

RES 24-025

Wilmington, Delaware
May 2, 2024

#0425

Sponsor:

Council
President
Congo

Co-Sponsors:

Council
Members
Johnson
Bracy
Oliver
B. Fields
White
Darby

WHEREAS, the *City Council Reparations Taskforce to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States*, or the "Taskforce," was established by Resolution 20-080 as amended; and

WHEREAS, the Wilmington City Council 2022-2025 Strategic Plan has set forth a goal of supporting a "Transparent and Well-Represented Wilmington" by facilitating the "study and development of reparations proposals for African Americans, in accordance with Resolution 20-080"; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 23-050 approved a modification to the timeline for the submission of the Taskforce's report to facilitate adherence to the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) conventions established by Chapter 100, Title 29 of the Delaware State Code, pertaining to public bodies. The submission date for the Taskforce's report was extended to March 31, 2024, to enable the Taskforce to solicit public feedback and synthesize its findings and recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Taskforce have identified and examined "issues of systemic racial disparity, racist practices and procedures and/or institutional discrimination against African Americans, resulting from the delivery or provision of City government services or the implementation or effect of City policies, and resulting from the delivery or provision of other government-provided services or widely implemented business practices or the implementation or effect of government policies or business practices" in the domains of policing; housing and economic disparity; education; health; and environmental justice; and

WHEREAS, the Taskforce has submitted findings and recommendations to City Council, a copy of which is attached hereto as Attachment A, that summarize the history of such issues in the City of Wilmington, describe their impacts on the City’s African American population, and make recommendations for redress that are either in the purview of Council or could be brought to the attention of the appropriate entities by Council through outreach; and

WHEREAS, the Taskforce’s report builds on a preponderance of scholarly and legal evidentiary documentation regarding the ongoing effects of the institution of slavery and its legacy of persistent systemic structures of discrimination on living African Americans and society in the City of Wilmington, as well as the State of Delaware and United States of America more broadly; and

WHEREAS, it is the solemn duty of this Council to promote equity, fairness, and quality of life for all residents. This Legislative body’s efforts to conscientiously assess its laws and policies and undertake corrective action, when warranted, include but are not limited to Resolution 21-018- A Resolution to Conduct a Disparity Study Regarding Economic Development and Healthcare Access and Opportunity in Wilmington, sponsored by late Councilwoman Rasheema Dixon; Resolution 22-073 A Resolution to Adopt the Report Titled “Landscape Analysis Report for the City of Wilmington”; the establishment of the Wilmington Civil Rights Commission by Ordinance 18-001; the initiation of a Citizen Complaint Review Board by Substitute 1 to Ordinance 20-034; the adoption of a Fees and Fines Taskforce by Resolution 22-069; maintaining appropriate representation on the Wilmington Learning Collaborative (WLC) Council, and the establishment of a Residency Taskforce to advise on how best to recruit from within our City’s talent pool and attract new expertise to our community; and

WHEREAS, the report produced by the Taskforce constitutes a significant contribution to the City's ongoing strides to acknowledge, evaluate, and address the impacts of past and present laws and policies on the quality of life and well-being of Wilmingtonians, particularly with regard to African Americans who are descendants of persons enslaved in the United States. It will serve as a guiding document for continued dialogue concerning racial disparities in the City of Wilmington.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that this Legislative body accepts into the record the report titled "African American Reparation Report for the City of Wilmington: Addressing Historical Injustices and Building a Path to Equity and Access." The analysis of the barriers to racial equity issued by the *City Council Reparations Taskforce to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States* will be taken under advisement by the Council of the City of Wilmington as it works to uphold its commitment to a "Transparent and Well-Represented Wilmington" for all Wilmingtonians.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Council expresses strong support for collaboration with the relevant State and federal agencies to bring meaningful and lasting change for those who have experienced the generational impacts of slavery and its ensuing legacies of institutional racism and structural violence that have restricted opportunity for countless individuals in the City of Wilmington.

Passed by City Council,
May 2, 2024

ATTEST: Maribel Seijo
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution formally accepts the report produced by the members of the *City Council Reparations Taskforce to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States*, or the "Taskforce," pursuant Resolution 20-080 as amended and Resolution 23-050.

ATTACHMENT A

(Report of the City Council Reparations Taskforce to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, with a Special Consideration for African Americans Who are Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the United States)

AFRICAN AMERICAN REPARATION REPORT FOR THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, DELAWARE.

**A d d r e s s i n g H i s t o r i c a l I n j u s t i c e s a n d
B u i l d i n g a P a t h t o E q u i t y a n d A c c e s s**

**Prepared by the
City of Wilmington Reparations Task Force
March 27, 2024**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The foundational principles of justice and equality that underpin American democracy have not been fully achieved for African Americans. African Americans were brutally enslaved and used to advance the development of the U.S. without adequate compensation. After slavery was abolished, African Americans were denied jobs, education, social security, financial credit, voting rights, labor unions, and even the right to life.

In Wilmington, the enduring presence of these remnants of injustice is a testament to the ongoing socio-economic challenges. Life expectancy is lowest for African American residents in Wilmington among other ethnicity, and poverty is highest in their neighborhoods. They are also exposed to high levels of environmental pollution with worrisome health disparities. While many African American homes in Wilmington were demolished for public projects, the practice of denying mortgages in these neighborhoods was evident.

While the lingering effects of these historic injustices laid the foundation for the present enduring challenges of African Americans in Wilmington, the current lack of adequate access to opportunities hinders their ability to improve their standard of living and accumulate intergenerational wealth. Reparations therefore are crucial steps towards rectifying the past and the ongoing sufferings. An apology with tangible forms of restitution is recommended.

INTRODUCTION

The call for reparation for African Americans¹ in acknowledgment of the enduring impact of slavery and decades of discrimination has reverberated through different media platforms over the years but has not been given the needed consideration. The bedrock principles of justice and equality upon which the U.S. democracy stands have not been fully realized for African Americans.

The stark reality of this dark chapter in American history is evident in the fact that enslaved African Americans² were compelled to contribute their labor, a fundamental aspect of their humanity, without compensation³. Slavery was specifically brutal⁴ in the U.S. because slaves were mercilessly whipped, shackled, hanged, burnt, and mutilated. Female slaves were raped and pregnancy was not a barrier for lashings. The families of slaves frequently endured separation due to sales, leading to the heartbreaking reality of never reuniting with their loved relatives again.

” Without federal land compensation or any compensation, many ex-slaves were forced into sharecropping, tenancy farming, convict-leasing, or some form of menial labor arrangements aimed at keeping them economically subservient and tied to land owned by former slaveholders”.

¹ Descendants of African slaves in the U.S.

² <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery>

³ <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/summer/slave-pension.html>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treatment_of_slaves_in_the_United_States#CITEREFMoore,_Slavery

The establishment of slavery in the U.S. was justified by a complex system of laws that rationalized and formalized the enduring and continuous enslavement of African Americans for many generations.

This exploitation was not only a violation of African Americans' basic human rights but also a cornerstone upon which the earlier economic growth of the United States was built. The U.S. gross domestic product significantly increased between 1800 and 1860 due to wealth from slavery⁵. Nearly half of the U.S. had working slaves before it was abolished.

“The over 4 million African American slaves in 1860 worth more than \$3.5 billion, and this was the largest single financial assets in the United States that worth more than United States manufacturing and railway combined.”

Raheemah Jabbar-Bey

African Americans served as free labor to amass generational wealth for the White population during slavery. While slavery lasted for about 250 years⁶, Its impact continued as African Americans faced an additional 90 years of Jim Crow Laws⁷ that entrenched economic oppression, disenfranchisement, and segregation. African Americans have been denied jobs, education, social security, financial credit, voting rights, labor unions, and even the right to life⁸.

⁵ <https://equitablegrowth.org/new-research-shows-slaverys-central-role-in-u-s-economic-growth-leading-up-to-the-civil-war/>

⁶ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/slavery-freedom>

⁷ <https://blackcitizenship.nyhistory.org/the-rise-of-jim-crow/>

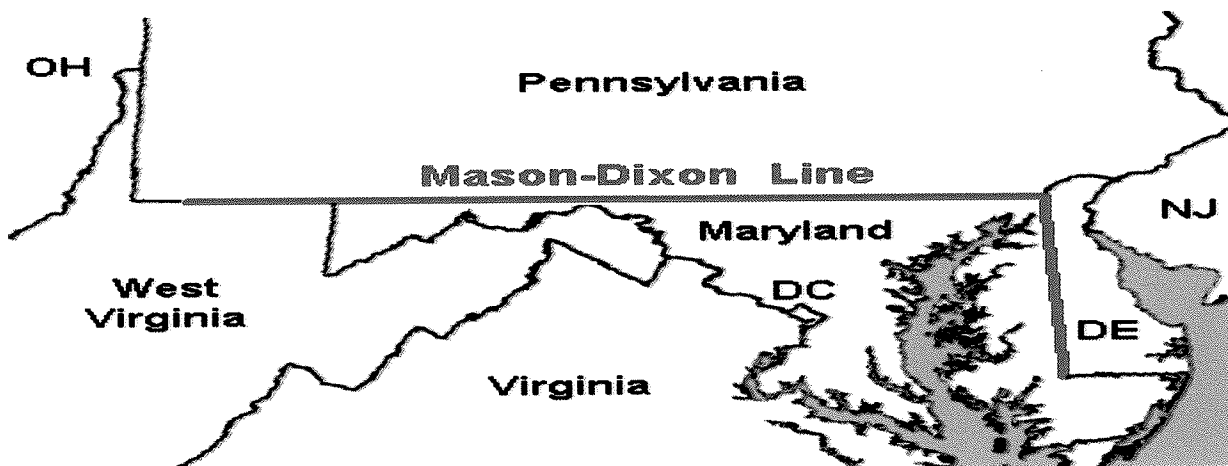
⁸ <https://nyupress.org/9780814793992/lynching-in-america/>

HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

The first recorded⁹ instance of an enslaved African American in Delaware was Anthony Swart who was captured by Skipper of the Grip in 1638 and brought to Wilmington (Fort Christina) in 1639 to serve Governor Johan Printz in the New Sweden colony. The narrative surrounding Anthony Swart's importation to Wilmington did not only serve as a critical point of reflection on the complex and troubling history of slavery in Delaware but the entire U.S.

The Mason-Dixon survey¹⁰ made a significant part of Delaware a Pennsylvanian State, and an estimated 2,000-5,000 slaves lived in Pennsylvania, and the three lower counties in Delaware (New Castle, Kent, and Sussex) by 1721. Kent and Sussex Counties had more slaves than New Castle because their economy hugely depended on tobacco as a cash crop, and this required more slaves and harder labor.

As the labor-intensive tobacco and corn economy grew in the United States, the population of slaves in Delaware also increased.



<https://www.risingsunmd.org/departments/division.php?structureid=51>

⁹ <https://www.nps.gov/people/anthony-swart.htm>

¹⁰ <https://www.risingsunmd.org/departments/division.php?structureid=51>

As of 1810, nearly 80% of African American slaves were free¹¹ in Delaware, and Wilmington became a progressive place to live because it had great abolitionists such as Bishop Peter Spencer who was born as a slave, but later became the father of Delaware's independent Black church movement. Wilmington also served as an escape route for slaves in Delaware through the Underground Railroad, and the support of Quakers such as Thomas Garrett and a few others.

This possibly explained the movement of free Blacks from other Delaware counties to Wilmington however, the Black people in Delaware were still controlled by an Act of 1700 titled "For the Trial of Negroes". This code outlined a range of offenses and their corresponding punishments for Black people either enslaved or free. The black codes centered around vagrancy laws which stipulated that any Black individual unable to demonstrate employment under a White employer could be arrested. Some crimes were even applicable only to Black people, and the penalties varied from lashings to execution by hanging¹².

The majority of slaves and free Black people in Delaware were farm laborers and domestic servants. The presence of free African Americans in Delaware in the 1820s became such a concern that the Union Colonization¹³ Society in Wilmington collaborated with some state

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DDnJnOuJ4E>

¹² <https://www.dccc.edu/dockets-exhibit>

¹³ <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/essays/wilmington-delaware/>

legislators to propose the removal of "free negroes and mulattoes" for the well-being of the state's White residents. These prolonged years of systemic injustices have cast a long shadow over the economic prosperity of African Americans, resulting in a pronounced and persistent racial disparity.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL JUSTIFICATION OF REPARATION IN WILMINGTON

The 19th and 20th centuries were tumultuous times for African Americans in many areas of the United States and Wilmington was not an exception to the high racial violence in the U.S. African Americans experienced extreme torture, mutilation, decapitation, desecration, and lynching. One example is George White, a Black farmer, who was lynched on Tuesday, June 23, 1903, in Wilmington. He was tied to a stake and burned¹⁴.

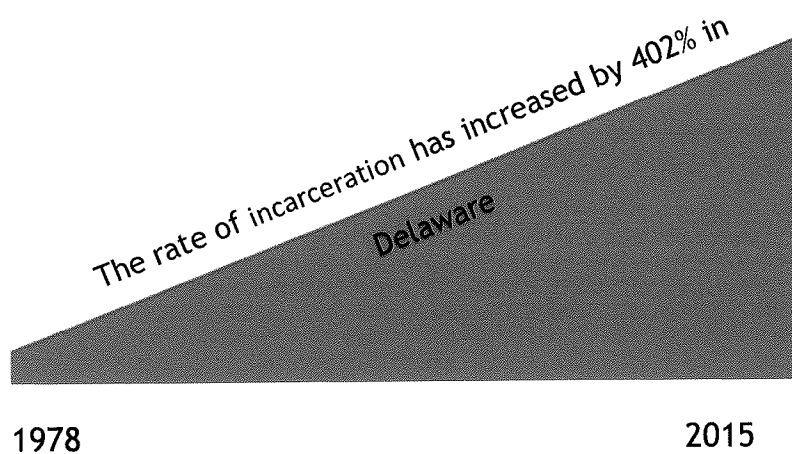
Lynching primarily targeted Black people. White mobs frequently used questionable criminal accusations as a pretext for lynching. Many victims were even killed without any allegations of wrongdoing¹⁵.

¹⁴ <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/jun/23>

¹⁵ <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/history-lynching-america>

MASS INCARCERATION AND OVER-POLICING

Jim Crow in Wilmington like other places within the United States placed African Americans under severe oppression. Research¹⁶ shows that Black people are more prone to police stops, pretrial detentions, facing charges for minor offenses, and receiving harsher sentences compared to Caucasian counterparts, even after adjusting for factors such as offense severity.



Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased by 1,200%, and the number of women in prison has increased by 458%.

From 1978 to 2015, the rate of incarceration increased significantly in Delaware. Black people accounted¹⁷ for 86.8% of those who received prison sentences for drug offenses and most of them are from the City of Wilmington. While significant racial disparities persist in the realm of incarceration for African Americans in Delaware, there has been a noticeable and widening gap for the City of Wilmington. Since 1978, the incarceration rate for Black people in Delaware has risen by 104%.

¹⁶ <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/for-the-record-unjust-burden-racial-disparities.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/RaceIncarceration.pdf>

In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at a rate 4.1 times higher than that of White individuals. The presence of Black women among those incarcerated in Delaware is on the rise. Since 1980, the incarcerated female¹⁸ population has surged by 1,200%. In all the cities in Delaware, Wilmington stands out with the worrisome record¹⁹ of having the highest number of city residents in prison. The likelihood of Black people being arrested for minor and non-violent offenses in Wilmington was nearly four times higher than that of White individuals.

The cash bail system also perpetuates significant racial disparities in pretrial outcomes²⁰. African Americans are less likely to afford cash bail than their White peers hence, many of them remain incarcerated pending trial than their White peers in similar situations. African Americans are more frequently assigned cash bail and in higher amounts compared to their White counterparts. African Americans are also less likely to be released without conditions, leading to pronounced racial inequalities in pretrial incarceration rates.

There is a significant positive correlation²¹ between incarceration and other disparities therefore, the mass incarceration of African Americans in Wilmington diminishes the support, earning potential, academic success, and family stability of African American households inclusive of those with children.

¹⁸ <https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-delaware.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/origin/de/2020/report.html>

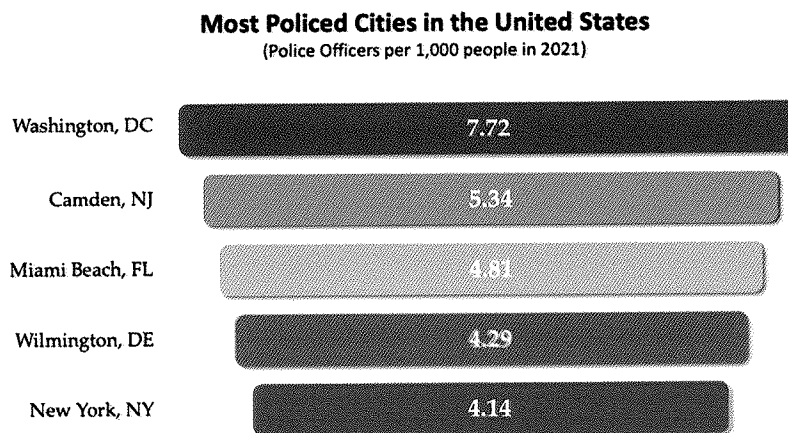
²⁰ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-case-for-cash-bail-reform/#:~:text=Cash%20bail%20criminalizes%20poverty%20and,racial%20disparities%20in%20pretrial%20outcomes>

²¹ <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/resource/connections-among-poverty-incarceration-and-inequality/>

The incarceration of family members is also linked to heightened mental and physical health issues. Children²² with incarcerated family members are involved in risky behaviors at a rate three times higher, and five times more likely to enter the criminal justice system than their counterparts. An examination²³ conducted in 2019 across the U.S. unveiled a connection between elevated incarceration levels and increased rates of both morbidity (poor or fair health) and mortality (reduced life expectancy).

Black individuals make up a disproportionate 80% of the arrests conducted by the Wilmington Police Department as of March 2020.

Wilmington was one of the top five most heavily policed²⁴ cities in the United States with 302 police officers in 2021, or about 4.3 for every 1,000 people. This was well above the average of 2.2 officers per 1,000 people across all cities in the U.S.



https://www.thecentersquare.com/delaware/wilmington-de-is-one-of-the-most-heavily-policed-cities-in-the-country/article_ef1babcf-4935-5eb2-8675-1fab7e0118c7.html

²² <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/incarceration>

²³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352827319300874>

²⁴ https://www.thecentersquare.com/delaware/wilmington-de-is-one-of-the-most-heavily-policed-cities-in-the-country/article_ef1babcf-4935-5eb2-8675-1fab7e0118c7.html

It is also on record that the protest that ensued after the death of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 prompted Governor Terry to order 2,800 strong National Guard military members to patrol Wilmington, ostensibly to "maintain peace", but involving the use of excessive force against the Black community.

This presence of the military in Wilmington during these years led to the exodus of working-class families from West Center City and other inner-city neighborhoods in Wilmington. The population of Wilmington declined from 95,000 in 1960 to slightly above 70,000 in 1980.

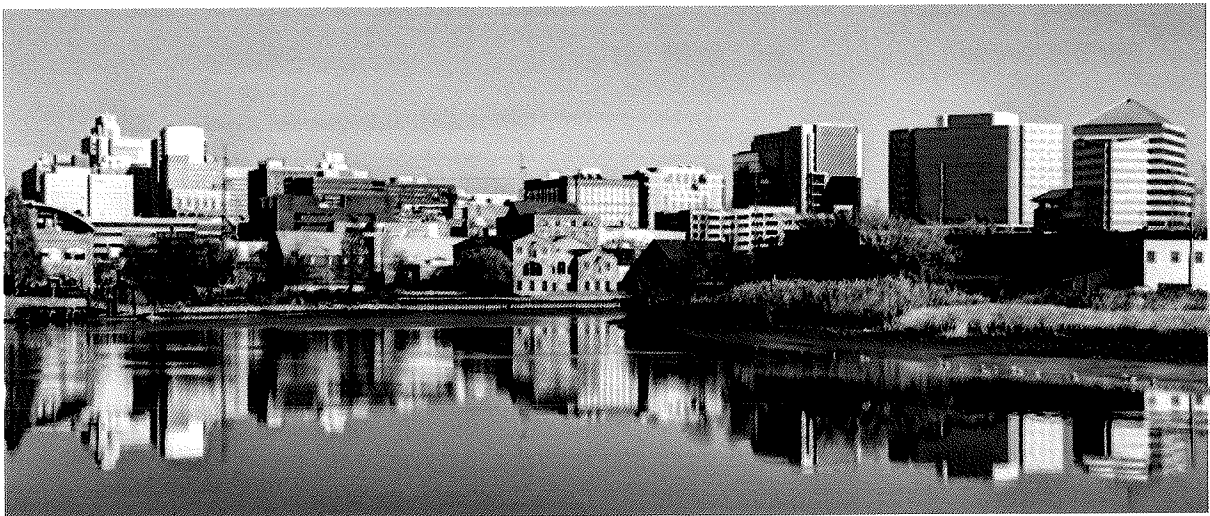
Within one week of the occupation, Mayor Babiarez requested the withdrawal of the soldiers, but Governor Terry refused, citing unspecified intelligence reports of potential renewed, and more violent racial disturbances. James Baker, former mayor of Wilmington, highlighted²⁵ that the nine-month military occupation exacerbated conditions on the West Side, and in other predominantly Black neighborhoods in Wilmington.

The Sentencing Project reported, "Truly meaningful reforms to the criminal justice system cannot be accomplished without acknowledgment of its racist underpinnings". Essentially, substantial reforms to the criminal justice system in Wilmington and Delaware as a whole require recognition of its underlying racist foundation and reparation.

²⁵ https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/20151222_Did_1968_occupation_of_Wilmington_spark_decline_.html

HOUSING DISPARITIES IN WILMINGTON

African Americans in Wilmington were also largely affected by the widespread racial housing discrimination in the U.S. During the 1900s, numerous public housing complexes were constructed separately for African Americans based on the belief that Whites needed protection from the free Blacks. Little Italy, Greek towns, and Irish communities were different from Black neighborhoods in Wilmington.



The demographic composition of Wilmington is not a consequence of the private choices made by Black families because it directly stems from the urban planning policies crafted and executed over several decades by the government. While the Supreme Court ended residential segregation on November 5, 1917, the segregated structure remains. Unlike the European immigrants, African Americans were restricted to areas initially designated²⁶ by municipal ordinances, and later by private racially restrictive covenants.

²⁶ <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/opinion/contributors/2013/12/24/government-strategies-helped-dismantle-wilmingtons-communities/4194747/>

The construction of I-95 through African American communities in Wilmington also played a role in their instability. In June 1951, Wilmington City Council approved Adams-Jackson highway route, and between 1960 and 1968, a substantial number of African American homes in Wilmington disappeared beneath the eight lanes entering the city from the southwest, and cutting through the western neighborhoods.

Eugene Young, the director of the Delaware State Housing Authority, expressed disappointment as he observed the changes that have occurred in the neighborhood he once referred to as his home.

Altogether, 507 homes, 50 business buildings, 48 garages, two churches, one public school, one private school, and one theater were torn down, resulting in the displacement of 926 families, all to clear the path for the highway²⁷. WHY²⁸ reported that the population of Wilmington fell from 95,827 to 80,386 between 1960 and 1970. African Americans were adversely affected because the demolished neighborhood was Wilmington's Black downtown featuring important institutions such as homes, businesses, restaurants, jazz clubs, theaters, and more.

Significantly, Mother African Union Methodist Protestant Church²⁹ on French Street, the oldest free colored church in America and the church where thousands of African Americans

²⁷ <https://www.udel.edu/udaily/2022/december/interstate-95-i95-highway-construction-impact-research/>

²⁸ <https://why.org/articles/as-major-i-95-construction-starts-in-wilmington-a-look-back-at-the-road-that-split-the-city/>

²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A.U.M.P._Church

gathered for the annual celebration of their religious freedom in the United States, was destroyed in 1969 and members were dispersed.

African Americans in Wilmington were also victims of the racially restrictive covenants in all federally insured mortgages. This emanated from the 1930s housing policy that featured structural racism where government maps segregated Black residential areas and tagged them as risky for Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) investments, while the White communities were tagged desirable for this same investment.

The official redlining map for Wilmington was not drawn, but the practice of denying mortgages in Wilmington's Black communities was evident. Racist FHA policies and their implementation by banks, builders, and the government limited mobility and opportunities to build wealth for generations of Black families. FHA financed the construction of suburban homes in New Castle County.

Many deeds prohibiting the sale of houses to Black families are on record in areas like Westover Hills, Brandywine Hills, Wawaset Park, and more in New Castle County, Delaware.

Additionally, New Castle County's property tax³⁰ valuations have remained unchanged since 1983. This would have resulted in certain houses being over-assessed compared to their actual value. Black owners of lower-value homes could be paying a higher percentage of their actual property value in taxes than owners of higher-value homes.

In particular, Wilmington's vacant property law imposes \$500 to \$5,000 on owners' vacant properties, determined by the duration of vacancy, and while \$6.4 million was budgeted for the Department³¹ of Real Estate and Housing for 2024, only \$130,000 was allocated for the maintenance of vacant properties.

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN WILMINGTON

Evidence³² in 2019 revealed that, on average, White Americans possess seven times the wealth of their Black counterparts. Despite comprising nearly 13% of the U.S. population, Black people hold less than 3% of the nation's total wealth. 19% of Black households have zero or negative net worth, whereas only 9% of White families find themselves in such financial circumstances.

³⁰ <https://delawarebusinesstimes.com/news/property-tax-assessment-required-5-years/>

³¹ <https://www.wilmingtoncitycouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Ord.-23-030-Rev.-1-0340-Constituting-Amendment-No.-1-to-the-Fiscal-Year-2024-Operating-Budget-Ordinance-cj-1.pdf>

³² <https://www.wilmingtoncitycouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/4830-Resolution-Declare-Racism-as-a-Public-Health-Crisis-and-to-Enact-Equity-in-all-Policies-of-the-City-of-Wilmington-and-State-of-Delaware.pdf>

The economic challenges in Wilmington are concentrated among African American residents, leading to a disproportionate impact of poverty on Black communities. The disparities in income, employment opportunities, and access to resources contribute to the unequal distribution of economic well-being, with a significant portion of African Americans facing higher levels of financial hardship compared to other demographic groups in the area.

The unemployment rate³³ for Blacks in Wilmington exceeded that of Whites by more than five percentage points in recent years. In 2019, Wilmington's median income of \$40,065 was significantly lower than the national median income of the U.S. which stands at \$55,322.

The poverty rate in Wilmington surpasses that of Dover by more than double and is nearly three times higher than the overall state poverty rate.

This disparity is linked to the substantial Black population, constituting 57% of the residents, with a median household income of \$30,034, which is just half of the \$60,772 median household income for White residents in Wilmington. City-Data³⁴ showed that 9.8% of residents in Wilmington in 2022 had incomes below the poverty level, marking a 68.6% increase compared to the statewide poverty rate of 9.4% in Delaware. Record³⁵ shows that Black families have the highest income poverty rate in Wilmington.

³³<https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/1/11314/files/2021/03/Racial-Divisions-Remain-Deep-in-Delaware-Sept-2017.pdf>

³⁴ <https://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Wilmington-Delaware.html>

³⁵ https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/resources/RWD__Profile_Wilmington.pdf

Delaware's child poverty rate³⁶ of 17.5% in 2021 was higher than that of Maryland (12.1%) and New Jersey (14.0%). Although, the prevalence of elevated child poverty is discernible across various areas in New Castle County, but significantly concentrated among African Americans in Wilmington. More than one in three children grapple with the challenges of poverty in Wilmington, and children who experience poverty face an increased susceptibility to adverse consequences that can endure into their adulthood.

The repercussions³⁷ of child poverty include developmental delays, suboptimal academic performance, a multitude of physical health challenges, as well as behavioral and emotional issues. It is also worrisome that 16.9% of older residents in Wilmington are experiencing poverty, and most of these senior citizens are African Americans. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need for targeted efforts and initiatives to address the root causes and provide support systems to uplift African American families in Wilmington.

³⁶ <https://udspace.udel.edu/bitstreams/aa77a07e-b3c9-4acd-afe8-e9eceadaae67/download>

³⁷ <https://www.apa.org/topics/socioeconomic-status/poverty-hunger-homelessness-children>

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION

The education of African Americans during slavery, except for religious instruction, was actively discouraged and outlawed. Some areas even prohibited free Blacks from accessing formal education. Slave owners believed that "teaching slaves to read and write would excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and could produce insurrection and rebellion³⁸."

After the enactment of the "Act of Free School," Delaware established its inaugural public school in 1829. Both Black and White taxes financed the new school, but African Americans were prohibited from attending. While religious groups such as the Society of Friends and Methodist Episcopal Church championed education for African Americans in Delaware, the State opposed it because it was believed that education would allow African Americans to "better carry out their dastardly plot to degenerate European people".

Despite the existence of three schools for African Americans in Wilmington before the Civil War, the endeavor to establish them by religious groups faced strong challenges. One individual opposed the education of African Americans in Delaware by saying³⁹ that African Americans are ferocious ugly beasts, and the more you bring them to light, the more tricks

³⁸ Jay, William (1835). An Inquiry Into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization, and American Anti-slavery Societies

³⁹https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Farchivesfiles.delaware.gov%2Fbooks%2FAfrican_American_Education_in_Delaware.pdf&psig=AOvVaw1sQG3nc3mGqqVstA_-ieB8&ust=1706285266411000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAgQrpoMahcKEwiwwamL9viDaxUAAAAAHQAAAAAQBA

you teach them to be more ferocious. African Americans in Delaware were considered too dangerous to be educated. “Keep the people (African Americans) in ignorance, lest they attain the knowledge of their right.” a European American said.

“It [an African American] is a ferocious, ugly beast, and the more you bring it to the light, and the more tricks you teach it the more ferocity will increase.”

While Delaware passed legislation in 1875 to create more state funding for the established African American schools, the funding was considered to cover only one-third of what was needed. In 1897, the Supreme Court ruling in Plessy v. Ferguson declared segregation legal as long as the separate facilities were equal. Delaware subsequently mandated the equitable distribution of state funds between schools for White and Black students. Nevertheless, since school districts still relied partially on property taxes, African American schools continued to receive less funding than their white counterparts.

Furthermore, racial segregation in Delaware, like all other states, separated African American schools from White schools in the 18th and 19th centuries. African American children in Wilmington had to attend separate schools with inferior educational resources. In 1910, a study commissioned by the state legislators found that African American school funding was 75% of White school’s funding after the difference in population was taken into consideration. Statistics showed that only \$31.48 was spent on each African American

student while \$418.80 was spent on each White student. According⁴⁰ to a 1915 federal study assessing the quality of education in the U.S., Delaware was positioned 39th out of the then 48 states, and the poorest-performing schools in Delaware were located in Black communities.

The U.S. Supreme Court, on May 17, 1954, declared in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregated schools were inherently unequal and mandated the desegregation of public schools. However, desegregation was later used in 1965 to close down Black schools in Delaware.

The current achievement and educational gap between African Americans in Wilmington and their White counterpart is not the effect of natural, but artificial causes.

The shutdown of Black schools adversely affected African American communities. Many African American teachers were fired, and most Black superintendents were laid off. In an incidental conversion⁴¹, White teachers vowed never to work under a Black superintendent. Today, African American students continue to face a higher likelihood of academic challenges and dropping out of school compared to their white counterparts. Unless Black students receive the necessary resources for success, discrimination will persist, rendering the court decisions in *Brown v. Board of Education* ineffective⁴².

⁴⁰ <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/-h-our-history-lesson-pierre-samuel-du-pont-s-delaware-experiment.htm>

⁴¹ State News and Daily Eagle of Monday, May 13, 1794.

⁴² <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/education/2014/05/16/sunday-preview-brown-v-board-years-later/9196775/>

HEALTH DISPARITIES IN WILMINGTON

The extensive record of unjust health outcomes among African Americans mirrors the hardships endured during slavery, segregation, mass incarceration, and their historical legacies. This explains why African Americans experienced poorer outcomes than White individuals across a majority of the evaluated indicators⁴³ related to health coverage and access to, as well as utilization of healthcare services. Yet, African Americans still face increased challenges when accessing and utilizing healthcare services.

In Delaware, ongoing apprehensions revolve around health inequalities between African Americans and their White counterparts, particularly concerning chronic illnesses. Black residents in Delaware face a higher prevalence of diabetes at 17.5% compared to their White counterparts at 11.8%. Consequently, the death rate from the disease is more than twice as high for Black residents compared to White residents.

In Wilmington, heart disease holds the top spot as the leading cause of death, closely followed by cancer, as per statistics from 2016 to 2020. According to LeRoi Hicks, the chief medical officer at Wilmington Hospital⁴⁴, there is a higher statistical likelihood of heart failure in communities that are historically underserved in terms of medical resources. Life expectancy in Wilmington differs by around 16 years among neighborhoods, with Black

⁴³ <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/report/key-data-on-health-and-health-care-by-race-and-ethnicity/>

⁴⁴ <https://news.christianacare.org/2023/05/christianacare-talks-community-health-with-wilmington-state-officials/>

communities typically having the lowest life expectancy⁴⁵. The mortality rate for Black infants in Wilmington surpasses that of White babies across Delaware by more than threefold⁴⁶.

"People can't even think about their health if they don't have a job if they don't have a place to live, if they need food to eat."

Bettina Tweardy Riveros, chief health equity officer for ChristianaCare.

A report⁴⁷ in 2023 showed that Black women in Wilmington have the highest instances of triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) in Delaware. City health statistics also indicated that close to 18% of residents in Wilmington live with a disability.

"It's much more than genetic," said Wendy Bailey from the Delaware Division of Public Health⁴⁸. There is a need to address historical injustices because government policies around economic stability, public health, built environment, and education significantly underscore these health inequities.

⁴⁵ <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/mh/files/phcbriefsummary.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://www.delawarepublic.org/science-health-tech/2020-03-06/black-women-in-wilmington-organize-to-end-maternal-and-infant-health-disparities>

⁴⁷ <https://news.christianacare.org/2023/11/getting-the-village-back-together-christianacares-plan-for-reducing-breast-cancer-disparities-in-delaware/>

⁴⁸ <https://why.org/articles/delaware-tracking-racial-health-disparities-online-dashboard-research-grant-diabetes/>

ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

African Americans are disproportionately exposed to environmental harms because colonialism, enslavement, and structural racist policies like segregation and single-family zoning have historically intertwined environmental destruction with racial injustice.

In 1776, the U.S. accounted for less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but as slavery persisted until its abolition in 1865, and the advancement of the Industrial Revolution between 1876 and 1900s, the U.S. became the world's third-highest emitter of global greenhouse gas. By the early 20th century, it was rapidly approaching the status of the highest emitter.

While the economic prosperity of the U.S. was driven by the systemic exploitation of Black Americans, African Americans have been systematically restrained to environmentally degraded communities. Research⁴⁹ shows that African Americans face disproportionate exposure to environmental health risks. Black neighborhoods have a 75% higher likelihood of being in proximity to toxic industrial facilities. Additionally, they typically experience levels of air pollution at least 56% higher than what would be considered equitable.

⁴⁹ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-case-for-climate-reparations-in-the-united-states/#:~:text=Reparations%20are%20an%20investment%20in,of%20climate%20change%20policies%20themselves.>

Wilmington residents face a significantly increased risk of developing cancers and respiratory illnesses as a result of toxic environmental pollution. Southbridge⁵⁰ is a predominately African American, low-income neighborhood of Wilmington, but home to 48 Brownfields listed by the EPA, which accounts for over half of all brownfields in Delaware.

Southbridge is at the focal point of various interconnected and cumulative effects stemming from environmental pollution.

Additionally, Southbridge has 13 facilities documented in the EPA's Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), four Superfund sites listed by the EPA, two facilities regulated under the EPA's Risk Management Program (RMP), the Port of Wilmington emitting soot and other air pollutants, as well as multiple waste disposal facilities. All are situated within this small neighborhood of a one-mile radius.

Eastside is also an African American community in Wilmington. EPA map⁵¹ has earlier screened this neighborhood as polluted. This is due to the chemical production and discharges from a global producer of active pharmaceutical ingredients with headquarters in Eastside Wilmington. Although regulatory agencies have indicated that the drug manufacturing activities of this pharmaceutical company may have respiratory effects on both its immediate surroundings and the wider environment, the company persists in its operations and has recently applied for a building permit to expand its production facility

⁵⁰ <https://comingcleaninc.org/latest-news/in-the-news/environmental-justice-for-delaware>

⁵¹ <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>

in Wilmington. The health effects from toxic air release to African American neighborhoods in Wilmington include harm to the nervous system, cardiovascular system, and the brain. The toxic pollutants have also been linked to infant mortality, mental health, water and food-borne illness, and cancer. “We have yet more proof that we are being taken advantage of, and the health of our community and our children is being sacrificed to industries who make money by passing their pollution on to us,” said Octavia Dryden.

CURRENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES IN WILMINGTON

The lack of equal access to opportunities due to slavery and discriminatory policies negatively impacts the socio-economic stability of African Americans in Wilmington and still hinders their ability to accumulate intergenerational wealth. The latest American Community Survey (2018-2022) showed that the percentage of African Americans in poverty in Wilmington is more than twice their White counterparts.

The current poverty guidelines by the Department of Health and Human Services suggest that 25.9% of residents in Wilmington earn less than \$25,000 annually, and the majority of them are African Americans. The rate of mortgage loan denials for Black applicants in Wilmington stood at 24.4% but only 12.6% for their White counterparts. While the African American median household income in Wilmington was \$39,530, it was \$75,333 for their White counterparts. The number of African Americans in rented homes in Wilmington is more than twice that of their White counterparts. More than 47% of residents in Wilmington

are severely burdened by the cost of their house rent, and most of them are African Americans.

Despite the long exposure of African Americans to air pollution that causes a variety of respiratory health issues including cancer, the number of African Americans without health insurance in Wilmington nearly doubles their White counterparts who live in safer neighborhoods within Wilmington. While only 15.4% of African Americans have at least a bachelor's degree in Wilmington, 54.2% of their White counterparts have at least a bachelor's degree. The number of African American households without internet subscriptions in Wilmington is more than twice their White counterparts. The estimated percentage of Wilmington's Black households that did not utilize any form of fuel for heating their homes between 2018 and 2022 was also notable.

The latest report⁵² of Economic Innovation Group ranked African American community with zip code 19801 in Wilmington as 53rd out of the 54 zip codes in Delaware. This community is distressed with a distress score of 80.9. Other African American neighborhoods in Wilmington with zip codes 19802 and 19805 are also at risk. These disparities did not arise naturally but through prejudiced and inequitable policies. Segregated and disparate neighborhoods sustain these socioeconomic disparities throughout successive generations.

⁵² <https://eig.org/distressed-communities/?geo=zctas&lat=39.75&lon=-75.59&z=12.19>

REPARATIONS AS THE PRIMARY COURSE OF ACTION

African Americans have been denied access to wealth, jobs, education, social security, financial credit, and even the right to life. Reparation⁵³ for African Americans in Wilmington is therefore a crucial step toward rectifying the profound and enduring damage inflicted by the historical scourges of racism and slavery.

The history of slavery in the United States, and the more than 500 years of intentional racial policies⁵⁴ denied African Americans the opportunity to accumulate wealth and secure a more equitable future for themselves and their descendants. Reparation will rectify some of the socioeconomic imbalances and systemic inequalities that persist today in African American communities in Wilmington.

The implementation of reparations is essential for paving the way toward a future that is fairer and more equitable, by acknowledging the inherent dignity and rights of all individuals, irrespective of their historical background. Reparations are essential steps to resolve some critical challenges of Wilmington deeply rooted in historical inequities and systemic biases.

⁵³ <https://stuartcenter.org/resource/case-reparations-ta-nehisi-coates>

⁵⁴ https://www.dropbox.com/s/wfodb9w53hi64yt/Data%20Walk_Wealth%20Gap.pdf?dl=0

Understanding the list presented in this report is inclusive of City Council actionable recommendations as well as some that would require the involvement of other governing bodies, the task force has differentiated the list to reflect actionable recommendations and those for which City Council can advocate on behalf of the City of Wilmington's residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A Formal Public Apology

Reparation Actionable by City Council

A formal reparative apology is necessary, and should recognize the gross injustices on African Americans in Wilmington, and pay tribute to all victims. The public apology would serve as a catalyst for deep communal contemplation, and fosters the education of the historical wrongs. By engaging in this shared introspection, African Americans in Wilmington will forge a path towards healing, understanding, and ultimately make the needed progress. While the apology is necessary, it is not sufficient. The apology should be combined with tangible forms of restitution.

Actions to Address Legal Injustice

Reparations Actionable by City Council

- ✓ Mandate policies and training on bias-free policing in Wilmington.

- ✓ Invest more funds in community violence intervention programs and strengthen community police relation to build public trust.
- ✓ Establish a robust positive communication with the aggrieved African American community leaders in Wilmington.

Reparations for which City Council Advocacy with the State is Needed

- ✓ Prohibit cash bail and mandate that those who are acquitted or exonerated be reimbursed by the entity at fault.
- ✓ Assess and remedy racially biased treatment of African American adults and juveniles in Delaware correctional facilities.
- ✓ Eliminate barriers for African American prospective attorneys by funding legal education of African American children in Wilmington.

Actions to Address Housing Disparities

Reparations Actionable by City Council

- ✓ Establish a Wilmington Reparations Housing Fund (WRHF) to increase homeownership of African Americans through subsidized down payment, mortgages and homeownership insurance.
- ✓ WRHF should increase rental support through down payment assistance, security deposit assistance, and utilities payment for African Americans in Wilmington.
- ✓ WRHF should revitalize and stabilize African American owner-occupied homes.

Reparation for which City Council Advocacy with the State is Needed

- ✓ Provide property tax relief to African Americans in Wilmington.

Actions to Address Economic Disparities

Reparations Actionable by City Council

- ✓ Create a Black Wall Street economics development programs in African American neighborhoods in Wilmington.
- ✓ Create and fund professional career trainings for African-Americans
- ✓ Invest in capacity building programs for the existing African American businesses in Wilmington in order to help them excel.
- ✓ Support the annual August Quarterly as a major program in Wilmington.

Reparations for which City Council Advocacy with State is Needed

- ✓ Provide guaranteed income program for descendants of African American slaves.
- ✓ Use the Voluntary Disclosure Act or ask the General Assembly to utilize it on our behalf to determine which of the million-dollar corporations in Delaware are still benefiting from the vestiges of slavery and involuntary servitude. Requesting these monies would make monies available for the vestiges of slavery under the state of Delaware.

Actions to Address Disparities in Education

Reparations Actionable by City Council

- ✓ Support equitable early childhood education for African American children in Wilmington and establish education centers that provide instruction to African Americans students and care while their parents are working.
- ✓ Expand scholarships to help young African Americans in Wilmington get into colleges and provide support services that help them stay in college.
- ✓ Partner with and provide funding to community organizations to expand programs to recognize young African American achievers in all fields.
- ✓ Partner with and provide funding to community organizations that give kids the opportunity to be involved in art education, and create programs that involve men in the lives of children in positive ways.
- ✓ Encourage the teaching of African American history in schools, on channel 22 and DETV in collaboration with the Delaware Historical society.
- ✓ Encourage the teaching of American history inclusive of African-American history in schools, on channel 22 and DETV in collaboration with historical society.
- ✓ Establish safe schools in collaboration with the four school districts and the Wilmington Learning Collaborative

Reparations for which City Council Advocacy with the State is Needed

- ✓ Provide incentives to African American teachers that want to live and teach in Wilmington.
- ✓ Consider going back to community schools in Wilmington rather than busing.
- ✓ Encourage the teaching of American history inclusive of African-American history in schools, on channel 22 and DETV in collaboration with historical society.

Actions to Address Health Disparities

Reparations Actionable by City Council

- ✓ Establish and fund community wellness centers in African American communities in Wilmington.
- ✓ Establish/support healthcare services programs in African American communities.
- ✓ Provide scholarships for more African Americans in Wilmington to get healthcare training.
- ✓ Establish policy to require or strongly encourage leaders of community organizations, mental and physical health professionals and educators in Wilmington to complete trauma informed training to equip them to meet the needs of African Americans dealing with trauma resulting from systemic racism dating back to slavery.

Reparation for which City Council Advocacy with State is Needed

- ✓ Provide and improve the healthcare services for senior African Americans in Wilmington.

Actions to Address Environmental Injustice

Reparations Actionable by City Council

- ✓ Increase greenspace access and recreation opportunities in African American communities in Wilmington.
- ✓ Test for and eliminate toxicity in African American communities.
- ✓ Partner with DNRAC, the STEM agency, to clean up all the brownfields in the City of Wilmington as they have funds to clean those brownfields.

Reparations for which City Council Advocacy with State is Needed

- ✓ Partner with DNRAC, the STEM agency, to clean up all the brownfields in the City of Wilmington as they have funds to clean those brownfields.

Others

Reparations Actionable by City Council

- ✓ Wilmington City Council Reparation Task Force (RTF) should be established as a standing quasi-government corporation in the same way that the Wilmington Economic Development Corporation, the UDAG Corporation, and other quasi-

government corporations that exist. RTF will carry out the policies and implement suggested reparations.

- ✓ Create a standing committee that assists with ongoing research and information on reparations in Wilmington. This committee should be tasked with reviewing ordinances introduced by City Council to review their effect on African Americans, if any.
- ✓ Provide funds to the aforementioned committee to help African Americans identify their American slavery ancestry through DNA/Ancestry testing

Endnotes

- ¹ Descendants of African slaves in the U.S.
- ² Slavery in America: *History Classics*.
- ³ National Achieves: How Federal Agencies Suppressed Movement to Aid Free People
- ⁴ Treatment of Slaves in the United States: *American Negro Slavery and Abolition: A Sociological Study*.
- ⁵ Washington Center for Equity Growth: *New research shows slavery's central role in U.S. economic growth leading up to the Civil War*.
- ⁶ National Museum of African American History and Culture: *From Slavery to Freedom*.
- ⁷ New York Historical Society: *The Rise of Jim Crow, 1877 - 1900*
- ⁸ New York University Press: *Lynching in America. A History in Document*.
- ⁹ First State National Historical Park: *Anthony Swart*.
- ¹⁰ Town of Rising Sun: *History of Mason-Dixon Line*.
- ¹¹ The 1639 Story: *Slavery and Freedom in Wilmington, Delaware*.
- ¹² Leaning from our History: *An Exhibit of Dockets for Enslaved People in Delaware County*.
- ¹³ The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia: *Wilmington, Delaware*.
- ¹⁴ A History of Racial Injustice: *White Mob of Thousands Burns Black Man to Death in Wilmington, Delaware*.
- ¹⁵ History of Lynching in America: *White Americans used lynching to terrorize and control Black people in the 19th and early 20th centuries*.
- ¹⁶ An Unjust Burden: The Disparate Treatment of the Black Americans in the Criminal Justice System.
- ¹⁷ Race and Incarceration in Delaware
- ¹⁸ Incarceration trends in Delaware
- ¹⁹ *Where People in Prison Came From: The Geography of Mass Incarceration in Delaware*
- ²⁰ *The Case for Cash Bail Reform*
- ²¹ Institute For Research on Poverty: *Connections Among Poverty, Incarceration and Inequality*
- ²² *Incarceration*
- ²³ Health Effects of Family Member Incarceration in the United States: *A Meta-Analysis and Cost Study*
- ²⁴ The Center Square Delaware: *Wilmington, DE Is One of the Most Heavily Policed Cities in the Country*
- ²⁵ The Philadelphia Inquirer: *Did the 1968 occupation of Wilmington spark decline?*
- ²⁶ Government Strategies Help Dismantle Wilmington's Communities
- ²⁷ The Impact of Highway Construction
- ²⁸ WHYY News: *As Major I-95 Construction Starts in Wilmington*
- ²⁹ The African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church and Connection
- ³⁰ Property Reassessment Now Required in Every 5 years
- ³¹ An Ordinance Constituting Amendment No. 1 to the Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget

- ³² Wilmington City Council Resolution: *Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Equity in Wilmington and Delaware*:
- ³³ Racial Disparities in Delaware Remain Deep: *Fifty Years After the Kerner Commission Report, and the Wilmington Riots*.
- ³⁴ Wilmington Delaware Poverty Rate Data
- ³⁵ The Racial Wealth Divide in Wilmington, DE
- ³⁶ Center for Community Research and Service, University of Delaware: *Overview of Poverty in Delaware*
- ³⁷ American Psychological Association: *The Mental Health Effect of Poverty, Hunger, and Homelessness in Children and Teens*
- ³⁸ Jay, William (1835). An Inquiry Into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization, and American Anti-slavery Societies
- ³⁹ African American Education in Delaware: *A History through Photographs, 1865 - 1940*.
- ⁴⁰ Samuel Du Pont's Delaware Experiment: *(H)our History Lesson*.
- ⁴¹ State News and Daily Eagle of Monday, May 13, 1794.
- ⁴² Delaware Online: *Brown v. Board, 60 years later: Are we better off?*
- ⁴³ KFF: *Key Data on Health and Health Care by Race and Ethnicity*.
- ⁴⁴ ChristianaCare News: *ChristianaCare Talks Community Health with Wilmington, State Officials*.
- ⁴⁵ Policy Brief: *Community Engagement Initiative on Health Inequities and Race in the First State*.
- ⁴⁶ Black Women in Wilmington Organize to End Maternal and Infant Health Disparities.
- ⁴⁷ ChristianaCare News: *Getting the Village Back Together: ChristianaCare's Plan for Reducing Breast Cancer Disparities in Delaware*.
- ⁴⁸ WHYY: *Delaware takes aim at health disparities that show higher rates of diabetes and other ailments for Black residents*.
- ⁴⁹ The Brookings Institute: *A Case for Climate Reparations in the United States*.
- ⁵⁰ Coming Clean Press Release: *Wilmington 'Environmental Justice Communities' Suffer Disproportionate Health Risks from Multiple, Overlapping Toxic Exposures*.
- ⁵¹ EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping.
- ⁵² Distressed Community Index of Economic Innovation Group
- ⁵³ The Stuart Centre for Mission: *The Case for Reparations (Ta-Nehisi Coates)*.
- ⁵⁴ Data Walk Wealth Gap.