

Serena Williams Documentary in the Works at ESPN

By Stacy M. Brown | NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent | @StacyBrownMedia

The series examines Williams's most memorable Grand Slam tournaments and formative life moments.

(NNPA) - Serena Williams has announced the start of production on her new ESPN series, *In the Arena: Serena Williams*.

Williams ruled tennis for over 20 years, winning 23 Grand Slams (singles). Like the Emmy-winning *Man in the Arena: Tom Brady*, the *Serena Williams* installment of the franchise reportedly will be a multi-part series that features first-person perspective from Serena and key figures throughout her life to "provide the most complete, intimate, and compelling account of her legendary career." The series examines Williams's most memorable Grand Slam tournaments and formative life moments.

It contrasts Williams's triumphant professional career and cultural significance with her private struggles, including her battle to keep her tennis career on top while adjusting to the life-altering event of having a baby.

The Walt Disney Company said a new generation of competitors, eager to emulate Williams' success and ultimately defeat her, marks a full circle in her career.

The series revisits the superstar's defining matches, formative moments, heartbreak, and glory to trace her personal and generational journey from phenom to icon across her whole career and into her legacy.

ESPN, Religion of Sports, 199 Productions (un-



Serena Williams arrives to the 54th Annual NAACP Image Awards at Pasadena Civic Auditorium. (Photo by Aaron J. Thornton/Getty Images)

der the direction of Tom Brady), and Nine Two Six Productions (under the direction of Williams and Caroline Currier) will all produce the series, which

Gotham Chopra will direct.

The Walt Disney Company said it would provide more information later.

California panel takes big step toward \$800B reparations to Black residents

By Stacy M. Brown | NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent | @StacyBrownMedia

(NNPA) - California's reparations task panel approved recommendations to compensate and apologize to Black communities for centuries of discrimination.

At a meeting in Oakland, the nine-member committee, which first met nearly two years ago, approved a lengthy list of reparations recommendations for state lawmakers to examine.

At the meeting, U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), called on states and the federal government to implement reparations legislation.

Lee said reparations are morally justified and could solve historical racial imbalances and inequality.

The panel's first vote accepted a detailed assessment of Black Californian discrimination in voting, housing, education, disproportionate policing and incarceration, and others.

Other suggestions included creating a new organization to serve descendants of enslaved people and calculating what the state owes them.

"An apology and an admission of wrongdoing alone is not going to be satisfactory," said Chris Lodgson, an organizer with the Coalition for a Just and Equitable California, a reparations advocacy group.

The task force's draft recommendation requires parliamentarians to "censure the gravest barbarities" on behalf of the state in their apologies.

The task force noted that California's first elected governor, Peter Hardeman Burnett, was a white supremacist who supported legislation excluding Black people from the state.

The draft report states that California, a "free" state since 1850, did not pass any laws guaranteeing freedom for all. Instead, the state Supreme Court enforced the federal Fugitive Slave Act for over a decade until freedom arrived in U.S. states.

"By participating in these horrors, California further perpetuated the harms African Americans



faced, imbuing racial prejudice throughout society through segregation, public and private discrimination, and unequal state and federal funding," the study authors wrote.

The task team adopted a public apology, admitting the state's past wrongs and committing not to repeat them.

It would be presented to the descendants of enslaved people.

California apologized for interning Japanese Americans and mistreating Native Americans.

The panel adopted the draft report's "cash or its equivalent" restitution for qualified residents.

Oakland's Mills College of Northeastern University hosted over 100 citizens and activists. All lamented the country's "broken promise" to give emancipated slaves 40 acres and a mule.

Many claimed it was time for governments to fix the harms that prevented African Americans from living without fear of being wrongly punished, maintaining property, and earning wealth.

Former Black Panther Party chairwoman Elaine

Brown encouraged protests.

The task force meeting was viewed as a pivotal moment in the push for local, state, and federal agencies to apologize for African American discrimination.

"There's no way in the world that many of these recommendations are going to get through because of the inflationary impact," said Roy L. Brooks, University of San Diego School of Law professor and reparations specialist.

Economists predict the state may owe Black residents \$800 billion, or 2.5 times its yearly budget.

The newest task force draft report has a much lower figure.

In 2020, Secretary of State Shirley Weber, a former Democratic assemblymember, authored legislation creating the task force to address the state's historical culpability for African American harms, not as a substitute for federal reparations.

The task team initially limited reparations to descendants of 19th-century enslaved or free Black individuals.

As reparations for African Americans have had uneven success elsewhere, the group's work has received national attention.

Black residents in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, Illinois, recently received housing vouchers as reparations, but few reportedly used them.

A bill to acknowledge the inhumanity of slavery in New York and form a panel to investigate reparations proposals has cleared the Assembly but not the Senate.

A decades-old federal proposal to form a reparations panel for African Americans has stalled in Congress.

Oakland City Council member Kevin Jenkins called the California task group "a powerful example" of what can happen when people work together.

Jenkins stated, "I am confident that through our collective efforts, we can significantly advance reparations in our great state of California and, ultimately, the country."

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