

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear House leadership,

“The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.’”

-Genesis 4:10 NRSV

We — the undersigned faith-based organizations, faith leaders, and advocates representing millions of people of faith across the country — **strongly urge you to support the passage of H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act.**

H.R. 40 would establish a commission to examine the history of enslavement and discrimination in the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. During the 116th Congress, H.R. 40 had over 173 co-sponsors, and was endorsed by over 300 organizations across the country as part of the “[Why We Can’t Wait](#)” project. This overwhelming support demonstrates that the United States cannot move forward without properly addressing and atoning for the lasting harms of the nation’s original sin — the institution of slavery.

There can be no racial healing in the United States without first repairing the harm caused by the deprivation and destruction of Black wealth, racism in health care, discrimination in the criminal legal system, and countless systemic failures. 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 from centuries of injustice.

Examining the impacts of past policies and providing reparations to impacted communities is a common governmental practice. In 1946, Congress created the Indian Claims Commission to pay compensation to any federally recognized tribe for land that had been seized by the United States. Similarly, in 1980, Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, to study the wrongful internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. This led to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 which issued a formal apology and provided compensation to survivors of internment and their families.

The government has never issued a comprehensive study of the lasting impact of enslavement and the resulting racist policies, institutions, and systems in this country. In 2020 alone, we have seen pivotal examples of the detrimental impact of our country’s long history of systemic issues on the Black community. It is vital that Congress pass H.R. 40 as a first step that will chronicle the centuries of injustice against the Black community and offer remedies to redress and repair the legacy of anti-Black racism in this country.

The right to reparations is well-defined in international human rights law. Reparations seek to address the harms caused by human rights violations. They can take the form of compensating for the losses suffered, which helps overcome some of the consequences of the abuse. H.R. 40 is an essential step toward making reparations a reality in the United States by publicly acknowledging the government's failings and setting a course for rectifying them.

As people of faith, we are calling on you to pass H.R. 40 because God calls us to repair wrongs done to one another and to work for personal and social reconciliation and renewal. We believe we are duly bound to follow a spiritual call to honor and protect the inherent sacred worth and dignity of all people and seek justice when that worth and dignity is violated. We have an opportunity and an obligation to swiftly pass H.R. 40 as a first step in redressing centuries of injustice against Black people in the United States. H.R. 40 has been described as the ONLY present possibility in adequately addressing and redressing these historic injustices.

As our nation works to heal from COVID-19, we must also have a national reckoning with our legacy of enslavement and systemic racism. Until the United States acknowledges the systemic failings that we have allowed to persist and offer Black people redress for these harms, there will be no healing in our nation. Reparations is a matter of Justice, and the time is now to act by passing H.R. 40.

Signed,

National Organizations

African American Ministers In Action

Alliance of Baptists

American Friends Service Committee

American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)

Bread for the World

Center for Common Ground

Church World Service

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Faith in Public Life Action

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

ICNA Council for Social Justice

Keshet

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Missionary Oblates
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance of Faith and Justice
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pax Christi USA
Poligon Education Fund
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
SBC21
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Leadership
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Episcopal Church
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
National Alliance of Faith and Justice

State Organizations

Faith Action Network of Washington State
Faith in Florida
Faith in Indiana
Faith in New Jersey
First United Methodist Church, Dallas
MAPS-AMEN (American Muslim Empowerment Network)
Missouri Faith Voices
NH Conference United Church of Christ Immigrant and Refugee Support Group
North Carolina Council of Churches
Soul 2 Soul Sisters
SouthEast Faith Leaders Network

United Methodist Women

Local Organizations

Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse (ACTS)

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Braxton Institute

Concord District Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society (Piedmont Episcopal District)

Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries

DC Dorothy Day Catholic Worker

Ebenezer Church PHX

IKAR

Lab/Shul

Little River United Church of Christ

Olympia Zen Center—A Buddhist Community

One Fellowship UMC

Orange County Congregation Community Organization (OCCCO)

Peace and Justice Ministry, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Edgewood, WA

Princeton Mutual Aid

Sisters of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Center

St. Luke Community United Methodist Church

The Gathering, A Womanist Church in Dallas

The VGC Group

Together Colorado

Trenton Anti-Violence Coalition

Unidos of Snohomish County

Wesley United Methodist Church

Individuals

A. Connie Ruhl

Akilah S. Wallace

Alice Woldt, former co-director Faith Action Network

Amy Compestine

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Christian S. Watkins
Carol Larkin
Carolyn Morse-Finn
Cynthia Griffiths
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Denise Lytle
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Mary Stamp
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Melani Baker

Melissa Battah
Meredith Dodson, Co-Chair of the Domestic Human Needs Racial Equity Group
Michael Betz
Mickey M Beary
Nancy C. Reyes
Nancy Horman
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Pastor Trena Turner
Patricia Kelly
Paul Benz
Paul Sherman
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Rabbi Sharon Brous, IKAR
Raymond Meester
Renee Felton Pullen
Rev. Barbara J Gilday
Rev. Dr. Cassandra Gould
Rev. Dr. David M. Hindman
Rev. Dr. Jerry L. Folk
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Rev. Ann Barton
Rev. Aundreia Alexander, National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
Rev. Carol P. Dague

Rev. Cynthia Lapp, Mt Rainier, MD
Rev. Denise Thompson
Rev. Dr. Christopher J. Ross
Rev. Dr. Stacey Cole Wilson, BWCUMC
Rev. Ebony Grison
Rev. Edward D. Gehres Jr.
Rev. Jeffrey Dodson
Rev. Katy Lloyd
Rev. Kristin-Luana Baumann, ELCA
Rev. Laura Robinson
Rev. Lee Hartman, Snoqualmie UMC
Rev. Mary Gear
Rev. Meredith A. Allen
Rev. Monica Styron, Vice Moderator Cayuga-Syracuse Presbytery
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