

Some people think it would be wrong to use taxes to fund reparations for slavery, since it would be punishing people for crimes they didn't commit.

I think this argument's flawed, so I'm gonna critique it. But first, I recommend that people read what experts on the subject have written and keep an open mind.

Just to clarify, when people hear "reparations", they immediately think of sending out checks to people. But that's just one possible form reparations could take. Other forms include funding historically black colleges and investing in black communities in similar ways.

So, in general, reparations are just ways to attempt to repair some of the damages caused by slavery and address disadvantages faced by descendants of slaves.

So, let's reconstruct the argument:

(D1) Current taxpayers are not responsible for the disadvantages faced by descendants of slaves.

(D2) It's wrong to use taxes to fund programs to address disadvantages that taxpayers aren't responsible for.

(D3) So, it's wrong to use taxes to fund programs to address the disadvantages faced by descendants of slaves.

The problem is, I think D2 is false, since it's open to counterexamples.

For instance, taxpayers are not responsible for the disadvantages faced by people with disabilities, refugees, people who can't find work, and children born into impoverished circumstances.

And yet, most of us would agree that it's not wrong to use taxes to help them. And we shouldn't see it as punishing anyone.