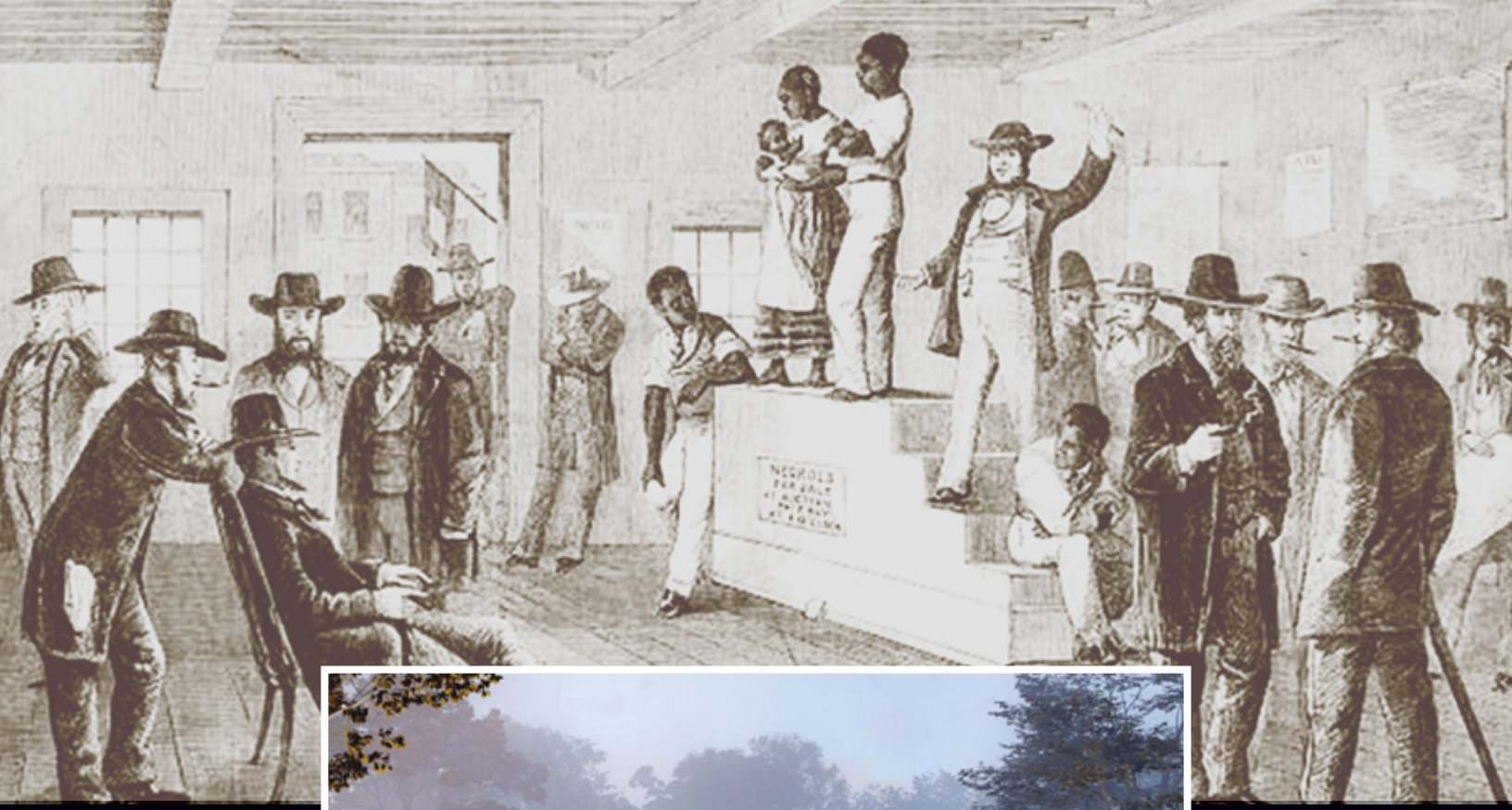
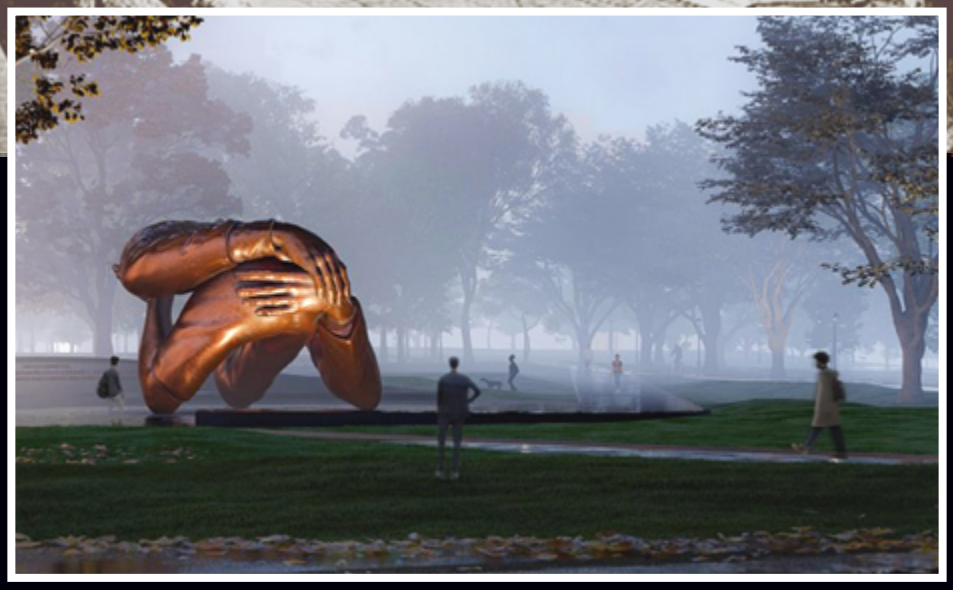




Preamble to the State of Black Boston: **Connecting *the* Past *and* Present**

KING BOSTON

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your interest in the movement for reparations. The narrative you are about to read goes beyond a historically grounded argument for reparations to atone for the historical and ongoing disenfranchisement of Black people: it is an invitation to us all to re-imagine what our collective future could look like. What would our world look like if we were all invited to fully participate as whole persons? What if power and prosperity were equitably shared? What would it look like if we all won?

The moment is now to reconcile with our history with slavery and its consequences resulting in systemic racism and discrimination, a system which holds all of us back. And while the process of making reparations entails outlining a system and programs of repair for local residents of African descent, all of our residents stand to benefit from the new opportunities this repair will make possible.

According to a national study entitled *Closing the Racial Inequality Gaps* conducted by Citi Bank in 2020, the racial gaps between Blacks and Whites have cost all of us: across a variety of areas such as education, housing, and earnings that lost stands at $16 trillion over the last 20 years. If we start closing these racial gaps, the study also found that we could see $5 trillion of additional GDP over the next five years.

Passing the Boston city ordinance to establish the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans is an important first step in collective repair and healing this region desperately needs. As we look ahead to H.R. 40, the federal bill that would establish a similar commission at the national level, it is critical that local communities establish commissions as well. Establishing these important bodies positions municipalities to benefit tremendously from closing racial wealth and opportunity gaps – gaps we have lived with so long that we think of them as "normal". Our collective vision about what is imaginable has been robbed by systemic racism. Commissions like these and subsequent acts that would constitute full repair, are our opportunity to breathe life into that vision and unleash infinite possibilities for our city and our state.

At King Boston, we hold a vision for a city, and more broadly, a nation that is truly worthy of us all. The Embrace memorial, the first and largest monument to racial equity and social justice since the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, embodies this vision. A tangible reminder and call to action, The Embrace reminds us that the fight for racial equity requires us all. Our destinies, irrespective of one's racial or ethnic identity, are inextricably linked.

Boston – and Massachusetts for that matter – can be a leader in facilitating this kind of meaningful repair, the kind that sets not just current, but also future generations on a better trajectory. Boston, an historic city of many firsts and contradictions, is both home to the nation's first public school, and also the city in which "separate but equal" originated. Massachusetts was among the first states to abolish slavery, but it was also the first colony to legalize it. It is time for our city and state to embrace this unique position and lead alongside others on matters of racial equity and repair from the harms created by one of this country's Original Sins. Let's ensure that we are on the right side of history. May the work of repair and imagining for the future begin.

This narrative is a story of both Black struggle and Black progress. We hope that it compels and inspires each of you, as we pick up the mantles of love and resistance that Dr. King and so many others have shouldered before us.

In solidarity and with love,

Imari Paris Jeffries
Executive Director, King Boston

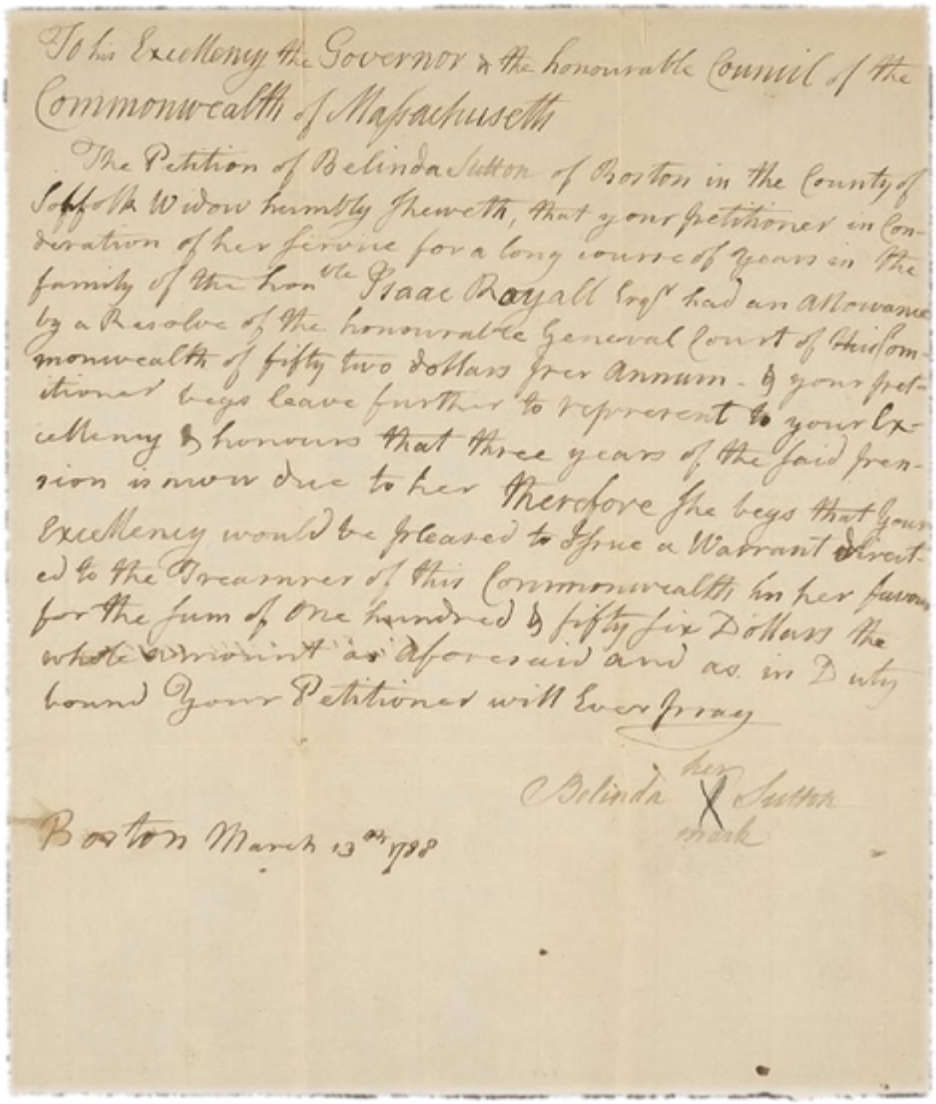
Tammy Tai
Deputy Director, King Boston

April Khadijah Inniss, MD, MSc
Director of Engaged Community Research, King Boston

CHAPTER 1

Introduction & Background

Massachusetts state and local Boston policies have disadvantaged Black residents across the full swath of socioeconomic sectors. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed many of these longstanding disparities and led to the disproportionate loss of Black lives. In Boston, Black people made up 1 in 3 Covid-19 deaths as of April 2022, despite being 24% of the city's population.[1,2] In 2020, there was a 9.3% gap between Black and White Boston Public School (BPS) students graduating high school within 5 years.[3] Data from that same year show that of the almost 4,000 arrests in the city, nearly 60% of them were Black.[4] Similarly, Black people in the city and in the state as a whole are disadvantaged in the areas of home-ownership and other wealth-building strategies.



To his Excellency the Governor & the honourable Council of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Petition of Belinda Sutton of Boston in the County of Suffolk Widow humbly sheweth, that your petitioner in Consideration of her service for a long course of years in the family of the Hon^ble Isaac Royall Esq^r had an allowance by a Resolve of the honourable General Court of this Commonwealth of fifty two dollars per annum - & your petitioner begs leave further to represent to your Excellency & honours that three years of the said pension is now due to her Therefore she begs that your Excellency would be pleased to Issue a Warrant directed to the Treasurer of this Commonwealth in her favour for the sum of One hundred & fifty six Dollars the whole amount as aforesaid and as in Duty bound Your Petitioner will Ever pray

her
Belinda X Sutton
mark

Boston March 13th 1783

Belinda's Petition to the Massachusetts General Court, February 14, 1783
Original manuscript, Massachusetts Archives

Frankly, these patterns of disadvantage are by design. A centuries-long series of consequential policy decisions made by the powerful and the failure to adequately address known discrimination have produced, perpetuated, and compounded these racial inequities.

Royall House and slave quarters, Medford, Mass., November 2, 1920.
Leon Abdalian Collection, Boston Public Library

The nation's history, though, is checkered with missed opportunities to redress the harms of the past and promote equity in the present.... Today, a new opportunity has presented itself for action.

Providing reparations to Black communities subject to these harms is a crucial part of beginning to make right historical wrongs that include, among others, codified chattel slavery, Jim Crow apartheid, and their enduring legacies. The tragic collective of these harms continue to stifle Black progress today. Yet, if it weren't for epic Black freedom struggles for liberation and to redefine themselves as the heroes of their own American story, perhaps little would have changed since Massachusetts became the first colony to legalize slavery in 1641.[5] Belinda Sutton, having been formerly enslaved by the Royall family, is one such example: in 1783, she successfully petitioned the Massachusetts State Legislature for a pension to be paid out of the Royall family estate to compensate her for the years of unpaid labor she had performed as a slave.[6]

The nation's history, though, is checkered with missed opportunities to redress the harms of the past and promote equity in the present. Specifically, the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War, the panel of social programs under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 each failed to bring in the tide that would lift all boats.

Today, a new opportunity has presented itself for action. According to Reverend William J. Barber III, there's a current Third Reconstruction that was ushered in under the election of President Donald Trump in 2016–a fresh era of racial reckoning and therefore a renewed appetite for prioritizing racial equity.[7] From public schools to organized policing, Massachusetts is home to a slew of firsts in the nation – including of course, the Revolutionary War that birthed America itself. Likewise, "it started in Boston" could be said of beloved public goods like parks and transportation systems. Why, then, can't the region be on the leading edge of a new Renaissance, one marked by actually living up to the nation's egalitarian ideals?

The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) defines reparations as "the process of repairing, healing, and restoring a people who were injured, due to their group identity, in violation of their fundamental human rights

by a government, corporation, institution, or individual."[8] Specific proposals of the modern era include Federal Bill H.R. 40, which is the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, and the Boston City Council's 2022 proposal to establish a similar commission at the city level. (H.R. 40 was modeled after a 1989 proposal put forward by the late Massachusetts state representative William Owens). These policies represent another chance to fully realize America's promise of liberty and justice for all.

The Injury Areas covered in this report are among the most fiercely urgent issues facing Black residents of Boston and of Massachusetts more widely. These seven Injury Areas were derived from the N'COBRA Five Injury Areas, the National African-American Reparations Commission's (NAARC) 10-Point Plan, and the Reparations Harm Report authored by Black residents of the town of Amherst, Massachusetts.

The 7 Injury Areas include:
Culture & Symbols
Housing
Transportation
Education
Criminal Legal Systems
Health
Income & Wealth

These 7 Injury Areas overlap and intersect in people's lives in ways that function as a sort of socioeconomic undertow, pulling and subsequently locking many Black families into a cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Though this report is far from a comprehensive listing of the many ways that Black people in the region have faced racial animus and exclusion, it highlights a number of highly consequential acts and events that have created the landscape of inequities that many recognize today.

7 Injury Areas

Culture & Symbols

Housing

Transportation

Education

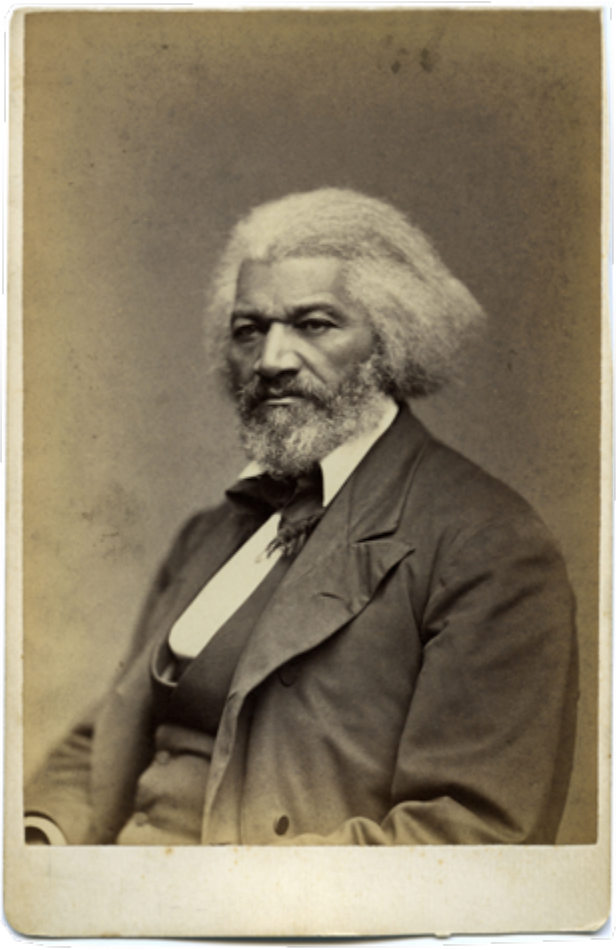
Criminal Legal Systems

Health

Income & Wealth

CHAPTER 2

Seven Injury Areas

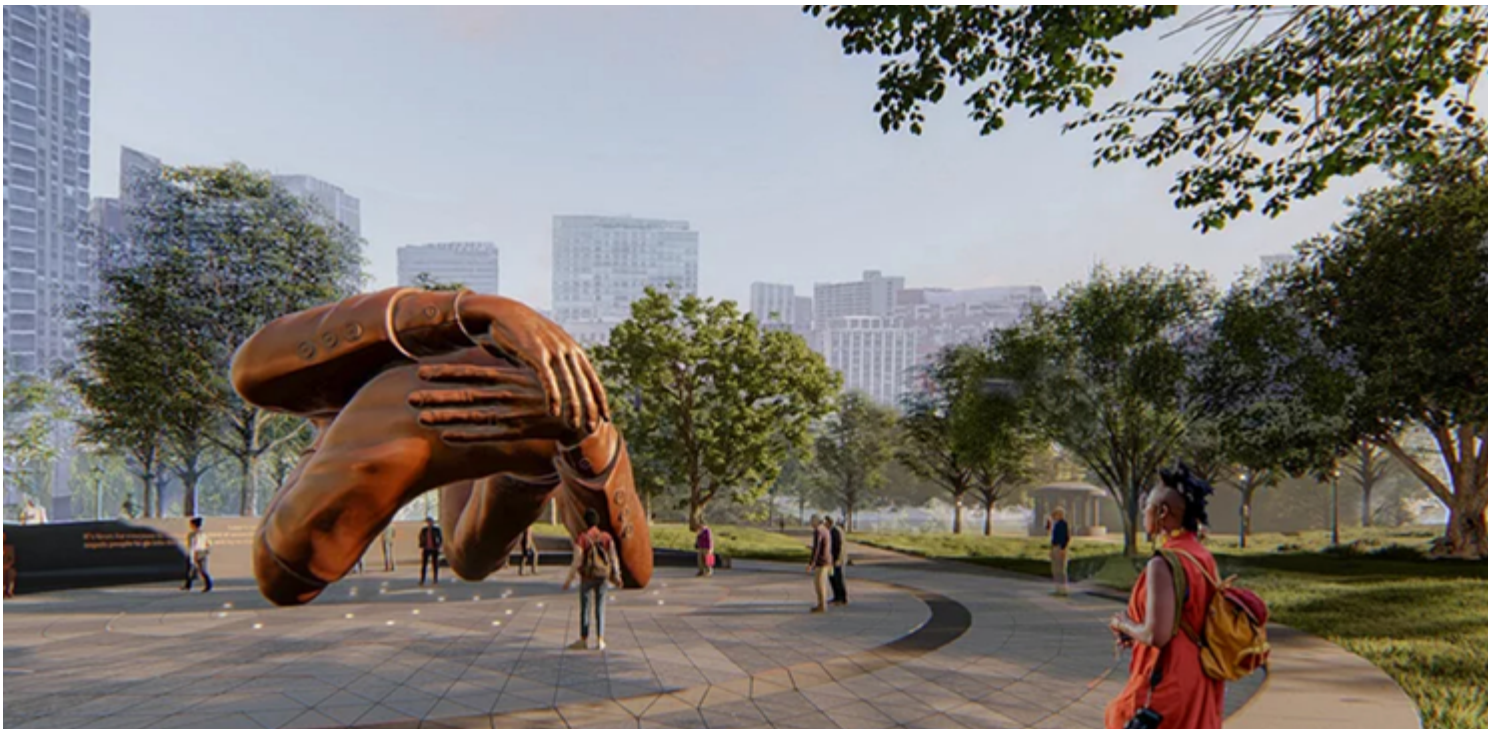


Frederick Douglass, a former slave turned abolitionist who established roots in New Bedford, MA, rarely smiled in photographs to counter happy minstrel-like caricatures of Black people.

CULTURE & SYMBOLS

Being grounded in a strong sense of identity is one precondition to flourishing, and it is said that, "if you do not know who you are, the world will tell you."[9] The concept of Peoplehood/ Nationhood is therefore integral to defining this Injury Area. On Massachusetts soil, enslaved African peoples were systematically commodified and largely stripped of their native cultural expression and the ability to be a self-determining people. What's more, the images and narratives of Black people often uplifted in the story of America have sought to tell Black people who they are. Yet, Black people have resisted at every step: for instance, Frederick Douglass, a former slave turned abolitionist who established roots in New Bedford, MA, rarely smiled in photographs to counter happy minstrel-like caricatures of Black people.[10]

From the monuments and historical sites that get the coveted blessing of national landmark designation, to the arts and culture scene that capture the zeitgeist of the region, Black people have fought for representation. In recent years, against the backdrop of a national interrogation of once-celebrated structures and symbols, local movements have produced new ones and spotlighted Black art and artists. For example, King Boston's own contribution, The Embrace, a world-class memorial to antiracism, collectivism, and love is set to be installed in 2023 on the Boston Common, the oldest public park in America. There, in 1965, Dr. King called on the city to live up to its highest ideals by confronting the problems of racism and economic injustice.



The Embrace, a world-class memorial to antiracism, collectivism, and love is set to be installed in 2023 on the Boston Common, the oldest public park in America.

The inspiration for The Embrace: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King are shown embracing when they'd learned he'd received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Bettmann Archive.

The Embrace, by definition, is on land marked as part of the city's iconic Freedom Trail, which historically has undervalued spaces and monuments that would tell the city's more colorful and complicated Revolutionary history. An historical analysis of the development of the Freedom Trail and the Boston National Park Services suggests that this misrepresentation of the nation's history is no accident. While the Freedom Trail has recently taken meaningful steps to shift this dynamic, the priorities and decisions of the past still loom large. Historian Seth C. Bruggeman, the author of *Lost On the Freedom Trail*, examined the unholy alliance between the local preservation community and urban renewal policies that decimated Black and immigrant communities.[11]

Buoyed by the windfall of federal funds for urban renewal and clearing "blight", the local preservation ecosystem took shape and was mostly co-opted by the wealthy and the powerful to memorialize sanitized and self-serving versions of American

This is just one part of a much-celebrated mural on Warren St in Roxbury, called "Roxbury Love". Depicted here are Malcolm X, Melnea Cass, and Martin Luther King Jr. The full mural also features Ruth Batson, Elma Lewis, Frederick Douglass, Ella Collins and Crispus Attucks.

history. Reflecting on the origins of the current preservation landscape, Bruggeman writes, "...decisions [were] made long ago about which neighborhoods to destroy and which to preserve; about which residents to protect and which ones to displace; and about which parts to remember and which parts to bulldoze."[12]

After state-sanctioned bulldozers razed Boston's own "blight", having raked local soil like glorified erasers, what was left? A 2021 effort backed by the Mellon Foundation offers a picture: The Monument Lab, a public art and history non-profit, performed an audit of 48,178 public monuments and structures across the United States and its territories.[13,14] The Lab found that the nation's monuments grossly over-represent White men and a third of them were themed around war and conquest.[15] For instance, of the top 50 persons represented on monuments throughout the country, only 3 were Black, and half of those 50 persons owned slaves. Local state and city structures fit this same mold; in Massachusetts, out of 3,043 monuments logged, only 7 commemorate Black people, according to the Lab.[16]

Black art and artists have faced their own challenges in making their mark on a city and in a state that historically has denied their humanity, let alone creativity. In WBUR's, "Meet The ARTery 25 — Millennials Of Color Impacting Boston Arts And Culture",[17] 25 artists of color shared their journeys navigating Boston's arts and culture scene. Many of the Black artists described navigating acceptability politics within Boston's predominantly White art world.

One featured artist, dancer Chrystyn Fentroy is the first Black ballerina in the Boston Ballet in a decade. She faced an immediate conundrum when the company put on "Chaconne", a performance piece about natural beauty. The ballerinas were to wear their hair down and untied, but Fentroy was asked if she would wear a wig for the sake of 'blending in'. For the first two shows, she agreed, but said it felt 'ugly' – ironic, considering the piece was an ode to and celebration of natural beauty – but whose beauty? In a silent but altogether bold act of resistance and a reassertion of the self, Fentroy chose to wear her hair naturally by the third show. "'I have never felt so proud and so beautiful," she said.

Art always finds a way to thrive, despite mitigating or impeding circumstances, much like Black people themselves. Yet, Black artists, despite profoundly influencing the broader culture, haven't been fully allowed *in*. Reparations that account for artistic expression, structures, and symbols, are a way forward. All along, Black artists have been trying to tell the world who Black people are: beautiful, powerful, and wholly worthy.

One of Elma Lewis's contributions to the community was the Black Nativity production, which is still presented every holiday. In 1981, she was the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship for her work, and in 1983 President Ronald Reagan presented her with the Presidential Medal for the Arts.

HOUSING

According to a United Nations global housing expert, "Housing is the link between one's dignity and one's ability to survive in our world."[18] Yet affordable housing is a growing challenge in Boston – as of February 2022, the median sale price of a single-family home in the city was more than 3.5 million dollars.[19] But Boston's Black residents have to contend with even more than just exorbitantly high costs to own and rent. As one of the oldest U.S. cities, practices of housing discrimination against communities

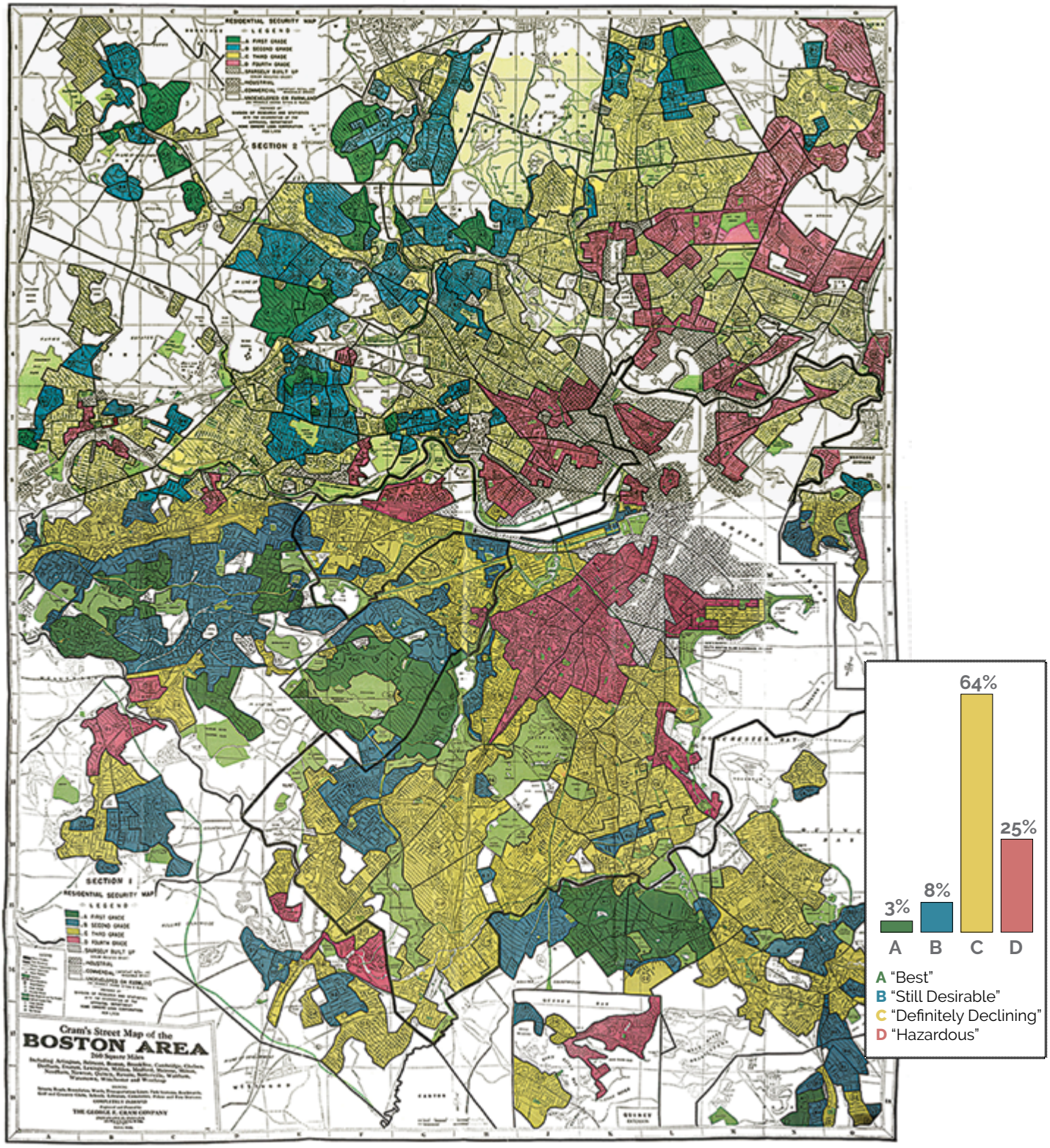
of color stretch throughout Boston history. Affordable housing and homeownership, the latter of which is an important path to building generational wealth, is a specific Injury Area identified by NAARC as harming Black communities across the country. Boston is no different.

The city's housing story takes shape against the backdrop of federal policy trends that served to codify racial discrimination, notably in the early 20th century at the onset of American urbanization. Although a 1917 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Buchanan v. Warley* outlawed race-based zoning by local governments,[20] a 1926 Supreme Court decision *Corrigan et. al. v. Buckley* gave realtors the legal right to add clauses within their deeds (covenants) to prevent Black people from moving into "Whites-only" neighborhoods.[21]

Photograph of a Roxbury family in 1920s

Locally, an onslaught of other measures had effectively land-locked Black Bostonian families into specific neighborhoods that were subsequently marked for disinvestment. For example, highlighting in red those neighborhoods deemed the riskiest investments and therefore "least desirable" (the practice known as redlining) in maps drawn up by the Federal Housing Administration in 1933, discriminatory zoning laws, and soaring home prices in predominantly White neighborhoods all conspired to limit Black mobility.

De facto policies like these often didn't name discriminatory intent, but certainly had discriminatory impact. Moreover, even though local and state governments evidently recognized housing discrimination, they failed to safeguard for Black people the same



The Home Owners' Loan Corporation developed these maps in the 1930s for 239 U.S. cities, including Boston. These maps were used to withhold mortgage capital from largely Black, immigrant, and low-income neighborhoods – effectively marking them for disinvestment.: Go to https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=12/42.382/-71.235 for an interactive version of this map.

rights that White elites enjoyed. Case-in-point: the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group was borne out of the recognition that Black people were facing undue, race-based obstacles to homeownership in the city, but the policy instead placed many new Black homeowners at risk for "fast foreclosures", among other harms.[22]

In 2021, among the population of Black households in Boston, only 35.3% were homeowners, compared to 68.8% of White households.

Several decades later, *RealEstate by Boston.com and Globe.com* reported in 2021 that among the population of Black households in Boston, only 35.3% are homeowners, compared to 68.8% of White households.[23] Today, Black renters don't fare much better: a 2020 study by Suffolk University tested the effects of race and source of income on the housing market by attempting to view available apartments. White participants were able to view 80% of available units, whereas Black participants were only able to view 48%.[24]

Providing opportunities for Black households to escape the boundaries of redlining and other anti-Black housing policies will result in truly mixed-income Boston neighborhoods with more robust racial diversity, and improve the standard of living for all.

Photo is of a giant anti-highway sign painted on the former railroad embankment in Jackson Square. Businesses and residences in the foreground had already been torn down. The granite from the embankment was reused to edge the walks of Southwest Corridor Park. The fencing from atop the embankment now encloses community gardens.

TRANSPORTATION

As housing policies like redlining shaped the boundaries that would come to define where most Black Bostonians lived, they also established how Black Bostonians moved. Boston bureaucrats, bolstered by the state-level Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and federal highway policy, are implicated in transportation and infrastructure battles that often fell along distinctly racial lines.

Major transportation initiatives like highway construction and public transportation projects have negatively impacted low-income and communities of color in Boston and the Greater Boston area for decades. Transportation officials of the mid-20th century had started to embrace technocratic approaches to the planning process, and that seemed to be the unspoken justification for failing to account for the desires and priorities of the residents with the most to lose – many of whom were Black Bostonians.

At Roxbury Crossing, a sign highlights the history of the Southwest Corridor. The Southwest Corridor was originally cleared to make way for an 8-lane extension of I-95.

The proposed Inner Belt/I-95 project that spanned the 1950s-60s is one such example. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act allocated $26 billion to cities and states to expand the nation's highway system by 41,000 miles.[25] Despite protests by a growing grassroots collective of individual residents and community groups, the 4.1 mile stretch of land that carved directly through Boston neighborhoods from Forest Hills to Back Bay, known as the Southwest Corridor, was razed to make way for an 8 lane extension of I-95. The Boston Preservation Alliance reports that 500 homes and businesses, including in Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, and the South End were destroyed.[26] These losses still impact many residents to this day both materially and through the disruption of social cohesion and neighborhood networks.[27]

While Black Bostonians are among the major demographic groups that rely heavily on public transit, planning has historically prioritized

efficient transit between surrounding wealthier White suburbs and Boston's core. For example, the more than 3 decades-old unfulfilled promise of a transit solution that was "equal or better" to the old Washington St elevated train (the "El") still leaves a bitter taste for many. State and federal bureaucrats saw no justification for investment in a light rail system to replace a portion of the El which Black residents relied on heavily. Meanwhile, they managed to find funds for *less cost-effective* commuter rail expansion projects in the suburbs – even paying an additional $40-50 million to build an 800-ft below-ground tunnel to accommodate rail expansion through downtown Hingham because residents objected to the above-ground proposal.[28]

Transportation inequities are the outcome of planning processes in which policymakers and administration officials decided to acknowledge some communities and marginalize others. Local projects have largely been designed by White elites who reap most of the benefits but few of the costs. Today, the historic transportation policy decisions highlighted here continue to compound the effects of the other Injury Areas for Black Bostonians. As a result, some residents still struggle with accessing gainful employment, healthcare, education, and other place-based opportunities.

EDUCATION

Boston circa 1723-1730 engraving by Carwitham. BPL Print Department

Black people brought to American shores as slaves were routinely forbidden to learn to read or write. Yet, they and their descendants, in direct defiance of notions of inferiority that White supremacist rule would attempt to place on them, have made invaluable contributions that have impacted not just American life, but the world. For example, in 1716 a Massachusetts slave named Onesimus, who had been allowed a form of education, introduced the practice of inoculation to prevent small pox during a particularly deadly outbreak in Boston. Not only did his wisdom stop the local epidemic in its tracks, he essentially laid the foundation for Western vaccine science that has saved countless lives to this day.[29]

Onesimus is just one case-in-point that knowledge is indeed power, and according to the Puritans at the time, mission-critical to developing a moral and civically engaged citizenry. Beginning in 1642, Massachusetts led the colonies and later the Nation in laws that would establish the right to an education and mandate the existence of public schools to support that right. But it would take centuries of struggle for Black people and other marginalized groups to have equal access to that right.[30] The struggle goes on to this day.

In 1849, Benjamin Roberts, a Black father in Boston, filed the first school desegregation suit after his daughter Sarah was denied access to a Boston school because she was Black. The state Supreme Judicial Court upheld the city's "right" to have "separate but equal" schools for Black and White children, the racist doctrine which was cited as the main precedent in the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896. The Plessy decision was used to promote segregation in all aspects of American civil life up to the mid-20th century.

The 1954 Supreme Court ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education*, held that separate schools for Black and White children were "inherently unequal" and therefore violated the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause. This set the stage for desegregation battles to follow in many cities. Ruth Batson, as Chairman of the Public Education Sub-Committee of Boston's chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), called on the Boston School Committee (BSC) to end the city's de facto school segregation policies. The NAACP and other Black community leaders filed court litigation, testified at BSC hearings, led marches and sit-ins

From left, Linda Brown Smith, Harry Briggs Jr., Ethel Louise Belton Brown and Spottswood Bolling Jr. at a news conference in 1964. Mr. Briggs's parents originated the lawsuit that ended in The *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling.
Sun photo by Al Ravenna.

Philanthropist and community leader Ruth Batson testifying before the school committee, circa 1960s

at BSC offices, and periodically organized school boycotts in which students stayed out of school and instead attended "Freedom Workshops" to protest these apartheid school conditions.[31]

Wendell Arthur Garrity Jr. (1920 – 1999) was a United States District Judge of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts

A particularly consequential set of legal and legislative battles ensued, Including In 1972 when the Boston's NAACP filed the class action lawsuit *Morgan v. Hennigan* in federal court on behalf of Black school parents. Judge Wendell Arthur Garrity ruled that Massachusetts had indeed supported two separate but unequal education systems based on race, and mandated busing Black students across neighborhood lines to White schools. Boston's violent conflict over busing is one of the most notorious in the country.

Today, Black students in Boston and Massachusetts face glaring opportunity and achievement gaps when compared to their more affluent White peers across key metrics of student success including reading and math proficiency, graduation rates, dropout rates, suspensions and expulsions, access to advanced work classes, and enrollment in selective exam schools.

Accompanied by motorcycle-mounted police, school buses carrying African American students arrive at formerly all-white South Boston High School on September 12, 1974, the first day of federal court-ordered busing to achieve racial balance in the city's de facto segregated schools. (Photo by Spencer Grant/Getty Images)

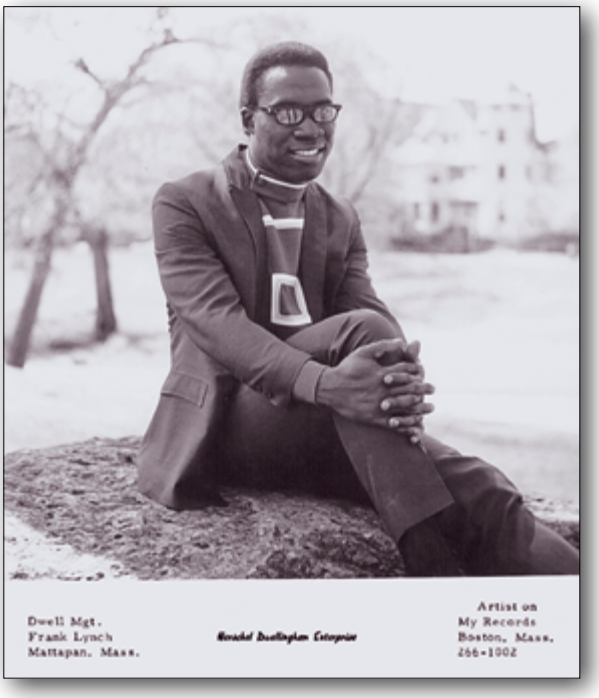
- In 2019, only one out four (25%) of the city's Black students in grades 3-8 were reading at grade level, compared to 62% of White students, according to English Language Arts MCAS scores.[32]
- Also in 2019, only 21% (or 1 out of 5) of Black students met or exceeded expectations on the Math MCAS in contrast to 62% of White students and 73% of Asian students.[33]

These large performance gaps have devastating consequences for Black children: research shows that students who are not proficient readers by third grade are four times less likely to graduate high school.[34] Meanwhile, in 2018-19, the state's Black student dropout rate was 2.6 times higher than it was for White students, and over five times the rate for Asian students.[35]

Data from 2020 show that there was a 9.3% 5-year high school graduation gap between Black and White BPS students.[36] This gap has severe consequences for Black students' life outcomes and

economic well-being: in 2020, those without a high school diploma earned $8,000 less in annual income than those with a high school diploma, and $34,000 less yearly income than those with a Bachelor's degree.[37] Based on these data, if the gap were closed, about 128 more Black students would have graduated. Therefore the graduation gap in 2020 alone cost over $1 million in lost income for the collective of those 128 Black BPS non-high school grads. That dollar figure balloons to over $4 million in lost income for these non-high school grads when compared to their peers who graduated college.

Despite generations of protest and resistance, Black people in Boston and in Massachusetts have been systematically relegated to a segregated and sub-standard system. As a result, harms in this Injury Area reproduce and exacerbate inequality in other domains. For instance, one study found that each additional year of attending a segregated school costs a Black student $1,000 in annual family income as an adult.[38] Conversely, Black students who attend well-resourced, integrated schools have higher academic achievement, are more likely to graduate high school and complete college, have higher adult earnings, better health, and lower incidences of poverty and incarceration.[39,40]



A promising young soul singer, Frank Lynch moved to Roxbury in the mid-'60s.
Photo courtesy of Herschel Dwellingham.

CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

While the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd in 2020 are well-known, there are countless more incidences of excess force and killings by police officers that time too easily forgot – like the 1970 murder of Boston's own Franklin Lynch, an uber talented singer who many say was a rising star destined to make hit records. Carly Carioli and Eli "Paperboy" Reed told the story in *Boston Magazine* in 2020. When Lynch injured his shoulder and presented to Boston City Hospital, he was also noted to exhibit erratic behavior that was strongly suggestive of mental illness. Instead of securing Lynch the psychiatric help he needed, he was ultimately gunned down – while an unarmed inpatient – by White officer, Walter Duggan, who happened to be guarding a hospitalized prisoner at that time. On April 5, 1970, a throng of Bostonians,

Boston police and night watch conveying Thomas Sims, a fugitive slave, to the ship that would take him back to the South. The large escort was intended to foil attempted rescues by abolitionists.
Anonymous from the firm of Worcester & Co.

including activists and doctors, marched carrying signs that read "Compensate the Lynch Family" and "Avenge Frank Now".[41]

Nevertheless, a series of clever procedural maneuverings by local law enforcement agencies culminated in Duggan never facing meaningful discipline or prosecution for his crime. Ironically, Lynch was later installed as the Boston Police Department's lead over the Community Disorders Unit, which was charged with protecting Black Bostonians from the onslaught of anti-Black violence brought on by Judge Garrity's landmark school desegregation ruling.[42]

This is one of many tragic examples of why N'COBRA asserts that the current criminal legal system is based on Jim Crow Era policies and practices, and continues to discriminate against, charge, and abuse Black people at alarmingly higher rates than Whites.[43]

How did this become the modus operandi of today's criminal legal system? The nation's first official police force was established in

A southern chain gang c. 1906.
Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Co.

Boston in 1838 to protect property, as Boston had become a prominent port moving high volumes of goods into and out of the city. Although this is considered to be the first "official" police force, there were traces of similar institutions in the prior centuries, such as watchmen, slave patrols, and the slave codes they enforced. However, even during the 1800s, police were often disguised as a new form of slave patrols, which were still extremely popular throughout the South. The modern police force that we have today didn't come about until 1909 under the infamous August Vollmer, who was the first police chief in Berkeley, California. Vollmer, who had past military experience, quickly transformed the police into a more militarized institution, which has had profound implications for use of force.[44]

A 2021 study in the journal *Science* evaluated roughly 3 million Chicago Police Department patrol assignments, and found that under comparable conditions, Black, Hispanic and female officers made fewer stops and arrests and used force less often than White officers.[45] Despite evidence suggesting that a more diverse police force could lead to less profiling of Black residents, the racial make-up of the Boston police force has always been majority White. The Boston Police Department reported in January 2021 that its department consists of 65% White officers, despite making up just 45% of the entire city.[46] In 2020, there were almost 4,000 arrests in Boston, of which 2,300 were Black – this figure represents nearly 60% of arrests, though Black people make up only 24% of the city's population.[47]

Adding insult to this Injury Area are policies around the notorious "War on Drugs" (particularly marijuana criminalization) and Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) practices. For example, the American Civil Liberties Union reported that in 2018, 2 years after Massachusetts legalized marijuana, Black people in the state were still arrested for marijuana-related offenses at 4x the rate that White people were.[48]

The 2016 decriminalization of cannabis in Massachusetts brought renewed hope that this would be the opportunity to right some of the wrongs in racially disparate cannabis-related arrests. Data published by the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission in 2021 reflect, at least so far, yet another unfulfilled commitment to racial equity: despite programs such as its Social Equity Program and Certified Economic Empowerment Priority Applicant status, out of the more than 18,000 individuals with cannabis licenses in the state, more than 13,000 (~71%) of them are White, while roughly 1,000 (or just 6%) are Black.[49]

The lackluster impact of CORI reforms reflect this same pattern: reforms designed (at least in part) to foster racial equity have nevertheless come up short. (And this observation says nothing about the harms disproportionately inflicted on Black Bostonians and Massachusetts residents with CORIs prior to these reforms.)

Protester across the street from Boston Common, Park Street Church in background in February 2010.
Photo by John Stephen Dwyer/wikimedia

The implementation of the CORI system in the 1970s has contributed to recidivism rates in Massachusetts because of the role it has played in preventing formerly incarcerated individuals from obtaining jobs, housing, and necessary social ties.[50] Of all the Black people who were released from a Massachusetts prison in 2015, 33% of Black men and 41% of Black women recidivated.[51] Despite the reforms CORI has undergone in 2010 and 2018, those convicted of offenses are still faced with barriers to adjusting and readapting to life outside of prison, leading to these rates of recidivism.

While economic consequences of incarceration dominate public discourse about life after release and recidivism, important health implications seem unrecognized and underappreciated. Studies suggest that a history of incarceration has long-term physical and mental health effects – and not just on the individual, but also on their families.[52, 53] Therefore, humane rehabilitation – that accounts for the whole person – after incarceration is critical to closing not only racial wealth gaps, but racial health gaps, too.

The systematic deprivation of power and privilege have directly led to local Black residents experiencing, on average, poorer health – a connection known as the social determinants of health.

HEALTH

The end of chattel slavery, of course, did not mean the beginning of a just, respectful, equitable, compassionate, and dignified health experience for Black people in the U.S. Despite these historical strides, the bodies and labor of Black bodies are still being exploited, and Black communities are in precarious conditions. These conditions remain without meaningful remedy because all levels of government have failed to acknowledge and repair the historical legacies of injustices and the afterlife of these injustices against Black people. This apathy towards the well-being of Black people is violent – it would fully condemn Black life, Black health, Black wealth, and Black humanity to a perpetual cycle of despair – were it not for Black resilience and resistance.

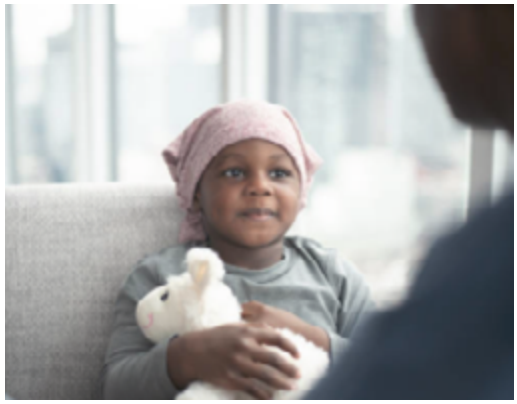
An examination of the health and well-being of local Black residents surfaces both past and present unethical and inhumane treatment. "The present Black health crisis is a continuum," say Drs. Linda A. Clayton and Michael W. Byrd, authors of *An American Health Dilemma*, the definitive historical account of anti-Black racism in the U.S. healthcare system.[54] The impact of slavery and Jim Crow on Black health began on the auction block more than 400 years ago and it is still telling on the bodies and spirits of local Black communities today, including those in Boston and in Massachusetts.

This systematic deprivation of power and privilege have directly led to local Black residents experiencing, on average, poorer health – a connection known as the social determinants of health. The social determinants of health include the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that contribute to their health.[55] Compounding this vicious entanglement of socioeconomic standing and well-being, are experiences with racism and discrimination both inside and outside of healthcare settings.

- In Massachusetts, a greater proportion of Black adults (20%) were more likely to report fair or poor health than White adults (12%).[56]

- In Massachusetts, maternal mortality data from 2015 shows that for Black women, the risk of dying in childbirth was almost double that for White women.[57]
- In *Killing the Black Body*, Professor Dorothy E. Roberts cites a 1972 front-page article of the Boston Globe that reported that "Boston City Hospital [conducted] hysterectomies on Black patients at high rates." [58]
- According to the National Center for Health Statistics (2017-2019), Massachusetts Black infants on average were about twice as likely as White infants to die during the first year of life.[59]
- A 2014 analysis of Black-White breast cancer mortality in the 50 largest U.S. cities determined that Boston has the 5th largest disparity.[60]
- Nearly 2 in every 5 White Boston residents diagnosed with cancer are treated at Dana Farber Cancer Institute (one of the country's preeminent cancer treatment centers) compared to 1 in 5 Black residents.[61]
- Between 2002 and 2013, Black people in Massachusetts had higher rates of asthma hospitalization than their White, non-Hispanic counterparts.[62]
- In a 2021 qualitative investigation of what quality maternal care means to people of color in Boston, non-Hispanic Black participants shared that they were "always or usually treated poorly in hospital due to race, ethnicity, cultural background, or language."[63]

While Black people did not create the conditions that contributed to outcomes like these, the Black community has the answers to which types of emancipation and liberatory policies can generate the intergenerational returns that are worthy of the community. Reparation is the process that would marshall and put to use long-overdue investments needed to promote the flourishing of local Black residents.

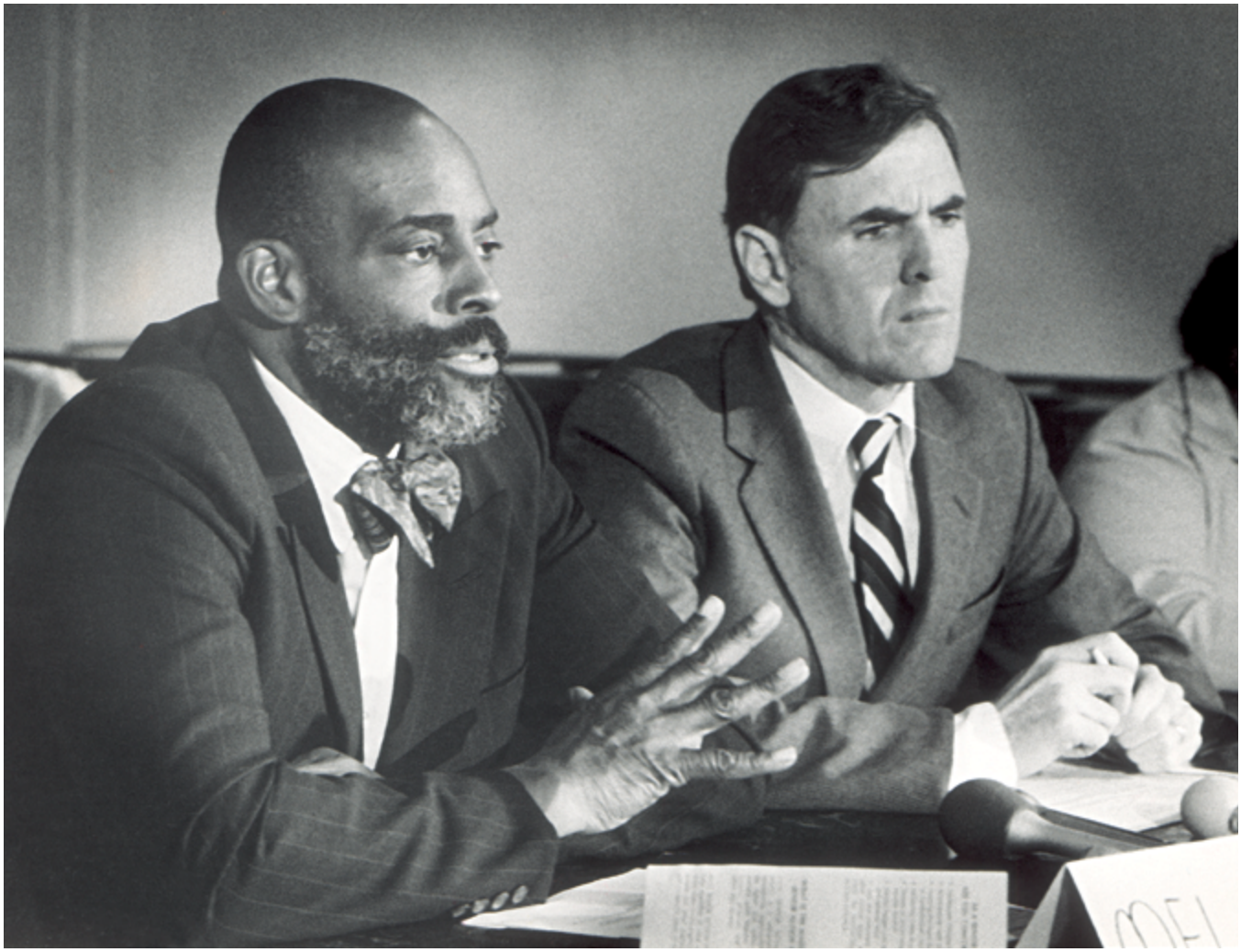


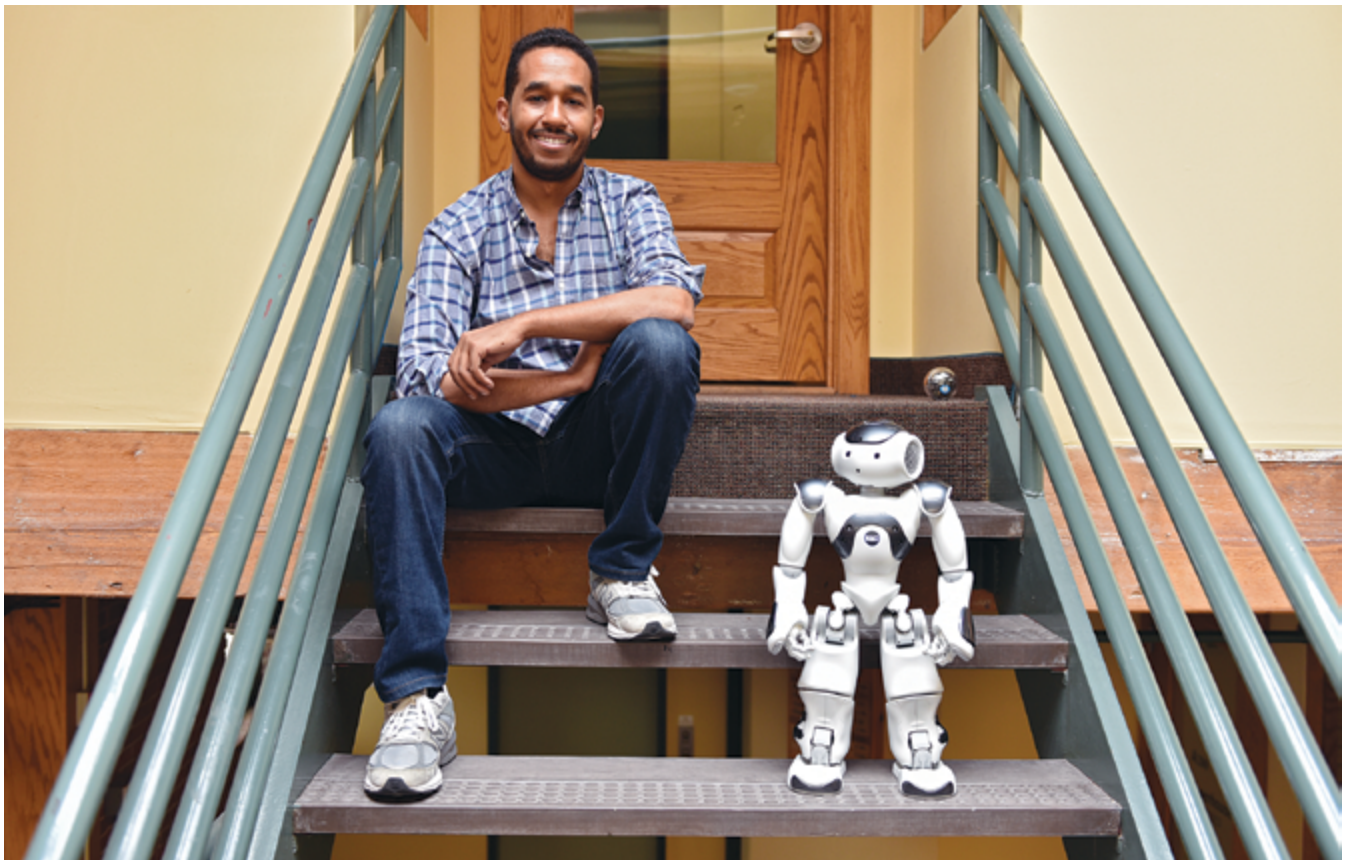
INCOME & WEALTH

Income and Wealth as an Injury Area deeply undergirds the other Areas represented in this report. The wealth gap between Black and White people in America is a direct, intentional, and generational result of the transatlantic slave trade and capitalism. According to N'COBRA, barriers to jobs that pay a liveable wage and to homeownership have been go-to tactics for blocking and withholding economic power from Black people.[64]

Massachusetts was the first colony to legalize slavery in 1641,[65] codifying the commodification of human beings – most often, Black people. Many mercantile families in Boston profited from this trade. By the late 17th century, more than half the ships in Boston's Harbor at any one time were involved in the West Indian slave

A major focus of Mel King's campaign for mayor in 1983 was income inequality based on race.
Photo by Getty Images from *The Boston Foundation in the City of Ideas 1915-2015*



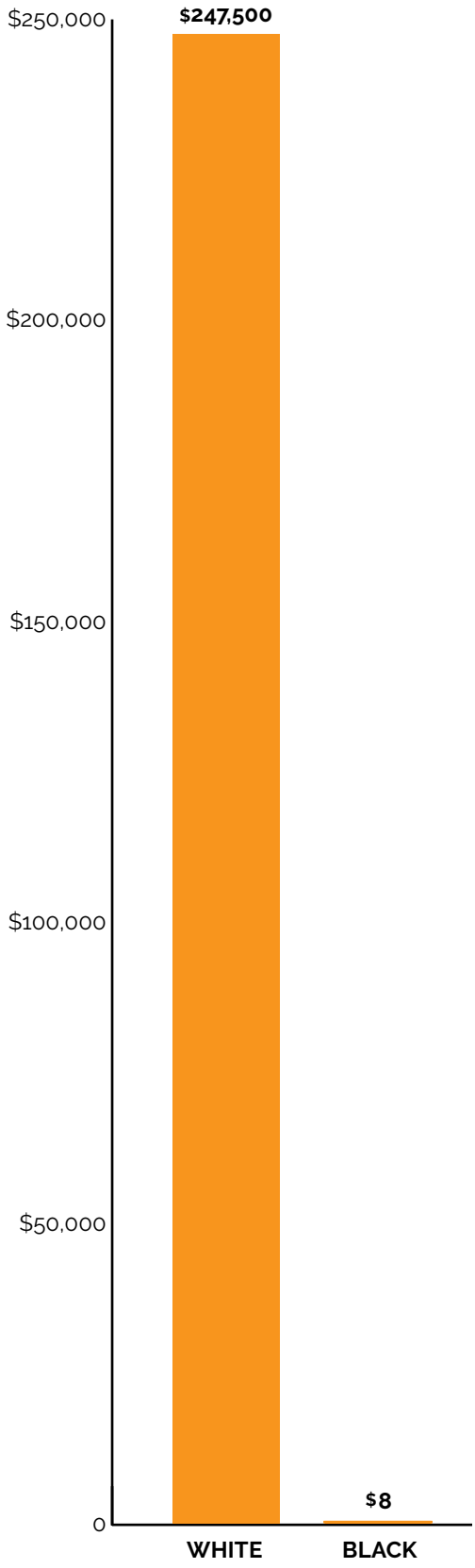


Rick Fredkin's business, Eduporium, provides STEM products, such as the Sphero robot, to schools.
Photo by Craig Bailey..

trade.[66] According to one historian, "the region in many ways depended on plantation slavery – those plantations were simply offshore."[67] The New England colonies provided the investment capital, farmed crops, livestock and fish to fuel the West Indian plantations, which in turn produced the highly profitable sugar consumed by European and colonial elites.[68] These profits lined the pockets of New England investors.

The local plunder of Black wealth was therefore first codified with the legality of slavery in Massachusetts in 1641. It continued with subsequent redlining and other barriers to resources and opportunity that Boston put in place over the centuries following the abolishment of slavery in Massachusetts in 1780.[69] In Boston, modern manifestations of this plunder include the way debt is distributed in the city. Compared to White Bostonians, Black residents are less likely to own homes, but for those who do, they are much more likely than White homeowners to have mortgage debt. Black households are also much more likely to have student

Average Net Assets
2015, MA



loans and medical debt, all factors contributing to the city's wealth disparity.[70]

Boston's Black-White wealth disparity is stark: a 2015 Boston Federal Reserve report found that while the average net assets held by a White household in Boston was $247,500, the average net assets held by a U.S. born-Black household was only $8. This finding is consistent with previous analyses that showed that in 1863, Black families held only 0.5% of the wealth in the United States, and over 150 years later, still only held less than 2% of that wealth.[71]

While homeownership is one important way families build wealth, entrepreneurship is another potential pathway. However, it is said that "talent is equally distributed but opportunity is not"[72]: Boston data describing where the city of Boston spent contract money illustrates this idea. Between 2014 and 2019, Black-owned businesses were awarded a dismaying 0.4% of the total city contract dollars. Of the 2.1 billion dollars the city had to spend, it spent less than ten million on Black-owned business.[73] Black unemployment numbers similarly reflect a phenomenon the Black community knows well: "last hired, first hired." A pre- pandemic 2014 analysis found that Black Bostonians had the highest unemployment rate at 13.5%,[74] and more recent numbers during the pandemic show that Black-White unemployment gaps only widened.

These gaps have their origin in Massachusetts legalizing slavery and therefore defining Black people as chattel that could be bought and sold, but who could not buy or sell for themselves. Later, a combination of inadequate educational opportunities within the public schools, discriminatory housing policies, mass incarceration of Black people, and the use of the CORI Registry only deepened the racial wealth gap between Black and White people. These are at the root of why Black families in this region and more broadly, the nation, have been locked out of attaining and transferring wealth to their families. This is particularly noteworthy, considering how much economic stability factors into overall well-being and flourishing.

CHAPTER 3

Conclusions

From Redcoats on the Freedom Trail to the Red Sox, from local stops on the Underground Railroad to the MBTA, the past and the present have long lived side by side here in the region. Similarly, the enduring legacies of discriminatory policies of the past linger in the present in the bodies, spirits, and experiences of local Black residents.

The decisions made today will determine whether these harms follow us into the future.

In this watershed moment in which the nation is grappling anew with racial equity, the impetus to act is an urgent one. The challenges facing Black communities in the city and in the state are urgent, and pressing in on all sides and across all sectors. From Income & Wealth to Health, Black people have had to overcome obstacles rooted in the racist policy decisions and problematic perspectives of the powerful. If policymakers and the constituents charged with holding them accountable fail to move forward an agenda for meaningful repair, these harms threaten to hold hostage yet another generation – not just Black people, but truly everyone.

If the devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic imparted any lesson, it's that destiny is a collective notion and not just a personal one. Everyone pays when systemic inequities go unchecked. For instance, a study from the University of California Center for Civil Rights Remedies estimates that patterns of racial bias in school suspensions cost U.S.

The challenges facing Black communities in the city and in the state are urgent, and pressing in on all sides and across all sectors.

taxpayers $35 billion dollars each year because suspensions often lead to students dropping out and other problems.[75] In contrast, everyone stands to benefit when equity is prioritized and racial gaps are narrowed or closed. A 2019 McKinsey & Company analysis estimates that closing the Black-White racial gap could add between 1 and 1.5 trillion dollars to the U.S. economy by 2028.[76]

Reparations present an opportunity for repair and collective healing from the past. Though the Injury Areas highlighted in this report reflect deep and painful wounds inflicted across generations, they are not impossible to heal. Ongoing injustices are not impossible to resist.

While this report elaborates on the injustices committed against Black people, it also highlights a steady drumbeat of resistance by Black people. Benjamin Roberts' courageous 1849 court battle to ensure a quality education for his Black daughter paved the way for Ruth Batson and the NAACP to challenge de facto segregation in Boston public schools more than a century later – and examples like these richly abound. May they inspire a fresh wave of imagination of what's possible.

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