

Session 5: Truth and Reconciliation

(with a focus on reparations)

United Nations definition of “Transitional Justice”:

“The full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation.”

--Transitional Justice and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner (2014). pp. 2

“United Nations work on transitional justice is based on international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law and international refugee law. In particular, four tenets of international human rights law have framed transitional justice and the fight against impunity:

(a) the State obligation to investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators of gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law, including sexual violence, and to punish those found guilty;

(b) the right to **know the truth** about past abuses and the fate of disappeared persons;

(c) the right to reparations for victims of gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law; and

(d) the State obligation to prevent, through different measures, the reoccurrence of such atrocities in the future.”

--Transitional Justice and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
United Nations Office of the High Commissioner (2014). pp. 2

“The idea of reparations is frightening not simply because we might lack the ability to pay. The idea of reparations threatens something much deeper – America’s heritage, history, and standing in the world. . .

. . .What I’m talking about is a national reckoning that would lead to spiritual renewal. . . Reparations would mean a revolution of the American consciousness, a reconciling of our self-image as the great democratizer within the facts of our history.”

Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations.” *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 2014. (Also see Neiman, p. 311, for a discussion of this quote in the context of Holocaust reparations)

“...None of the actions we are told black people must take if they want to “lift themselves” out of poverty and gain financial stability — not marrying, not getting educated, not saving more, not owning a home — can mitigate 400 years of racialized plundering. Wealth begets wealth, and white Americans have had centuries of government assistance to accumulate wealth, while the government has for the vast history of this country worked against black Americans doing the same.”

---“What is Owed.” Nikole Hannah-Jones,
The New York Times, June 30, 2020

“To ignore the fact that one of the oldest republics in the world was erected on a foundation of white supremacy, to pretend that the problems of a dual society are the same as the problems of unregulated capitalism, is to cover the sin of national plunder with the sin of national lying.

The lie ignores the fact that reducing American poverty and ending white supremacy are not the same.”

Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations.”
The Atlantic Monthly, June 2014

“. . . Our past will continue to haunt us if we do not face it down.

An open reckoning with that past is a crucial step toward maturity that will allow us to envision a full-bodied future, for a grown-up relationship to one's culture is like a grown-up relationship to your parents. We all benefit from inheritances we did not choose and cannot change.

Growing up involves sifting through all the things you couldn't help inheriting and figuring out what you want to claim as your own – and what you have to do to dispose of the rest of it.”

--Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil* (2019), pp. 39

City council in Asheville, North Carolina, unanimously approves reparation plan

The city will make investments in areas where Black residents face disparities.

By Ivan Pereira

July 15, 2020, 3:48 PM • 4 min read



What is Black Lives Matter?

#BlackLivesMatter is a global organization that campaigns against violence and systemic racism towards black people.

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/city-council-asheville-north-carolina-unanimously-approves-reparation/story?id=71795059>