

# Ten Point Action for Reparations: Answering the Call

*Slavery was deeply woven into the fabric of the United States and challenged the meaning of democracy. Enslaved people's work formed an economic engine producing half of all U.S. exports and providing much of the financial capital and raw materials to spark industrialization. Bought and sold as property, enslaved people were valued at an estimated \$2.7 billion in 1860. Despite daily denials of their humanity, enslaved African Americans sustained a vision of freedom. They seasoned life with small pleasures and found ways to make food, family, dance, prayer, dress, and even work their own. These everyday acts helped build identity and a foundation for freedom.*

--- Smithsonian, The National Museum of American History

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/changing-america-emancipation-proclamation-1863-and-march-washington-1963/1863/slavery-america> [accessed May 30, 2016].

Welcome to our special edition on reparations. Reparations is a large and controversial topic in the U.S., especially when it relates to people of African heritage who were enslaved and never compensated for their labor and pain during and after physical enslavement. The above quote, ironically written by the Smithsonian Institution (founded in 1846) and reports that 'enslaved people were valued at an estimated \$2.7 billion in 1860' and should we convert that amount (although still not enough) into 'money' today, it would easily be in the trillions (in 2014 the U.S. net worth was about \$123.8 trillion), which indicates a financial ability to issue reparations to descendants of the enslaved (people of African descent) in the U.S. Yet, in the 'greatest country in the world' there is any a tiny concern about reparations for enslavement and its aftermath of: torture, lynching, rape, dismemberment, laws enforcing racial segregation (even in the U.S. military and federal workplaces), etc.

The sparks for this edition were begun by V.P. Franklin, the editor of *The Journal of African American History*, when he called for Black scholarly journals to launch an effort to publish content of reparations for African Americans in the U.S. in unity with: (1) the 2013 established the Caricom Reparations Commission of 15 Caribbean governments to prepare the case for reparatory justice for the region's indigenous and African descendant communities who are the victims of crimes against humanity in the forms of genocide, slavery, slave trading, and racial apartheid; and (2) the Caricom ten point action plan address reparations [see the full plan in our document section of this issue].

And indeed, in this mix is the June 2014 article by Ta-Nehisi Coates titled “The Case for Reparations” in *The Atlantic* outlining two hundred fifty years of enslavement (slavery), ninety years of Jim Crow, sixty years of separate but equal, and thirty-five years of racist housing policy in the U.S., and *Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Slavery and Native Genocide* (2013) by Hilary McD Beckles, which concludes that Britain has a case of reparations to answer which the Caribbean should litigate.

This special edition is dedicated to the life and times of “*Queen Mother*” Audley Moore (1898-1997), an advocate of reparations for people of African heritage, a founder of the Republic of New Africa, and one of the first signers of the Republic of New Africa's Independence Charter, which called for the creation of five independently governed states in the U.S.



And second (but not least), this edition is dedicated to *Deadria C. Farmer-Paellmann* (pictured here at the left) a dynamo in the reparations effort. In January of 2000, she exposed and secured an unprecedented public apology from Aetna Incorporated for writing insurance policies on the lives of enslaved African people with slaveholders as the beneficiaries in the 1800's. Her research linking various blue-chip corporations to the European slave trade led to them making a \$20 million payment to the African American community in 2005. Her litigation strategy in a case filed against slave-trade corporations for consumer fraud resulted in the first reparations court victory in American history in 2006. Third, this issue is dedicated to the work and memory of late longtime Detroit, MI resident Ray Jenkins (1920-2009) known as "Reparations Ray," or the father of the reparations movement (Jenkins inspired Democratic Congressman John Conyers to propose reparations bills).

We begin with a “Sir Hilary McD. Beckles: “Rise to Your Responsibility”, a December 10, 2014 address delivered by professor Sir Hilary McD. Beckles if the University of the West Indies and chair of the Caribbean Community Commission on Reparation and Social Justice in New York, NY at the General Assembly of the United Nations (69<sup>th</sup> President) wherein he states that the 21st Century will be the century in which the world will be called upon to atone with reparatory justice for the crimes against Africans and their descendants; even if it will take all of the 21st century to achieve reparatory justice, its advocates will not retreat but instead, mobilize the decade and begin to move speedily along the journey for reparatory justice, and that “our finest and treasured values – peace, justice, respect, and reconciliation require that we attain reparatory justice.”

Next we have “U.S. Reparations to Descendants of the Enslaved in the U.S.” by J. Angelo Corlett that provides a philosophical account of the issue of U.S. reparations to descendants of the enslaved in the U.S. (i.e., African Americans) to outline the different kinds, approaches and arguments for and against reparations to suggest that perhaps the case for reparations may be a topic for the International Criminal Court.

Then, Emmanuel E. Obuah in “The Politics of Reparations: The Academic Epistemic Communities and the Implications of Reparation Debate on African-American and Africa’s Quest for Reparations” argues that there is an absence of political will to articulate demands for reparations at international forums, and suggests that arguments concerning reparations can be placed in three main broad academic epistemic communities along with other subdivisions to explain the quest for reparations for African Americans and Africa

Continuing, Daudi Ajani ya Azibo in “The Domain of Psychological Restoration: Reparations Down Payments for the Defeat of Mentacide, Transcendence of Psychological Misorientation, and the Mental Overturning of a Terminated People via Returning to the African Personality” outlines a psycho-cultural case for reparations for descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States; suggests that the psycho-cultural case for reparations for Aboriginal Hawaiians parallels with African-U.S. Second, Azibo states that for African descent persons worldwide to go forward in perpetuity as Africans, psycho-cultural repair and restoration of the African personality is necessary; and in the African-U.S. context, psychological restoration is deserving status as one of the distinct domains of reparations down payments, and that there must be a prerequisite for individuals to receive personal monetary reparations they are due, but first her/his African personality must be certified in meeting a minimal standard.

A: *JPAS* advisory member James B. Stewart in “Expanding and Re-focusing the Case for Black Reparations” calls for an expansion of the basis of reparations claims beyond the focus on labor expropriation associated with plantation-based chattel slavery to suggest that the exploitation of enslaved African Americans by industrial interests is offered as one additional basis for reparations claims, but even more significant are the continuing inter-generational effects of pre- and post-Civil War dietary restrictions on childhood development, the barriers to human capital accumulation through educational attainment. And it is argued that disrupting the ongoing cycle of youth disempowerment and constrained life choices requires that reparations payments be targeted to youth development as proposed by V.P. Franklin (“Reparations Superfund: Needed Now More than Ever,” *The Journal of African American History*, vol. 97, no.4, Fall 2012, pp. 371-375) in his plan to establish a Reparations Superfund.

Next, “African American Reparations: A Selected Annotated Bibliography” by A: *JPAS* senior editor Itibari M. Zulu is a descriptive selective annotated bibliography, primarily focused on the African American experience in the U.S. concerning the history of enslavement, segregation, Jim Crow etc. in accordance with the intent of the Call for Papers on the "Ten Point Program for Reparations for African Americans" organized by V.P. Franklin, editor of *The Journal of African American History*. The intent is to provide an introductory and concise summary of relevant books and articles on the issue reparations organized within the last 15 years.

Adjoining the above, Lonnie G. Bunch III in his commentary “America's Moral Debt to African Americans”, articulates that slavery has left a deep scar on America, and that Ta-Nehisi Coates with pinpoint clarity, has focused a scholarly light that shines into all the dark corners of this shameful chapter of U.S. history via his June 2014 *Atlantic* essay arguing that reparations are deserved and long overdue; while the conversation with scholars and ordinary citizens often centers on financial payment, he is emphasizing that the moral debt is more important; the profits from enslaving provided a reservoir of capital that allowed America to grow into a world power, thus, the image of America as a just society is stained by the lack of moral reparations and fair treatment for a group of its earliest and most loyal laborers and residents. And in conclusion, he ask how does a nation repay its moral debt, and writes that the greatest repayment would be to ensure that African Americans now and generations from now, have access to quality education, affordable health care and neighborhoods that are safe.

V.P. Franklin in his commentary “John Hope Franklin, Reparations, and Making Black Lives Better” offered a response to Drew Gilpin Faust’s “John Hope Franklin: Race and the Meaning of America” in *The New York Review of Books*, December 17, 2015 for the National African American Reparations Commission and states that John Hope Franklin viewed himself as a "scholar-activist," hence John Hope Franklin was outspoken in calling for reparations payments to African Americans collectively as he sought reparations for the losses his father, attorney Buck Franklin, who suffered from the notorious Tulsa Race Riot in 1921 when the prosperous Black business area was destroyed by whites (Franklin and other survivors of the violence testified before the Oklahoma legislature’s commission set up to investigate the incident, and while the commission recommended “direct payment of reparations to the survivors of the Tulsa Race Riot,” none were authorized by Oklahoma legislators).

In terms of documents, we have (1) Representative John Conyers and the Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, (2) Ten Point Action Plan: Caribbean Community Reparations Commission, (3) Legacy of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, first session, December 18, 2007, (4) Testimony of Deadria Farmer-Paellmann in Support of H. R. 40 -- Commission to Study Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act, (5) the conference statement of the “Repairing the Past, Imagining the Future: Reparations and Beyond...” international interdisciplinary conference at the University of Edinburgh in the UK in collaboration with the Wheelock College (Boston, USA), held November 5-7, 2015, (6) the final communiqué of the National/International Reparations Summit held April 9-11, 2015 in New York City, NY hosted by the Institute of the Black World 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and (7) the demand for reparations action plans of Black Lives Matter that demand reparations for past and continuing harms, stating that the government, responsible corporations and other institutions that have profited off of the harm they have inflicted on Black people — from colonialism to slavery through food and housing redlining, mass incarceration, and surveillance — must repair the harm done.

This contribution to reparations discourse can serve as an introduction, along with the other journals participating in this historic call for discussion on reparations for African Americans in the U.S. Absent in this edition are the details of the role of U.S. financial institutions/corporations (i.e., Aetna, Inc., JPMorgan Chase, Lehman Brothers, New York Life Insurance Company, Wachovia Corporation [now owned by Wells Fargo], NM Rothschild & Sons Bank [London], Norfolk Southern,

*USA Today* [parent company, E.W. Scripps and Gannett, has had links to enslavement], FleetBoston [evolved from Providence Bank, founded by a slave trader and owned ships used to transport enslaved Africans], CSX [used slave labor to construct portions of some U.S. rail lines], Canadian National Railway Company, Brown Brothers Harriman [oldest and largest private investment bank and securities firm in the U.S.], Brooks Brothers [sold slave clothing to slave traders], Barclays [a British multinational banking and financial services company headquartered in London], etc.) and institutions of higher education (Brown, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Rutgers, Williams College, University of North Carolina, Emory University [Atlanta], Columbia University, University of Virginia, Georgetown University, University of Delaware, Dartmouth College) that involved in the enslavement and suppression of people of African heritage in the U.S.

Perhaps we can explore these sub-topics at a later time, but in the meantime, the push for reparations for African Americans must be advanced, which means all corners of society (especially formal education) must be aware of this debt and crime against African humanity. And thus, an apology with no tangible structure for reparations is a hoax. Now is the time for reparations for African Americans in the U.S. to be taken seriously by everyone, an act that may call for a 10,000,000 strong march on Washington, D.C.