

I have two stories to share:

I will start with my maternal 4x great grandparents Pleasant and George Brent. Pleasant, born in 1848, and George in 1829, both enslaved in KY. George served in the Civil War, passed not long after emancipation. Pleasant and George's daughter Luvenia born in 1860, knew human bondage well. Enslaved from birth, born partially blind – she was a fighter from birth. Although unsuccessful, she along with hundreds of other Black Americans petitioned congress for payment of fair wages, and laws to ensure future support for their years of involuntary enslavement. This was one of the earlier efforts for reparations.

Pleasant, her brother Henry Tibbs, and Luvenia made their way to California. Henry arriving in 1872 and Pleasant in 1909. Henry purchased his first parcel of land in 1880 in midtown Sacramento, and by 1900 would purchase parcels and a home throughout the Sacramento area. Henry died in 1912 and upon his death this land was auctioned by the state, under the guise that no living relative existed, although his sister Pleasant was alive and well. Pleasant contested the proceedings, but her attempt to keep what was rightfully hers was futile. Stolen property and denied wealth would be her condition.

I also want to share with you the story of my great grandmother Evelyn Binion and great grandfathers Pearley Monroe, and Anias Binion. My grandmother's first husband, my great grandfather Anias, was hanged in 1928, and my grandparent's home set aflame killing their youngest child. Evelyn with no time to grieve, no time to bury her husband nor her child, left Georgia and made her way to California, landing in Sacramento in 1929. The anguish from the loss of her husband and child would follow her until her death – my grandmother could never ease that pain. In 1931 she married Pearley Monroe.

Pearley Monroe is the grandson of Nancy and Peter Gooch. Nancy and Peter were brought to California as slaves in 1849. Nancy was forced to leave her only child, Andrew behind, and by 1870 earned enough money to bring Andrew, his wife, and Andrew's two sons to California – one of which was my great grandfather Pearley.

In 1850 California entered statehood as a "free" state and the women and men enslaved in California were given some measure of freedom. Nancy and Peter were one of those women and men set free. Nancy and Peter grew, and sold fruit, cooked for miners, mended their clothing, and eventually earned enough money to purchase their first 180 acres of land in 1860 in Coloma, California.

Nancy, her descendants, my great grandparents, by 1940 would purchase some 410 acres of land in Coloma California. 300 acres of their property was taken by the State of California under eminent domain. That land where California's Marshall Gold Discovery Park sits, was once owned by 3 black families, one of which is mine, the Gooch-Monroes. Equitable compensation was never given to my family, nor any of the other families.

Unfortunately, there are thousands of stories like mine, that need to be told. California lawmakers created legislation that created “legal” mechanisms to prolifically steal land from Black families and farmers. The laws and culture of the time, some of this still present today, made it easy to accept – this became the social norm.

Now is the time to right a wrong. We have an opportunity to repair the ills of the past, return that which was stolen, repair the damage and help heal all of the families that were harmed by slavery, and systemic racism in all forms.

**Why am I giving testimony today?**

I can be a voice for my family, and the many other Black families whose ancestors have been harmed by slavery, discrimination, and the laws and policies that continue to perpetuate systemic racism. I want what has happened to me, my ancestors to resonate and elicit action to repair the harm that has been done.

**What would make your family whole? What do you think the reparations plan should entail?**

Let’s work toward repairing the damage that has been done as a direct result of slavery, systemic racism, denied access to housing, education, land, and wealth – list goes on. Let’s compensate families for the land that was stolen – or just give it back, provide access and avenues to home ownership, payment for denied wages that should have been paid while enslaved (monetary compensation), funding for businesses, building up the infrastructure of black communities, providing healthful means to better our condition. Removing every law that denies Black families access to wealth, services, educational resources, housing, and medical care. Health care that addresses health disparities associated with the black community, specifically the trauma caused by racism, and a statewide program (DOE curriculum) that tells the true history of Black Americans, slavery, and the injustices we experience.