

## **Local Reparations...Let's Have a Conversation**

Last month I attended a workshop on reparations at the YWCA sponsored by the Racial Justice Coalition. I learned a lot I did not know about the reparations process in Asheville and the history of reparations in the US and abroad. Did you know that in 1862 President Lincoln signed the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act into law offering reparations to former slave owners – \$300 for each person freed? No reparations were offered to those formerly enslaved!

Although the local reparations process started in 2020, we have not had conversations in our congregation about reparations and how they might align with our UU values and aspirations. UUs are not a monolith, and there are different perspectives on the importance of reparations to promote healing and address the impacts of the historical injustices of slavery, Jim Crow and continued discrimination and disregard for Black lives. Below are a few resources from the workshop.

A place to start (or review, if you've read it before) is [The Case for Reparations](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates.

[The Local Reparations Process in Asheville and Buncombe County](#) – A synopsis of the local reparations process, starting with the passage of the Reparations Resolutions in 2020 and the formation of the Community Reparations Commission (CRC).

[A Brief History of Reparations](#) – A broader timeline of the history of reparations in international, national, and local contexts.

[Common Questions and Concerns](#) – A list of questions and concerns that people have raised around reparations for Black people, with some suggestions for how to respond to them. The RJC offers the following questions (modified slightly for our conversation) to consider as you reflect on these resources. There may be a range of thought about this issue, but I trust we can agree to maintain curiosity and respect when we do not agree.

### **Identify your feelings and values.**

Do you care about this issue? Why or why not? What feelings come up for you when you think about reparations? Which of your values are challenged by our current racial justice reality? What values would be affirmed by the delivery of reparations? Are there values that would be affirmed by not engaging in reparations?

**Develop your story.** How did you come to believe that reparations are due/not due to Black people? Where did you begin? What beliefs did you have before you came to support/reject this cause? What people or experiences influenced you to shift your thinking and feelings?

**Acknowledge your position.** Become familiar with your own position in this conversation and what influences that position.

If you are interested in exploring reparations with fellow UUs, consider joining me for “Curious Conversations” which resume on August 24 at noon in Sandburg Hall (bring a bagged lunch). If you are unable to attend, there will be another gathering Sept. 28, same place, same time. I am also available for conversation. Check out my [Calendly](#) for a time when we can speak (via Zoom, phone, or in-person). And be on the lookout for future opportunities at UU Avl and in the community to continue to learn about reparations.

Lastly, if you support reparations, consider signing the “Reparations are Due Pledge.” [Reparations are Due Pledge & Explanation](#) – An overview of local history and the harm inflicted on Black residents, from slavery through Jim Crow apartheid and up to the present day.

I hope this is the beginning of many thoughtful conversations in our UU community about reparations. Whatever your position, may this be a community that encourages us to put our faith in action by grappling with the issues faced by our community, and leading with love in partnering with others to make amends and promote healing in the face of injustice so that all may thrive.

In faith,  
Rev. Claudia Jiménez  
Minister of Faith Development