

**Committee: SPECPOL 1**

**Topic: The question of reparations for slavery**

**Chair: Jasmine Little**

**School: SVIS**

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## Summary

According to GEMS (Global Estimates of Modern Slavery) applications of the notion of reparations to former slaves and/or their descendants is known as reparations for slavery. Both transitional justice and legal philosophy have notions for compensation. These forms of reparation for slavery were most used during World War I and Nazi Germany. Looking at the present-day, slavery takes place all-around the world with 50 million cases reported worldwide. Nevertheless, many states do attempt to make amends with past slavery and slavery debts. Primarily the UN (United Nations), as the chief calls for reparations for slavery, meaning Michelle Bachelet (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2018-2022) urges countries to confront legacy of slavery and colonisation. Finally, Michelle Bachelet urged nations to look back on their histories and work towards a greater understanding of the magnitude of ongoing "systemic discrimination" during an urgent discussion on racism and police violence at the UN human rights council in Geneva.

## Definition of Key Terms

**GEMS-** Global Estimates of Modern Slavery

**Descendants-** One originating or coming from an ancestral stock or source.

**UN-** United Nations

**Slave trade** - The trade or business of procuring human beings by capture or purchase, transporting them to some distant country, and selling them as slaves; traffic in slaves.

**Reparation** - The act or process of making amends for a wrong.

## General overview

Reparations for the slavery is not a new idea. General William Tecumseh Sherman gave an order in South Carolina just before the Civil War came to a conclusion. For each former slave family, he demanded 40 acres and the loan of an Army mule. This request was never fulfilled. Following the war, radical Republicans in Congress pushed legislation mandating the seizure of former Confederate land in order to give freed slaves "40 acres and a mule." The law was vetoed by President Andrew Johnson in 1866.

Around the turn of the century, there was a new drive for reparations. For former slaves and their offspring to receive pensions, several black organisations pushed Congress. In 1894, a measure was submitted to the U.S. Senate that would have authorised direct payments of up to \$500 + monthly annuities ranging from \$4 to \$15 to all former slaves. This measure, along with numerous others, was killed in congressional committees. With the start of World War I, the pension movement itself began to lose steam.

Some black leaders brought the concept of reparations back to life in the 1960s. James Forman, who was in charge of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee at the time, issued a "Black Manifesto" in 1969. It claimed \$500 million from churches and synagogues in the United States for their complicity in the upkeep of slavery before to the Civil War. Reparations were also sought by black nationalist groups like the Black Panther Party and Black Muslims.

An updated demand for black reparations emerged in the 1980s. Two other movements that were successful in receiving funding from the US government served as its catalysts. In 1980, the Supreme Court made an order to the federal government to pay eight Sioux Indian tribes \$122 million to compensate for the illegal seizure of tribal lands in 1877. Then in 1988, Congress approved the payment of \$1.25 billion to 60,000 Japanese-American citizens who had been interned in prison camps during World War II.

In April 1989, Council Member Ray Jenkins guided through the Detroit City Council a resolution. It called for a \$40 billion federal education fund for black college and trade school students. About the same time, a conference of black state legislators meeting in New Orleans backed the idea of a federally financed

education fund for descendants of slaves. Shortly afterward, Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) drafted a bill calling for the establishment of a congressional commission to study the impact of slavery on African-Americans.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### United States

The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which stated that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction," was ratified in 1865, marking the end of the American Civil War and the end of slavery in the United States. Four million African Americans were reportedly set free at that period. A rising list of contemporary examples of reparations for slavery in the United States in 2020 was expected as the demand for reparations in the US has grown. Reparations for slavery related to the Atlantic slave trade date back to at least 1783 in North America.

### United Kingdom

Once being the largest empire in the world, the UK used to be a pioneer of the slave trade before they banned it, setting up a 'slave trade triangle between the Home Counties, Africa and America. When regarding reparations for slavery, the UK would be footing a lot of the bill due to being attributed as the spawn of mass slave trade. In the UK, traction has been building for the nation to apologise and pay reparations for slavery, however the current Prime Minister has shut down these demands.

### Portugal

Portugal is an outstanding case in the story of reparations for slavery. Portugal is reported to have been the most active in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in terms of numbers of slaves. While Portugal never had the largest empire, such figures show how much Portugal had exploited the slave trade. However, the size for reparations would need to be considered as a nation like Portugal might not be able to pay as big payments as the United States would be able to.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description
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(Just a brief description of the main events to provide context)

**1787** - Belinda Sutton, kidnapped as a child in what is now Ghana and sold into slavery

**1865** - Union Army General Sherman issued Special Field Order #15, which gave 40,000 former slaves 40 acres each of captured land from South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The order was later overturned by President Andrew Johnson, who ordered the land returned to Confederate landholders.

**1870**- Sojourner Truth circulated a petition requesting Congress to provide land to the “freed coloured people in and about Washington” to allow them “to support themselves.”

**1878**- Henrietta Wood won restitution for slavery. According to Caleb McDaniel, “though born enslaved in Kentucky in 1818 or 1820, Wood had been living as a free woman in Cincinnati in 1853 when she was kidnapped and re-enslaved by a white Kentuckian named Zebulon Ward; she ended up living in slavery until after the Civil War.

**1894** - The National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief and Bounty and Pension Association was formed by a formerly enslaved woman, Callie House, and challenged the United States to pay pensions to former slaves. By 1898, it had enrolled 300,000 African Americans to demand pensions from the federal government.

**1890 – 1903**: Six ex-slave pension bills went before Congress; none were passed.

**1957-1959**: Queen Mother Audley Moore presented a petition to the United Nations demanding land and billions of dollars in compensation, as well as repatriation to Africa.

**1969** - The “Black Manifesto” was launched in Detroit. Penned by James Forman, former Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizer, and released at the National Black Economic Development Conference,

**1995** - The Southern Baptists apologized to African American church members for the denomination’s endorsement of slavery.

**2001**- The Oklahoma legislature passed, and Governor Keating signed, a bill to pay reparations for the destruction of the Greenwood, Oklahoma community by white supremacists in 1921 in the form of low-income student scholarships in Tulsa.

**2002** - Edward Fagan filed a class-action lawsuit in the name of Deadria Farmer-Paellmann and other people in similar situations. Fagan’s lawsuit requested a formal apology and financial reparations from three United States companies that profited from slavery.

**2005** - The United States Senate approved, by voice vote, S.R.39, which called for the lawmakers to apologize to lynching victims, survivors, and their descendants, several of whom were watching from the gallery

**2015** - The City of Chicago signed into law an ordinance granting \$5.5 million in cash payments, free college education, priority for city employment, and a range of social services, including the creation of a healing and organizing centre on the South Side of Chicago, to 57 living survivors of police torture.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

**NEW YORK (29 October 2019)** – Reparations for racial discrimination rooted in colonialism and slavery are essential to the fulfilment of human rights, a UN human rights expert said today, calling on States to accept they have obligations and responsibilities to make reparations to victims and their descendants.

**August 30, 2022, Geneva** – For the first time, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is calling on the U.S. government to begin the process of providing reparations to descendants of enslaved people. The recommendation comes in the committee’s report on its review of U.S. compliance with the CERD treaty. The committee also took the unusual step in its countrywide review of citing human rights violations in a specific state: environmental racism in Louisiana’s “Cancer Alley.”

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue.

**1839 - 1909:** The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society

**1909 - 1947:** The Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society

**1947 - 1956:** The Anti-Slavery Society

**1956 - 1990:** The Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights

**1990 - 1995:** Anti-Slavery International for the Protection of Human Rights

**1995 - present:** Anti-Slavery International

## Bibliography

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