

Dear President Biden,

As the undersigned members of the Washington Interfaith Staff Community, our religious organizations would like to express support for a letter recently sent to your attention. It was written on behalf of the 365 civil rights, human rights, and faith-based organizations; and dozens of activists, leaders, and celebrities that support creating a federal reparations commission through an executive order by Sunday, June 19, the Juneteenth holiday. In the letter issued on May 4, 2022, the racial justice leaders and advocates implore your administration establish a federal commission to initiate a federal study that develops reparations proposals for African Americans. We whole-heartedly support this request and pray that the executive order is issued, on or before Juneteenth in collaboration with other events that highlight the emancipation of African American enslaved people, and in recognition of the greater need for racial justice in our communities.

For generations, houses of worship, clergy, and faith-based activists have advocated for reparations to repair the breach in society brought on by this country's original sin of chattel slavery. Our siblings in civil rights and human rights movements have long called for reparations, too – creating a rich theological and secular call of reparatory justice. White supremacist activity, like mass shootings at an AME Church Bible study in South Carolina and in a grocery store in New York; social and economic inequities, like the massive gulf between Black and white wealth; and contention over the inclusion of Black history in public schools have grown even greater in recent years because we have not made amends or properly reckoned with our national past. As faith-based leaders, we affirm that the racist violence, policies, and laws that contribute to ongoing harm is a matter of moral and legal justice that must be addressed now

The Black community has long awaited a study that objectively measures past, present, and future remedies for suffering that began with enslavement, continued with Jim Crow and disenfranchisement, and endures through inequitable laws and policies today. The trauma this community endures day-to-day cannot be ignored, with consistent news reports of tragedies that befall Black people in the United States. From police shootings of unarmed African Americans to Black college students kicked out of campus study spaces, our country is fed a steady diet of race-based attacks on African Americans. The executive order you create will propose remedies to the ongoing pain and suffering based on race. Without this measure, we do not foresee an end to the harm that makes life for all of us in the country miserable.

The faith community calls on you, Mr. President, to employ the power of your office to bring racial repair to and fulfill a campaign pledge you made to “support a study of reparations...[as a means to] root out systemic racism and ensure that all Americans have a fair shot at living the American dream.”

Now is the time to reckon with hundreds of years of slavery, Jim Crow, racist laws, racist economic policy, and racial violence. We thank you in advance for being a man of faith and taking the first step in issuing this critically--needed Executive Order.

Now is the time to sign the most important Executive Order of all time. Establishing an H.R.40-style commission is the future of the United States.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists
American Friends Service Committee
American Humanist Association
Church World Service
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington D.C.
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)
General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church
National Council of Churches
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Race Relations, Christian Reformed Church in North America
Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference, Inc.
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist for Social Justice
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries