



## The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks

By Randall Robinson

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**The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks** By Randall Robinson

The national bestseller by the author of **Defending the Spirit**.

In this powerful and controversial book, distinguished African-American political leader and thinker Randall Robinson argues for the restoration of the rich history that slavery and segregation severed. Drawing from research and personal experience, he shows that only by reclaiming their lost past and proud heritage can blacks lay the foundation for their future. And white Americans can make reparations for slavery and the century of racial discrimination that followed with monetary restitution, educational programs, and the kinds of equal opportunities that will ensure the social and economic success of all its citizens.

In a book that is both an unflinching indictment of past wrongs and an impassioned call to our nation to educate all Americans about the history of Africa and its people, Robinson makes a persuasive case for the debt white America owes blacks, and the debt blacks owe themselves.

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## The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks By Randall Robinson Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Randall Robinson, the founder and president of TransAfrica (a lobbying organization dedicated to influencing U.S. policy toward Africa and the Caribbean), recounted his heroic struggle to fight and overcome racism in the magnificent *Defending the Spirit*. In his triumphant follow-up, *The Debt*, he goes further than any previous black public figure in calling for reparations to African-Americans for the present-day racism that stems from 246 years of slavery. Citing compensation that Jews and Japanese Americans have received, he writes, "No race, ethnic or religious group has suffered as much over so long a span as blacks have and do still, at the hands of those who benefited ... from slavery and the century of legalized American racial hostility that followed it." In making his case, Robinson utilizes facts and figures that highlight the disparity between African-Americans and whites. While fully recognizing the monumental odds of this movement's success, Robinson feels that the push for reparations will also greatly benefit African-Americans in nonmaterial ways: "Even the making of a well-reasoned case for restitution will do wonders for the spirit of African-Americans," he argues. "It will cause them to at long last understand the genesis of their history--before, during, and after slavery--into one story of themselves." --Eugene Holley Jr.

#### From Publishers Weekly

As founder and president of TransAfrica, an organization aimed at influencing U.S. policies toward Africa and the Caribbean, Robinson can be said to have contributed to the antiapartheid movement and the restoration of democracy in Haiti. Having vividly outlined the pervasiveness of American racism in his previous work, *Defending the Spirit*, he now summons America to acknowledge what he casts as its financial obligation to blacks for centuries of slavery and continued subjugation. Substantiating his analysis of America's ignorance of African history and the agenda of the Clinton administration with personal stories that illustrate the impact of de facto discrimination, he reveals slavery's legacy not only in our social and political lives, but also in the American psyche. In Robinson's view, the incessant deification of the founding fathers (many of whom owned slaves) and the denial of the benefits gained from centuries of slave labor are, in effect, an attempt to pretend "that America's racial holocaust never occurred." Juxtaposing domestic racism with the sufferings of people abroad, he contends that America's dubious foreign policy initiatives in Cuba and throughout the black world should be mitigated through debt relief. Methodically tackling one issue at a time, Robinson suggests the creation of a trust to assist in the educational and economic empowerment of African-Americans. Whether readers agree or disagree with his views, Robinson has made a definitive step in presenting these controversial and still unresolved issues. Book club rights sold to Doubleday/Black Expressions; author tour. (Jan.)

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#### From Library Journal

The title of this book shouldn't deter perspective readers: Robinson (founder and president of TransAfrica) dedicates only one of the ten chapters to a discussion of reparations. And his ideas about reparations are unconventional: it's true, he writes, that there is a precedent for paying reparations to the victims of history. But even just starting a national conversation about reparations, he suggests, would be useful--such a discussion would bring U.S. racial atrocities to the surface, make blacks aware that something has been taken from them through no fault of their own, and launch a critical mass of blacks "into a surge of black self-discovery." In the remainder of the book Robinson discusses his disappointment with the quantity and quality of black political participation and the long-term economic and psychic damage brought on by slavery, Jim Crow, blacks' lost African past, and unequal U.S. foreign and domestic policies. Robinson's political experience and readable prose should make the book appealing to a wide audience. For public and

academic libraries.--.

-*Sherri Barnes, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara*

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