

# REPAIRING THE BREACH



The Justice League of Greater Lansing Michigan has cemented our commitment to healing and becoming the Beloved Community by **making the connection between faith and racial justice in the form of reparations**. In the Greater Lansing area, reparations will mainly be committed from predominately white Houses of Worship as part of their efforts to **repair the breach** caused by centuries of slavery, inequality of wealth accumulation, and the failure to live into God's Plan of equality for all of humanity.



## Why reparations for Lansing area Black citizens?

Racial prejudice was never just a southern problem. Racism was built into housing, education, and health systems – even in Michigan. Up until World War II, signs were proudly displayed throughout Michigan, reading “We want white tenants in our white community.”

Racism was especially prevalent when it came to housing.

In 1929, Earl Little bought a home in the whites-only Lansing subdivision of Westmont. The home was burned to the ground. He was later beaten and placed on Lansing streetcar tracks to be run over. Little left seven small children, including six-year-old Malcolm, who would later be widely known as Malcolm X.

Redlining was a federal policy whereby communities were split into zones based on which areas could get federal mortgage backing and which could not. Black citizens were almost entirely segregated in these redlined areas and often forced to live in homes they were buying on contract, meaning they acquired no equity until the homes were completely paid off.

74 percent of redlined areas are still heavily segregated and at a severe economic disadvantage today according to the National Community Reinvestment Coalition.

Between 1963-67, urban renewal projects destroyed Lansing area Black communities. The I-496 project bisected a vibrant Black community in the SW capitol area. An appraiser would appear one day at the door, telling them how much their home was worth, how much they could get for it, and advising them not to fight city hall because they wouldn't win. No relocation assistance was offered at that time. Renters and those who were buying their home on contract received absolutely nothing. 890 homes in total were taken. Countless businesses and churches were wiped out.

Meanwhile, in East Lansing and neighboring communities, home deeds had restrictive covenants that forbade the selling of homes to “any person or persons [other] than those of the Caucasian race.” A Black person wouldn't be able to purchase home until 1968.

## What are faith-based reparations?

Holy scripture calls us fix this world that humans have broken.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

- Isaiah 58:12

Through all the area fights for equitable housing, it's important to note that Lansing and East Lansing churches were on the front lines, using the power of the pulpit and voices of their congregations to push officials to adopt open housing policies.

Despite these actions, churches that are predominately white have benefited from redlining and other racist policies. Their churches and their members have not had the same obstacles buying homes, educating their children, dealing with financial institutions, or seeking medical treatment as Black citizens have faced.

In 1969, the National Black Economic Development Conference met in Detroit, Michigan, adopting James Forman's The Black Manifesto, demanding \$500 million in reparations for the mistreatment of African Americans from white churches and synagogues.

“(W)e know that the churches and synagogues have a tremendous wealth,” the manifesto stated, “and its membership, white America, has profited and still exploits black people.”

Faith-based reparations have already started in communities across the country.

Memorial Episcopal Church in Baltimore was founded by a slave owner. Last year, they created a \$500,000 fund for reparations to the Black community.

Other churches have finally started paying royalties (in the form of donations to non-profits for Black youth) for hymns that were composed by Black people.

## What do we propose?

We will create an endowment fund through contributions from faith-based and individual donors as well as corporate and community-based organizations.

We will build an advisory council made up of Lansing area Black citizens from different sectors in the community, to manage the fund.

We will ensure the fund supports education scholarships, home ownership support, and business startup funds for Lansing area Black residents.

To learn more and view our sources for information contained in this flier, please scan to QR code below.



*For more information regarding the Justice League of Greater Lansing Michigan,  
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