

# An Apology Without Reparations



By Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

**(EDITORIAL)** — Pope Leo XIV issued an apology Monday for the Catholic Church’s role in legitimizing slavery, but for many descendants of enslaved Africans, the statement landed with the familiar thud of moral theater — an apology crafted for the record, not for repair.

Leo called the Church’s centuries long sanctioning of human bondage a “wound in Christian memory.” But the wound is not abstract. It is living, inherited, and measurable in the generational dispossession of Black people across the Americas, Africa, and the Caribbean — communities whose ancestors were enslaved under papal authority and whose descendants have yet to see a single act of material restitution from the institution that helped create their suffering.

For the first time, a pope acknowledged that the Vatican did not merely “fail to condemn” slavery but actively authorized it. Fifteenth century papal bulls gave European monarchs explicit permission to invade African and Indigenous lands, seize property, and reduce non Christians to perpetual slavery. These decrees formed the legal backbone of the Doctrine of Discovery, the ideological engine of colonialism.

Yet even as Leo XIV admits this history, he stops short of the one step that would signal genuine repentance: reparations.

Black Catholics and scholars have long insisted that apologies without repair are hollow. “The Catholic Church has never been an innocent bystander in the history of white supremacy,” historian Shannen Dee Williams said. Her point is unmistakable: the Church was an architect of racial slavery, not a passive observer. And architects owe restitution.

Leo’s encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, attempts to link the Church’s past sins to modern forms of exploitation in the digital age. But the pivot feels premature. How can the Vatican credibly warn against “new forms of enslavement” when it has

not addressed the old ones it helped engineer? How can it speak of human dignity while refusing to return stolen wealth, land, or resources extracted through centuries of Church sanctioned violence?

The Vatican repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery in 2023, but it has never rescinded the edicts that justified conquest and enslavement. It has never offered financial reparations to the descendants of the millions trafficked under its blessing. It has never committed to returning land taken from Indigenous nations under papal authority. And it has never created a global fund to repair the economic devastation that slavery produced. Devastation that continues to shape Black life today.

Leo’s own ancestry — a lineage that includes both enslaved people and slaveholders — underscores the entanglement of Catholicism, colonialism, and racial hierarchy. But personal lineage does not substitute for institutional accountability.

During a recent visit to Angola, Leo prayed at a shrine built on the site of a major slave trading hub. He spoke of “sorrow and great suffering” but avoided naming slavery directly. Monday’s apology repeats that pattern: sorrow without specificity, regret without restitution.

The question now is unavoidable:

**If the Church can acknowledge its role in creating the global system of racial slavery, why does it refuse to repair the damage?**

**What does an apology mean to the descendants of enslaved people when the institution responsible for their ancestors’ suffering still holds the wealth accumulated through that exploitation?**

**How long will the Vatican ask for forgiveness while declining to return what was stolen?**

Until the Church confronts these questions with concrete action — financial, structural, and global — its apologies will continue to fall on ears that have heard centuries of sorrow but have yet to see righteousness.

## New study: Young Blacks and Latinos lack access to wealth-building tools - Millennials, Gen Z most affected

By Charlene Crowell | Senior Fellow Center for Responsible Lending (CRL)

**(FINANCE)** - As much of the nation continues to grapple with rising costs that are outpacing wage gains, new research affirms that younger, more diverse generations are caught in a financial marketplace built for yesteryear not today.

Ambition Without Access, a newly released study by the Julian Bond Institute (JBI), an initiative of the Center for Responsible Lending (CRL), is the first nationally representative look at how wealth and financial aspirations differ across race and generations particularly for Blacks and Latinos.

“Young Blacks and Hispanics want to own homes, want to start businesses, want to retire comfortably, and want to leave something for their children — at rates that either match or exceed their white peers,” states the study. “They are optimistic. They are financially motivated. And they are determined.”

The JBI 2050 Survey, conducted in cooperation with NORC at the University of Chicago, surveyed white, Black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans across Gen Z (age 18-28), Millennial (29-44), Gen X (45-60), and Boomer (61-79) age groups.

Among its findings:

•86% of Americans across every race and generation say homeownership was a financial goal when they became financially independent — yet only 23% of Black Millennials who aspired to homeownership have achieved it, compared to 51% of white Millennials.

•67% of Black Gen Z and 55% of Hispanic Gen Z aspire to own a business — a rate significantly higher than the 34% of white Gen Z who share that goal.

•77% of Black Gen Z and 70% of Hispanic Gen Z aspire to build an inheritance to pass on, even though only 18% and 20% respectively expect to receive one themselves —compared to 33% of white and 38% of Asian Gen Z who anticipate getting one.

•46% of Black Millennials are optimistic about their household’s financial future — higher than the 31% of white Millennials — despite having fewer financial resources, lower savings, and significantly less family financial support.

“The gap between financial aspiration and achievement for young and minority consumers is not a matter of motivation. It is a matter of structural access — to family financial resources, affordable credit, adequate income, and the knowledge to navigate a system not designed with these communities in mind. As the United States moves toward a majority-minority future, closing these gaps is not just a moral imperative — it is an economic one,” said Sara Weiss, executive director of JBI and a report co-author.

But homeownership, long considered the foundation for building family wealth, remains out of reach for many younger consumers.

According to the National Association of Realtors, the nation’s average price to purchase an existing home

this past April was \$417,700. Regionally, the lowest priced home purchases were found either in the Midwest at \$324,500, or the South at \$366,600. The nation’s highest priced homes at \$619,600 were in the West and \$510,800 in the Northeast.

Home affordability was also the focus of a recent New York Times editorial citing the vast differences in the ratio between home prices and median household income. In 1950, the median home price in the United States was \$7,400 — only 2.5 times the median annual household income. “But that ratio began surging in the 2000s. Today the median home costs almost five times the median household income” states the editorial.

Conventional mortgages, the most affordable and sustainable over the 30-year length of most loans, have the advantage of fixed interest rates, but they require a 20 percent down payment to access the lowest rates available. Few young consumers can independently afford down payments ranging from \$64,900 to \$123,920. Smaller down payments may be available but come with higher monthly payments that include mortgage insurance.

For JBI and CRL, timely and decisive actions geared towards practical solutions are essential to overcome today’s financial roadblocks.

“The Gen Z and Millennial respondents in this survey are in the formative years when the foundation for wealth is either built or destroyed,” states the study. “The consequences of homeownership decisions, saving habits, and credit trajectories being established right now will compound themselves for decades...Thus, the time for structural reform is not after the demographic transition occurs. It is both before and during it.”

Secondly, according to the JBI study, solutions to today’s homeownership challenges must incorporate initiatives for consumers at every stage of life:

“Solutions lie in enacting initiatives to fund downpayment assistance at scale for first generation homebuyers, reforming mortgage policy to expand access, increased funding of small business support and capital access programs in communities of color, uniform adoption of state-sponsored retirement programs that allow individuals access to retirement plans when their employers do not provide them, and a commitment to modernize consumer protections so that they align with the present fintech era. Doing so will prepare us for the America that is coming; failing to do so will leave us stuck in the America that has been.”

JBI designs community-informed research that elevates the financial needs, challenges, and opportunities of our increasingly diverse nation to help financial institutions, policymakers and academia effectively design an inclusive financial market for the future.

Just as intentional policies and practices left out communities of color from wealth-building, now is the time to correct course by forging intentional inclusion.

# PUBLIC NOTICES

Travis County Healthcare District d/b/a Central Health  
1111 E. Cesar Chavez Street  
Austin, TX 78702

**Request for Qualifications (RFQ) 2605-002 Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Services for Cameron Center**  
**Due Date: June 12, 2026 by 2:00 PM CT**

Central Health is seeking Statements of Qualifications from highly qualified Professional A/E firms to provide comprehensive professional design of a Medical Respite and Community Services Campus located at 7901 Cameron Road in Austin, Texas 78754. The 4.38-acre site houses three buildings totaling approximately 122,000 square feet. The solicitation package can be downloaded from:  
<https://www.bidnetdirect.com/texas/traviscountyhealthcaredistrictdbcentralhealth>, OR  
<https://www.txsmartbuy.gov/esbd/2605-002>

Travis County Healthcare District d/b/a Central Health  
1111 E. Cesar Chavez Street  
Austin, TX 78702

**Request for Qualifications (RFQ) 2605-001 AI-Powered Predictive Analytics & Clinical Decision Support Platform for Emergency Department Utilization and Preventable Readmissions Reduction**  
**Due Date: 06/08/2026 by 2:00 PM CT**

Central Health is issuing this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to identify and pre-qualify the most competent and experienced firm(s) to design, implement, and support an AI-Powered Predictive Analytics & Clinical Decision Support (CDS) Platform (the “AI Solution”) that can support the reduction of avoidable Emergency Department utilization and preventable inpatient admissions and readmissions across its:

- Medical Access Program (MAP)
- MAP Basic
- Sendero Health Plans
- Affiliated safety-net populations

Respondents are encouraged to submit Qualification Statements that reflect their areas of expertise and demonstrated capabilities. Central Health recognizes that some Respondents may not have experience across all components of the Scope of Work and welcomes submissions that address discrete or specialized portions of the services described herein.

The solicitation package can be downloaded from:  
<https://www.bidnetdirect.com/texas/traviscountyhealthcaredistrictdbcentralhealth>  
OR <http://www.centralhealth.net/finance/purchasing>  
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