

Social Work Advocacy for Black Reparations

V. Nikki Jones¹, Cathy G. McElderry², M. Lacey McNary³, Carmelita L. Dotson⁴ and Kenya Frazier⁵

School of Social Work, Spalding University^{1,3,5}

Department of Social Work, Middle Tennessee State University^{2,4}

Abstract

Reparations are acknowledgement, acceptance, and redress for gross injustices and wrongdoings. U.S. Black reparations can attempt to address and repair systematic oppression through comprehensive interventions aimed at the vestiges of chattel enslavement and undoing and countering disproportionate, negative outcomes experienced by African Americans. Social workers committed to doing anti-racism should fervently advance reparations in social work education and practice as a social justice policy priority. This article envisions ways that social workers can actualize advocacy for reparations as an anti-racist practice. The social work profession has the potential to serve and support the Black reparations movement through education, collaboration, and community organizing.

Keywords

Reparations, justice, anti-racism, anti-Black discrimination

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Corresponding author: vjones02@spalding.edu

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Reparations offer a means to intentionally respond to and repair historic and ongoing injuries perpetrated against human beings. In seeking to understand and effectively advance the Black reparations movement, one has to seriously study and support the global movement for reparatory justice. For diasporan and continental Africans, reparatory justice, which comprises the uprooting of and redress for European systems of domination, is sought for the Transatlantic trade, dehumanization and enslavement, genocide, European colonization and economic exploitation, among other serious human rights' crimes and harms. The current debate over Black reparations in the United States focuses on compensatory remedies for human rights violations inflicted upon people of African descent over the course of chattel slavery, as well as ongoing anti-Black discrimination faced by their descendants. Taken together, these events include forced migration; over 200 years of uncompensated labor; failed Reconstruction; U.S. racial apartheid and White domestic terrorism; and racial criminalization, prison-industrial complex, and police violence.

In the United States, the vestiges of enslavement, including de jure and de facto segregation, and anti-Black discrimination maintain racial disparities in health, wealth, education, punishment, neighborhood pollution, and community violence (Bowman et al., 2018; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017; Crowder & Downey, 2010; Fontenot et al., 2018; Hinton & Cook, 2021). Such injustices have also contributed to post-traumatic stress and unresolved grief for African Americans. DeGruy explained that African Americans have inherited “a legacy of debt and suffering” from a “legacy of trauma” transmitted through generations of ancestors whose experiences of abuse and survival have often become present-day, maladaptive thinking and behavior (2005, p. 117). These experiences for African Americans are akin to descriptions of

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historical trauma and consequential emotional wounding, mental unwellness, and unresolved grief among Indigenous peoples of the Americas (Brave Heart et al., 2011).

While Black reparations in the United States is the focal point of this article, the ‘legacy of debt and suffering’ is not isolated to this one country or African Americans as the colonial context has perpetuated mass atrocities. As Fanon described, “the violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life...” (1963, p. 40), colonial violence has entitled reparations to peoples across the globe. The United Nations’ agencies have underscored the necessity of governments, organizations, and other entities to acknowledge and remedy crimes against humanity and both historical and contemporary forms of racial inequities (United Nations Department of Public Information, 2002; United Nations General Assembly, 2019).

Currently, advocacy for reparations is a neglected justice issue in social work that should compel the profession to engage in social and political activities and legislative actions (Jones & McElderry, 2021; McElderry & Jones, 2021). Advancing reparations as a social justice priority is an important task for anti-racist social work practice with aims to atone for the profession’s participation in white supremacy and systemic oppression (Ortega-Williams & McLane-Davidson, 2021). Advocacy for reparations presents social workers an opportunity to address institutional racism and adhere to social workers’ codes of ethics to promote the welfare and betterment of human society (National Association of Social Workers of Zimbabwe, n.d.) and challenge social injustices and pursue social change in the interest of justice (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018; National Association of Black Social Workers [NABSW], n.d.; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021a). Social work organizations in the United States have acknowledged their role in supporting and perpetuating racism in policies and called for anti-racist social work practice (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2022; National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work, 2020; NASW, 2021b); yet, at the time of this writing, the NABSW (2020) is the sole U.S. social work organization to

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explicitly announce support for reparations. The current emphasis on anti-racism in social work raises an important question of how social workers are *doing* anti-racist practice. If social work is truly invested in undoing racism (NASW, 2021b) and practicing anti-racism, then the profession should participate in the important work of advocacy for reparations.

Global and national social work advocacy for Black reparations is currently limited. Thus, this article offers a scholarly contribution to anti-racist social work practice vis-à-vis advancing social workers' advocacy for reparations. We propose ways social workers can actualize advocacy for reparations as an anti-racist practice. Reparations advocacy should be considered in social work education, national organizations, and community organizing. We begin by introducing reparations in the context of anti-racist practice and then describe federal reparations' legislation in the United States. These considerations are followed by recommendations for advocacy for reparations. We assert that social workers have the potential to serve and support the reparations movement through education, collaboration, and community organizing. We offer specific strategies to support advocacy for reparations that complement previous scholarship on justice, equity, and anti-racist practice.

Anti-Racist Practice and Reparations

Given the significance of ongoing white domination, white nationalism, and a race-based caste in the United States, anti-racist social work must focus on eliminating all systems of oppression and repairing the harms caused by anti-Black discrimination. Thus, advancing reparations to undo racism must be at the core of anti-racist social work practice. Early and evolving definitions of anti-racism in social work suggest:

- A form of practice to eradicate racist social relationships and structures from the profession and society.
- An ongoing effort to divest from the status quo of whiteness by using mechanisms outside of existing institutional parameters to create change.

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- A transformative process to reshape social relationships and interactions between Black and White people specifically and to eliminate racism at micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.
- Engaging in multiple ways of knowing such as utilization of African-centered knowledge. (Dominelli, 2018; Graham, 2000; Jones et al., 2022; Keating, 2000)

As of recent, social work organizations, such as the NASW, have released statements promoting justice and racial equity while also condemning racism and white supremacy and the devaluation of Black lives (NASW, 2020a; NASW, 2020b). The CSWE (2021) has also publicized recommendations, from its Task Force to Advance Anti-Racism in Social Work Education, to develop a plan for integrating anti-racism pedagogies into social work curricula. However, despite all of these well intended efforts, a plausible fear is that talking and planning are the closest that individuals and organizations will come to actualizing anti-racism.

As DiAngelo explained, “We [White progressives] will put our energy into making sure that others see us as having arrived. None of our energy will go into what we need to be doing for the rest of our lives... actual antiracist practice” (2018, p. 5). Advocacy for reparations is anti-racist practice. Reparations can help repair structural, systemic, and institutional injustices and resultant racial disparities through comprehensive interventions that reduce or eliminate disproportionate, negative outcomes experienced by African Americans. Globally, advocacy for reparatory justice is an example of the ‘rest of our lives’ work mentioned by DiAngelo (2018).

U.S. Government and Black Reparations

The words reparation and reparations are often used interchangeably, but necessitate clarification (Aiyetoro, 2002; Shepherd & Hemmings, 2022). *Reparation* is an internationally recognized process to pursue acknowledgment, apology, repair, and reconciliation for historic wrongdoings and crimes against humanity committed by governments, corporations, and individuals. A common form of reparation are Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that can

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serve multiple purposes such as investigating wrongdoing and facilitating the transfer of power such as in South Africa and Peru (Androff, 2022).

Reparations are moral and material atonement for human rights violations and crimes committed against people and include non-monetary and monetary redress. One goal for reparations in a multiracial society such as the United States should be moral and material atonement. Brooks (2004) has explained that atonement seeks to make racial reconciliation possible as it can enable reflection, acceptance, and forgiveness to occur when the perpetrator takes accountability, makes an apology, and does something to make the apology tangible. Thus, atonement is moral *and* material reparations. Non-monetary redress includes various forms such as disclosure of wrongdoings, public apologies, and civil or criminal consequences for perpetrators. By contrast, material redress involves land, employment, behavioral health programs, property, and direct monetary payments. Documented examples of reparations include the U.S. government to Indigenous People, Germany to Holocaust survivors and Israel, Canadian government for internment of Japanese Canadians, U.S. government for internment of Japanese Americans, Canadian government to First Nations people, and New Zealand government to Māori (Winbush, 2003).

In the United States, we have witnessed some advancements on Black reparations at state and local levels. Although, legislative wins have yet to occur on efforts to pursue H.R.40/S.40 – Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans and H.Con.Res.19 – Urging the establishment of a United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation. H.R.40/S.40 proposes to identify the following:

- (1) the role of the federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery,
- (2) forms of discrimination in the public and private sectors against freed slaves and their descendants, and

(3) lingering negative effects of slavery on living African Americans and society.

(Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, H.R.40, 117th Cong., 2021-2022; S.40-Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, 117th Cong., 2021-2022)

H.R.40 is a precursor to S.40 and H.Con.Res.19. Since November 20, 1989, when the late Representative John Conyers (Democrat-Michigan) first introduced H.R.3745, which later became H.R.40, the bill has progressed very little aside from subcommittee hearings. More recently, notable actions on H.R.40 have occurred. On June 19, 2019, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties held a hearing on H.R.40 (Lockhart, 2019). Additionally, on April 13, 2021, the House Judiciary Committee held the first markup of H.R.40. This milestone marked the first time the bill made it out of subcommittee to the House floor. The H.Con.Res.19 complements H.R.40/S.40 by urging the establishment of a United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation to examine chattel slavery, systematic oppression of African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups, and how oppression impacts laws and prevents social and economic opportunities and mobility (H.Con.Res.19-117th Cong., 2021-2022; Lee, 2021).

Unlike federal efforts, some state and local governments have undertaken and made forward movement on reparations (Associated Press, 2007; Gillespie, 2019; Moscufo, 2022; State of California Department of Justice, 2022; Treisman, 2021). For example, Florida has provided compensation to survivors of the 1923 racial massacre of African American residents of Rosewood and lawmakers in Maryland and Virginia have passed resolutions issuing formal apologies for slavery. Similar efforts have occurred in California, where on July 1, 2022, the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans presented an interim report to the California legislature. The City of Evanston's implementation of a reparations restorative housing program and Harvard University's endowment of \$100 million to address legacies of slavery are examples of local actions to make amends and address reparations. These incremental steps of repair are notable but should not be confused with

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comprehensive reparations, which entails multigenerational and multiform redress for previous and ongoing harms (Aiwuyor & Taifa, 2023; Taifa, 2022). The goal of comprehensive reparations is to repair the five injury areas caused by historic human rights violations and ongoing anti-Black discrimination.

The National Coalition for Blacks for Reparations in America [N'COBRA] (2020) has identified five injury areas suffered by people of African descent as a result of chattel slavery and ongoing anti-Black discrimination. These areas are: 1.) nationhood/peoplehood (destruction of African people's culture and right to self-determination), 2.) education (denial of access to education institutions and separate and unequal systems), 3.) health (history of inhumane experiments in the name of science, disproportionate inaccessibility to health systems, and ongoing racialized health disparities), 4.) criminal (convict leasing, mass surveillance, mass incarceration, and unequal sentencing and death penalty), and 5.) wealth/poverty (unpaid labor, discrimination in housing and employment, and racial wealth gap). In addition to the five injury areas, there are five forms of reparation for harm that must be pursued for comprehensive reparations:

- *Restitution* focuses on reversing injuries endured as a result of harms (e.g., citizenship, repatriation, and freedom for political prisoners).
- *Compensation* entails economic awards made for damages such as employment and costs for care or services.
- *Rehabilitation* emphasizes provisions of service beyond monetary compensation such as restoration of land, tax exemptions, and acknowledgement of stolen intellectual properties.
- *Satisfaction* is cessation of harms and includes public apologies and commemorations and tributes to victims and survivors.

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- *Guarantees of Non-repetition* is prevention of future violations of human rights, including civilian control of military and observance of codes of conduct. (N'COBRA, n.d.; United Nations General Assembly, 2005)

N'COBRA and other grassroots organizations have persistently worked for reparations measures and supported passage of H.R.40. Given the current movements and milestones occurring, now is the time for social workers to actively support comprehensive reparations.

Reparations and Opportunities for Social Work

The addition of the 13th Grand Challenge, to eliminate racism (Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2020), demonstrates the aspirations of social workers to diligently work to defeat anti-Blackness and racial injustices. Advocacy for reparations is consistent with the profession's mission to enhance well-being with particular interest in vulnerable and oppressed populations; and the aims of the 13th Grand Challenge to advance community empowerment, advocacy, and a policy agenda to eradicate white supremacy. Therefore, it is critical to discuss how social workers can engage in the global movement for Black reparations. Compared to the general public, social workers appear more agreeable to reparations. Jones et al. (2021) examined social workers' attitudes toward reparations and found that a majority of social work respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* (73.2%) with reparations for African American descendants. Additionally, 73.5% of respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that reparations can begin to remedy and repair racial inequity. More than half of respondents (68.8%) *agreed* that the NASW should make reparations a social justice priority.

Results from this small sample of social workers has revealed support for reparations. Much of social workers' support for reparations is likely impacted by professional codes of ethics that emphasize social justice and advocacy and the pursuit of anti-racism in social work education. Even though professional and organizational efforts around social justice are often more aspirational than practice application, there is an emerging paradigm shift to actively challenge

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sources of Eurocentric hegemony. For example, the 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards require implementation of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) across explicit and implicit curriculum (CSWE, 2022). Equally important, the Canadian Association for Social Work Education, which accredits social work programs in Canadian universities, has offered a reconciliation toolkit to support Schools of Social Work to engage and co-develop “with the Indigenous peoples of the territory on which you reside” through relationship-building, land acknowledgments, and other efforts (2023, p. 1).

Anti-racist social work practice requires moving beyond the talk of social justice to full participation in the hard work that lies ahead. Advocacy for reparations, such as H.R.40/S.40 and H.Con.Res.19, demonstrate best practices and conscious, deliberate actions in “active resistance to and dismantling of the system of racism to obtain racial equity” (NASW, 2022, para. 2). While the profession has a long history of supporting social justice and social welfare policy, the verdict is still out on how U.S. social work organizations will advance human rights and justice in the era of white nationalism and far-right political conservatism. H.R.40/S.40 and H.Con.Res.19 are worthy causes that warrant attention by the social work profession.

Recommendations for Engaging in Advocacy for Reparations

In the United States, the social work profession can work in solidarity and partnership with organizations, allies, and activists to promote racial equity, passage of H.R.40/S.40 and H.Con.Res.19, and atonement. Social workers should build coalitions with Black organizations, such as N’COBRA and the Movement for Black Lives, to support educating and empowering consumers to organize for reparatory justice. Social workers who reside or work in countries in and outside of the United States can engage and support global reparations movements such as the Caribbean Reparations Commission and the European Reparations Commission and peoples in Haiti, Brazil, Namibia, Tanzania, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere who are demanding reparatory justice (CARICOM Reparations Commission, 2023; National African-American Reparations Commission, 2021). However, first and foremost, it is imperative to acknowledge

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historic and ongoing anti-Blackness. Truth-telling requires an accurate account of the past and acknowledgement of the ongoing disparities disproportionately faced by peoples of African descent. Social workers can prepare and participate in the truth-telling process on multiple fronts. The subsequent sections describes how this work can unfold.

Social Work Education

Reparations must be an explicit element of anti-racism in social work education. Advocacy for reparations is not included in the previous or current drafts of the CSWE's Education Policy and Accreditation Standards. However, unlike the CSWE, the Canadian Association of Social Workers has shown an interest in and commitment to reparations by working on a project with the Association of Black Social Workers in Nova Scotia to develop recommendations for reparations on behalf of the profession (Este & Walmsley, 2022). U.S. social work educators should utilize the resources provided by such organizations to support developing its own collaborations, agendas, and efforts. Organizing in favor of comprehensive reparations is germane to social work competencies to advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice (competency 2) and engage ADEI in practice (competency 3). The absence of reparatory justice leaves a void in social work education that neglects the profession's commitment of advocacy for social change. Failure to include goal-oriented and action-based activities can render our work performative. As interventionists at micro, mezzo, and macro levels, social workers can play an important role in supporting H.R.40/S.40, H.Con.Res.19, and other reparatory justice practices.

Social work programs should address the past and long-term sequelae of anti-Black discrimination that necessitate reparations, as well as recognize how the profession and universities in which social work programs are housed benefit from systemic oppression. Along with curriculum on cultural diversity and restorative justice, CSWE-accredited social work programs should address the need for reparatory justice practices and policies to atone for social, racial, economic, and environmental injustices at individual, group, and macro levels of practice.

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Social work faculty and students should have sufficient familiarity with H.R.40/S.40 to recognize its association with contemporary social welfare policy and implications for human rights and justice.

Social Work Organizations

Social work organizations can support and utilize the language of the N'COBRA, NABSW, the Social Service Workers United-Chicago, and other groups advancing reparatory justice to draft their own position statements on Black reparations. There is emerging scholarship and resources to underpin building an agenda to support the movement of social workers for reparations (e.g., Bridgeman & Kemp, 2017; Este & Walmsley, 2022; Jones & McElderry, 2021; Jones et al., 2021; McElderry & Jones, 2021). National social work organizations should be well-positioned for a possible role in advancing racial justice by calling for a U.S. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Androff, 2022). Social work organizations should also prioritize the inclusion of reparatory policy (i.e., local, state, and federal efforts) within key policy issues and agendas. For example, social workers should support family-based and neighborhood reparations at the local level similar to the return of Bruce's Beach to the descendants of Charles and Willa Bruce or what has been done in Evanston, Illinois, the first city to make reparations available to African American residents for discriminatory housing policies and practices (Taifa, 2022; Treisman, 2021). Social work organizations should form committees and task forces to study and advance redress for historical and continuing injustices.

Professional social work organizations can seek guidance and collaboration from progressive local groups such as the Social Service Workers United-Chicago for leadership on advocacy efforts for reparations. The Social Service Workers United-Chicago (2020) have actively pushed for larger, national social work associations, specifically the NASW, to support reparations and other human rights policies. National social work organizations and associations have access to social capital and monetary resources, including an ability to widely disseminate knowledge and convene large memberships. Therefore, national organizations should

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incorporate advocacy for reparations into publications (e.g., journals, newsletters, blogs), ethical codes, and conference themes. Additionally, these organizations have the resources to offer workshops, trainings, and other forms of continuing education about reparations, reparatory policies, and reparative practices to their members. Membership resources can also comprise educational materials on mobilizing support for legislative efforts like H.R.40/S.40, local- and state-level actions for reparations, how to serve in a supportive role for non-social work reparations organizations, how to serve as an educator and advocate for reparations, and where to participate in charitable giving to organizations or candidates who support reparations. Social workers must collaborate and combine their efforts with local communities, grassroots organizations, legislators, and reparations organizations.

Community Collaboration

Collective support for H.R.40/S.40 provides a conduit for the profession to align its aspirational goals of justice and anti-racist practice with an action-oriented focus. Social workers have broad reach to impact change across multiple settings and levels of practice. Thus, a clear stance from social work organizations can propel other professionals and community members to recognize reparations as an effective, attainable means to racial equity. However, a process of (re)membering, or putting back together an accurate and complete accounting of history, that acknowledges the ongoing global movement for reparatory justice is necessary before social workers undertake reparatory efforts and community collaborations. For example, advocacy for reparations began with the labors of individuals like Jourdon Anderson writing to his former enslaver Colonel P. H. Anderson for compensation owed or Paul Cuffe seeking redress through repatriation (Brooks, 2004), and early policies such as General William T. Sherman's issue of Special Field Orders, No. 15 in 1865 or Representative Thaddeus Stevens's introduction of H.R.29, a bill to the 40th Congress in 1867 for confiscated lands to be distributed to previously enslaved Africans. Reparations work has included the pioneering, post-enslavement activism of Callie House and Isaiah Dickerson with the Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension

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Association of the United States of America in the late 1800s; as well as, more contemporarily through James 'Jim' Forman's Black Manifesto, Congressman John Conyers push for H.R.40, and the persistent activism of organizations such as the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, December 12th movement, and N'COBRA.

While (re)membering, social workers must not contribute to paternalism in activism (see Okun & Jones, 2019) and should abstain from co-opting the Black movement for reparations. Social workers should strive for collaboration and advocacy that refrains from performative allyship (Ekpe & Toutant, 2022; Phillips, 2020). Performative allyship involves a person or entity engaging in buzzword activism, seeking recognition or rewards for being 'woke', or co-opting movements for self-aggrandizement (e.g., publications, grants, and presentations). Instead, social workers should be authentic co-conspirators who utilize their access, opportunities, and resources in service to reparatory justice and dismantling oppressive systems. An effective co-conspirator embraces anti-racist transformative leadership (Jones et al., 2022) and has knowledge and training in best practices for community organizing. Anti-racist transformative leadership includes self-reflection, humility, directness, attending skills, use of race and culture conscious language and perspectives, an ability to critique existing oppressive systems, and use of power and privilege to deconstruct existing oppressive systems and reconstruct equitable ones.

Social workers must establish community organizing and professional apparatuses committed to reparations. For example, establishing a professional task force committed to reparations is essential because it creates space for strategy, advocacy, and implementation from a network of individuals with like-minded goals. A social work task force dedicated to reparations and working in collaboration with existing reparatory justice groups can serve as a resource for progressive thinking and action-oriented social work students, professionals, and community members. Social workers can help support and facilitate communities to develop social and economic resources, navigate governmental structures, and carry out community-focused interventions (Weil, 2005). This action-oriented task force can offer information and

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direct practice strategies, workshops, meetings, and community events where individuals, groups, and communities can learn about the international history of reparations.

Using (re)membering, social workers can help eradicate false beliefs about the impracticality of reparations and miseducation on what reparations entail. For example, pollsters who survey U.S. citizens often misconstrue reparations as simply cash payments that exclusively benefit African Americans (e.g., Johnson, 2020; Nteta, 2021). However, social workers through teaching, scholarship, curriculum, and practice can educate fellow social workers, consumers, and other community members that reparations include more than monetary compensation and inevitably will benefit more than African Americans. As Blackwell (2017) explained:

There's an ingrained societal suspicion that intentionally supporting one group hurts another. That equity is a zero sum game. In fact, when the nation targets support where it is needed most—when we create the circumstances that allow those who have been left behind to participate and contribute fully—everyone wins. The corollary is also true: When we ignore the challenges faced by the most vulnerable among us, those challenges, magnified many times over, become a drag on economic growth, prosperity, and national well-being (p. 30).

Although reparations are moral and material atonement targeted for African Americans, in a multiracial democracy it is impossible that the benefits of reparations will be exclusively enjoyed by a particular community.

Social workers' commitment to education, interprofessional collaboration, community action, and cross-cultural coalition building in support of reparations efforts is imperative at every level of practice. We have discussed (re)membering and allyship, but we must also acknowledge resultant multilevel exhaustion involved within social movements and the necessity of self-and collective care (Abdulle, 2019). The struggle to obtain freedom, self-determination, and repair for African Americans has persisted for centuries. Given this long history, advocacy for reparations like other forms of human rights and social justice activism can contribute to

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activist burnout that can undermine and destabilize social movements (Gorski, 2019). Therefore, social workers should volunteer direct aid, offer resources, and create collective spaces to support activists, organizations, and other co-conspirators engaged in advocacy for reparations.

Conclusion

Social workers must be invested in advocacy for reparations and specifically current legislative efforts such as H.R.40/S.40 and H.Con.Res.19 to advance anti-racist practice. These legislative efforts seek to study and reveal the legacies of chattel enslavement and discrimination and develop a reparations' proposal. These bills can open the door for the world, namely the United States, to have a candid conversation about anti-Black discrimination and, in turn, may lead to racial justice, repair, and reconciliation. Advocacy for reparations seeks redress from the U.S. government for the institutions, policies, laws, and practices that created and maintained systems of anti-Blackness and racial inequity. Despite the argument that the civil rights legislation of the 1960s and affirmative action leveled the playing field, African Americans did not benefit as expected from these policies. Traditional civil rights laws and affirmative action policies are symmetrical measures that applied equally to all groups (Brooks, 2004). Not only do these approaches not apply exclusively to African Americans, but they have also not been the primary or greatest beneficiaries. In contrast, comprehensive reparations must be an asymmetrical measure that targets African Americans in order to redress the lingering effects of chattel slavery and race-based discrimination. That said, redress for the past atrocities of chattel slavery and the continuing sequela of racial oppression have the potential to benefit not only African Americans but society as a whole. Because reparatory justice is sometimes viewed as an issue of morality, there also exists an opportunity for the U.S. to formally acknowledge, apologize, and begin the process to address its human rights violations against people of African descent.

Social work has a commitment to justice and the empowerment of vulnerable populations as mandated by its codes of ethics. Therefore, social workers should be aware of reparatory justice

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and innovative approaches to reduce and eliminate injustices. As the largest professional social work organization in the world, the NASW is best positioned to use its multiple communication modalities, such as journals, website, and social media, to advance H.R.40/S.40 as a policy priority for social workers. Additionally, future research should explore how the profession can model redress. For example, social work has excluded Black social workers and been unresponsive to Black autonomy (Cohen, 2021; Graham, 2000; Jagers, 2003; NASW, 2021b); contributed to racial disparity and disproportionality in child welfare (Dixon, 2008; NASW, 2021b); remained committed to testing as a pathway to licensure even when it was regarded as racially discriminatory (NABSW, 2022; Reid-Merritt, 2010); and prioritized a Eurocentric worldview and methodology that continues to dominate the profession (Schiele, 2017). All of these and other actions beg the question of what are U.S. social work organizations such as NASW and CSWE doing to redress for harms, specifically anti-Black discrimination? Perhaps, U.S. social work organizations can review the recommendations from Androff (2022) and form a truth and reconciliation initiative to reckon with the past; apply the restorative justice process to determine reparations as discussed in Jones and McElderry (2021); and utilize the list of recommended reparations offered by the Association of Black Social Workers in Nova Scotia and the Canadian Association of Social Work to propose redress on behalf of the profession (Este & Walmsley, 2022).

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