

H.R. 40 aligns with the National Council of Churches anti-racism campaign to [A.C.T. Now to End Racism](#).

## PRIMARY ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES

- [The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America \(N'COBRA\)](#)
- [The National African American Reparations Commission](#)

## WHAT IS HR 40, REPARATIONS, AND “WHY WE CAN’T WAIT”

- **Reparations is a Justice matter**, and this legislation is in response to racial equity issues **400-plus years in the making**.
- This **country has been built upon intentional structural inequities against people of African descent** including chattel slavery, Black Codes, convict leasing, Jim Crow, redlining, access to fair housing, education, employment opportunities, etc.
- Since the federal government has never commissioned its own comprehensive study, H.R. 40 would **establish an expert federal commission to study** the legacy of slavery and ongoing harms **and develop proposals for how to provide redress and repair**, including fiduciary reparations. The work of an H.R. 40 commission is **a necessary part of public acknowledgment of the U.S. government’s complicity and wrongdoings, and how it seeks to rectify them**.
  - ***HR 40 Bill Text:** The commission shall examine slavery and discrimination in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. The commission shall identify (1) the role of the federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery, (2) forms of discrimination in the public and private sectors against freed slaves and their descendants, and (3) lingering negative effects of slavery on living African Americans and society.*
- **32 years in the making**, since its first introduction by late Rep. John Conyers in 1989, there is **precedent for H.R. 40**, and establishing an expert commission to examine harmful impacts of policy choice and provide redress is a **typical government practice**.
  - *See below “Historical & Supporting Information, Scholarly Articles”*
- If passed, H.R. 40 would provide the information and resources for **America to move towards atoning for its original sin**. The trans-Atlantic slave trade and the brutal treatment of African Americans has impacted every generation since the first enslaved Africans were sold in 1619.
- **Guarantees of non-repetition** include institutional and legal reform as well as reforms to government practices to end the abuse.
- The right to remedy and **reparation is well-defined in international human rights law**, and governments have an obligation to fulfill those rights. Victims of serious human rights violations, including acts of racial discrimination, have a right to an effective remedy, which includes reparations for past and ongoing harms. These victims include Black communities that still endure systemic discrimination rooted in the history of enslavement of Africans. Reparations include the following:
  - **Restitution:** measures to restore the situation that existed before the wrongful act(s) were committed, such as restoration of liberty, employment and return to the place of residence and return of property.
  - **Compensation:** monetary payment for “economically assessable damage” arising from the violation, including physical or mental harm, material losses, and lost opportunities.
  - **Rehabilitation:** provision of “medical and psychological care as well as legal and social services.”
  - **Satisfaction:** includes a range of measures involving truth-telling, statements aimed at ending ongoing abuses, commemorations, memorials or tributes to the victims, and expressions of regret or formal apology for wrongdoing.
- Passing H.R. 40 will be **in alignment with the United Nations International Decade for People of African descent: recognition, justice and development,”** recognizing internationally that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected.
- There can be **no racial healing without repairing the harm** caused by the deprivation and destruction of Black wealth, racism in health care, discrimination in the criminal legal system, and more. H.R. 40 is the **only bill that will lead to concrete proposals** for repairing the damage that the US government has inflicted on Black people. **Anything short of this will fail to deliver the remedy required.**

### FAITH FACTS—BIBLICAL JUSTIFICATIONS & SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

- God demands our acknowledgement and redress of injustice – Genesis 4:10
- Jesus’ mission statement is the basis for our faithful response – Luke 4:18-19
- Zacchaeus learns from Jesus the principal of reparatory restitution – Luke 19:8-10
- [The Biblical Case for Reparations](#), by Rev. Dr. John Thomas
- [A Christian Call for Reparations](#) by Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas
- [Reparations Are Biblical](#), by Rev. Thabiti Anyabwile
- [Reparations is not only a political response, but a Christian response...](#), by Rev. Dr. Kerry Day

### HISTORICAL & SUPPORTING INFORMATION, SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

- [An Historical Timeline of Reparations Payments Made From 1783 through 2021 by the United States Government, States, Cities, Religious Institutions, Colleges and Universities, Corporations, and Communities](#)
- Today’s debate about [reparations for slavery](#) dates back to Alexander Hamilton’s era. Except in the past, reparations were [actually paid out](#) – to the [owners of enslaved people](#).
- The Rhode Island General Assembly [passed an act in 1778](#) that said since enslaved people were “deemed the Property of their Owners ... Compensation ought to be made to the Owners for the Loss of their Service.”
- **Northern elite slaveholders sought and sometimes received reparations** for [losses they experienced during the Revolutionary War](#). Reparations ranged from restitution for the loss of enslaved people who escaped and gained freedom behind British lines to compensation for the expense of maintaining property (which included enslaved people) that were [commandeered by Revolutionary forces](#).
- **The Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862 ended enslavement in Washington, DC**, establishing a commission to hear petitions of former slave owners and provided direct compensation for the “loss of their human property.”
- **The American Civil War’s Field Order No. 15 in 1865** issued by Union Gen. William Sherman promised [“40 acres and a mule”](#) to formerly enslaved people freed along the coast of Georgia – though it was [quickly overturned and did not originally include a mule](#).
- **President Carter issued Executive Order 12093, the “President’s Commission on the Holocaust” in 1978**, which was responsible for submitting a report “with respect to the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust.”
- **The Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) of 1980**, which studied the facts and circumstances surrounding the internment of US citizens and permanent residents during World War II, led to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. The US government then issued a formal apology for the internment and granted redress in the form of financial compensation and education benefits to survivors and their families.
- **The Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946** established a formal commission to hear, investigate, and determine the validity of claims of “any Indian tribe, band, or identifiable group of American Indians” against the US.

### COUNTERARGUMENTS TO THE OBJECTIONS

- **In response to claims that H.R. 40 is divisive, following the Capitol Attack and the 4 years of regression under Trump:** We should not allow those who spread disinformation, traffic in hatred, and foment violence to define what unity and healing look like.
- **Slavery was national policy**, with ramifications that reverberate across the country today. We need a national reckoning and solutions at the federal level.
- White people continue to enjoy the spoils of a government that gave the white majority a leg up while **robbing Black people of intergenerational wealth**. The proposed H.R. 40 commission will design proposals to address and eliminate the racial wealth gap, in addition to reparative proposals that will specifically address disparities in healthcare, employment, education, food access, land and home ownership, police violence, etc.
- **Not everyone will agree on every aspect of any bill.** But those who support reparations for the legacy of slavery all agree on one thing: that reparations in some form or forms, are owed. H.R. 40 is an essential step toward making reparations a reality. We cannot further delay the establishment of the federal commission, whose job it will be to study the legacy of US enslavement and develop various reparatory proposals of redress. **The journey to repair is long.** But establishing the H.R. 40 commission **is absolutely essential**, and won’t preclude further debates.