schooling at all, Black students across the country and in California have attended schools with less funding and resources than white students. After slavery, southern states passed laws to prevent Black and white students from attending the same schools. Throughout the country, even after the U.S. Supreme Court held “separate but equal” to be unconstitutional, children went to the school in their neighborhoods, so education segregation was further entrenched by residential segregation. Many public schools in the United States never integrated in the first place or were integrated and then re-segregated. Today, California is the sixth most segregated state in the country for Black students, who attend under-resourced schools.
 - Due to residential segregation and compared to white Americans, African Americans are more likely to live in worse quality housing and in neighborhoods that are polluted, with inadequate infrastructure. Black Californians face similar harms.
 - Government financial assistance programs and policies have historically excluded African Americans from receiving benefits.
 - The current child welfare system in the country and in California, operates on harmful and untrue racial stereotypes of African Americans. This has resulted in extremely high rates of removal of Black children from their families, even though Black parents do not generally mistreat their children at higher rates than white parents. Black children thus disproportionately suffer the loss of their families and the additional harms associated with being in the child welfare system.
 - Federal and state governments, including California, failed to protect Black artists, culture-makers, and media-makers from discrimination and simultaneously promoted discriminatory narratives. State governments memorialized the Confederacy as just and heroic through monument building, while suppressing the nation’s history of racism and slavery.

Executive Summary

- Federal, state, and local government actions, including in California, have directly segregated and discriminated against African Americans at work. Federal and state policies like affirmative action produced mixed results and were short lived. African Americans continue to face employment discrimination today in the country and in California.
- American government at all levels, including in California, has historically criminalized African Americans for the purposes of social control, and to maintain an economy based on exploited Black labor. This criminalization is an enduring badge of slavery and has contributed to the over-policing of Black neighborhoods, the school to prison pipeline, the mass incarceration of African Americans, a refusal to accept African Americans as victims, and other inequities in nearly every corner of the American and California legal systems. As a result, the American and California criminal justice system physically harms, imprisons, and kills African Americans more than other racial groups relative to their percentage of the population.
- The government actions described in this report have had a devastating effect on the health of African Americans in the country and in California. Compared to white Americans, African Americans live shorter lives and are more likely to suffer and die from almost all diseases and medical conditions than white Americans. Researchers have linked these health outcomes in part to African Americans' unrelenting experience of racism in our society. In addition to physical harm, African Americans experience psychological harm, which can profoundly undermine Black children's emotional and physical well-being and their academic success.
- Government laws and policies perpetuating badges of slavery have helped white Americans accumulate wealth, while erecting barriers that have prevented African Americans from doing the same. These harms compounded over generations, resulting in an enormous gap in wealth between white and African Americans today in the nation and in California.