

**Highland Baptist Church
Reparations Task Force**



Fall 2020

Job Description, Approved by Ministry Council September 14, 2020

"Reparations are a sign of repentance, an avenue toward conciliation, a show of contrition, a confession of guilt, an acknowledgment of responsibility, an admission of wrongdoing, an admittance of complicity, and an attempt to live up to religious belief." ~Rev. Dr. Angela Cowser, Associate Dean of Black Church Studies and Doctor of Ministry Programs, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

To celebrate freedom and democracy while forgetting America's origins in a slavery economy is patriotism à la carte. Perhaps no statistic better illustrates the enduring legacy of our country's shameful history of treating black people as sub-citizens, sub-Americans, and sub-humans than the wealth gap. Reparations would seek to close this chasm. But as surely as the creation of the wealth gap required the cooperation of every aspect of the society, bridging it will require the same. ~Ta-Nehisi Coates, national correspondent for *The Atlantic* in "The Case for Reparations"

"⁶ So Zacchaeus hurried down [from the tree] and was happy to welcome Jesus. ⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." ⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." ⁹ Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house..." ~Luke 19:6-10a

Purpose: Systemic racism in America is an ever-evolving system made up of political, legal, financial, educational, and religious institutions. Highland Baptist Church recognizes that American churches have been complicit in systemic racism. We also acknowledge that predominantly white churches and their members benefit from these systems while predominantly Black churches and their members experience oppression. We are awakening to the fact that churches have not only historically pushed racist ideologies but that we are currently promoting implicitly racist and oppressive theology.

Therefore, the three-fold goal of this task force follows: 1) To examine potential ways that Highland Baptist Church has benefitted from racist systems historically, 2) to explore current ways that we uphold racist ideologies and theologies, 3) to consider when, how, and to whom we might offer reparation.

Duties:

1. Research and Study
 - A. Explore Highland's history with racism: How has Highland benefitted from racist structures in the past and how are we

benefiting currently at the expense of the Black community? (i.e. Redlining, complicity in Jim Crow segregation, membership in the Southern Baptist Convention, etc.)

- B. Examine Highland's iconography (i.e. figures in the stained-glass sanctuary windows and fellowship hall windows). What is the history of these persons with regards to slavery and continued racism? Research the effects of depicting biblical characters, including Jesus, with white skin. What would be involved in replacing a window? Could it be done so that it fit harmoniously with the others? What would be the cost?
- C. Consider what organizations in our surrounding community are doing significant anti-racism work. What Black organizations, schools, churches, etc. would we like to come alongside potentially?
- D. Host listening sessions/survey the congregation about the idea of reparation and what the task force might need to consider.

2. Repentance. Consider how Highland might participate in an (ongoing?) act of confession and contrition in regard to worship and/or corporate liturgy, perhaps a public statement, and on an individual level.

3. Action

- A. How can Highland advocate at an internal, congregational level?
 - a. How might Highland incorporate ongoing education and financial reparation into our ministry fold? (i.e. Designate funds in the operational budget, collect an annual special offering which can receive funds on an ongoing basis, regular classes, guest speakers, etc.)
 - b. Consider other ways to give to reparation at a congregational level.
- B. How can Highland advocate at a federal level?
 - a. Should we advocate for the passing of HR40 (A house bill that is passed will enable the study of reparations)? If so, how?
 - b. Consider other ways to give to reparation at a national level.
- C. How can Highland advocate at a city/state level?
 - a. Continue engagement with "A Path Forward"--a city-wide early response to redlining. (Highland's Anti-Racism TEam signed on to this document in August 2020.)
 - b. How can we do the work of reparation with other like-minded churches/faith organizations?
 - c. Consider other ways to give to reparation at a city level.

Word List

1. **ADOS**: an acronym for American Descendants of Slavery. This movement, started by Yvette Cornell and Antonio Moore, has as its central theme the demand for reparations by the federal government and other institutions for descendants of American slaves. ADOS also advocates for a larger agenda outlined in a New Deal for Black America. (See ados.101.com.) There is some controversy over the movement because ADOS does not advocate reparations for immigrants or descendants of immigrants who came of their own free will to the United States.

2. **Antiracism/antiracist**: “An antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences—that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group. . . . Antiracism is a powerful collection of antiracist policies that lead to racial equity. . . . An antiracist is someone who is supporting an antiracist policy by their actions or expressing an antiracist idea.” (Ibram X. Kendi, pp. 20-23)

3. **“A Path Forward for Louisville”**: a petition put together by a diverse group of Louisville Black community leaders in response to the question, What does Black Louisville need? <https://apathforward4lou.org/>.

4. **Bias**: “a conscious or unconscious prejudice against an individual or group based on their identity.” (Cory Collins)

5. **BIPOC**: an acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Not without controversy as any one term used to encapsulate a variety of people groups will come up short and risk erasing the very groups it seeks to highlight.

6. **Black codes**: laws that were passed by Southern states after the Civil War that applied only to Blacks and were designed to keep them locked up. Offenses were for things like loitering, breaking curfew, vagrancy, having no proof of employment, and carrying weapons. Together with convict leasing, Blacks were back to working against their will for no wages under bad conditions. <https://eji.org/news/history-racial-injustice-convict-leasing/>

7. **Black Lives Matter**: #BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer. Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. BLM combats and counters acts of violence, creates space for Black imagination and innovation, and centers Black joy. Co-founded by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi.

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

8. **Black Manifesto:** On a Sunday in May 1969, civil rights activist James Forman, on behalf of the National Black Economic Development Conference, interrupted the service at Riverside Church in New York City to demand predominately white churches and synagogues pay \$500 million in reparations for slavery of Africans in the United States. The funds would be overseen by African Americans and used to develop a program for black economic power, which was outlined in the manifesto. Some churches expressed sympathy, the Southern Baptist Convention outright rejected it, and none accepted the idea of reparations. <https://snccdigital.org/events/jim-forman-delivers-black-manifesto-at-riverside-church/>;

<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/3/11/18246741/reparations-democrats-2020-inequality-warren-harris-castro>

9. **Convict leasing:** a strategy Southern states used after the Civil War to keep African Americans in a form of slavery by leasing prisoners to railways, mines, and large plantations. Though the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude, prisoners were exempted (and still are). Prisoners were not paid, though the states were, and the prisoners suffered in terrible work conditions. <https://eji.org/news/history-racial-injustice-convict-leasing/>

10. **Cultural appropriation:** the adoption or exploitation of another culture by a more dominant culture. Examples are “ethnic” Halloween costumes, white people with dreadlocks, and white rap artists (Oluo, pp. 144-146). They highlight power imbalances in a world where white is glorified and other traditions are viewed as a commodity.

11. **Forty acres and a mule:** On January 16, 1865, while the Civil War raged on, General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, which confiscated a strip of coastline stretching from Charleston, South Carolina, to the St. John’s River in Florida from Southern owners and allotted plots of 40 acres to 40,000 Blacks who were slaves or refugees in the area. President Andrew Johnson overturned that order in the fall of that year, returning most of the land to the original Southern white planters. This was the only reparations, short-lived as it was, that former slaves ever saw. Today, reparations supporters point to Sherman’s order as the U.S. government’s promise to make restitution for slavery.

<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/shermans-field-order-no-15>

12. **GI Bill:** Legislation from the US government in 1944, post-WWII, enacted to support a veteran’s return home with funds for college, grad school, or vocational school. Additional benefits included low-cost mortgages, low-interest loans to start a business, and one year of unemployment compensation. It racially discriminated based on Jim Crow legislation and is known as “affirmative action” for whites. It has increased racial wealth disparities.

13. **HR 40:** This House of Representatives bill, first introduced by Representative John Conyers Jr. in 1989, and introduced by him every year since through 2017, would create a commission to study reparations and develop proposals for African-Americans. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas introduced the bill in 2019. “The commission shall examine slavery and discrimination in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. Among other requirements, the commission shall identify (1) the role of 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.”

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/40>

14. **Intersectionality:** denotes the intersections of racism, sexism, classism, gender discrimination, ability, and other forms of oppression. “A black feminist approach to the study of power and inequality that understands systems of oppression as inextricably linked. . . . Devised by Kimberle Crenshaw, a black legal theorist who helped pioneer both critical race studies and black feminism in the academy.” (Fleming, p. 64)

15. **Jim Crow segregation:** After Reconstruction ended in the 1870s, Southern and border states passed a mountain of laws that ensured Blacks lived as second-class citizens and segregated from white citizens. Blacks were disenfranchised and lost the economic and political gains they had made during Reconstruction. The Jim Crow era did not end until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (The term “Jim Crow” is thought to be derived from a minstrel character created and performed by a white actor in blackface.)

<https://eji.org/news/history-racial-injustice-jim-crow-laws/>

16. **Mass incarceration:** refers “not only to the criminal justice system but also to the larger web of laws, rules, policies, and customs that control those labeled criminals both in and out of prison” (Alexander, p. 13). ADD MORE?

17. **Micro-aggression:** small insults perpetrated at a marginalized person because of their affiliation with that marginalized group, causing real psychological damage. Because they are “micro” they can be easily explained away as non-offensive and often hard to describe. Here are two examples: (1) “Wow, you speak English really well,” and (2) “You are so articulate.” (Oluo, pp. 169-171). “They normalize racism” (p. 173).

18. ***Police**

- **Brutality:** statistics verify that people of color are targeted by law enforcement and disproportionately criminalized. They are more likely to be stopped, arrested, assaulted, and killed by police than whites.

- **Militarization of the police:** refers to the weapons carried and tactics employed, especially in regard to protestors and riots. And it includes a more aggressive style of law enforcement.
- **Defund the police:** Cutting the astronomical amount of money that our governments spend on law enforcement and giving that money to more helpful services like job training, counseling, and violence-prevention programs. Each year, state and local governments spend upward of \$100 billion dollars on law enforcement—and that’s excluding billions more in federal grants and resources.

<https://www.aclu.org/news/criminal-law-reform/defunding-the-police-will-actually-make-us-safer/>

19. **Qualified immunity:** a special protection for government officials that allows them to be immune from liability if they violate a citizen’s rights. Under qualified immunity, “government officials can only be held accountable for violating someone’s rights if a court has previously ruled that it was ‘clearly established’ those precise actions were unconstitutional. If no such decision exists—or it exists, but just in another jurisdiction—the official is immune, even if the official intentionally violated the law.” (Institute for Justice, <https://ij.org/frequently-asked-questions-about-ending-qualified-immunity/>)

20. **Racism/racist/systemic racism:** race prejudice + misuse of power by systems and institutions. Racism is more than prejudice (individual attitudes and actions). It is the collective action of a dominant racial group. Systemic power is present. When one group’s racial prejudices are enforced by the systems of a society, giving power and privilege based on race to the group in power, and limiting the power and privilege of the racial groups that are not in power.

21. **Reconstruction:** After the Civil War ended, a brief and ineffectual Reconstruction under President Andrew Johnson lasted until the U.S. Congress passed the Reconstruction Act of 1867, which ushered in a progressive era in the South. Freed Blacks were able to vote, and many won elections and held office in state governments and the U.S. Congress. This Reconstruction lasted until the Compromise of 1877, in which Southern Democrats agreed not to block the election of Republican Rutherford Hayes to the presidency in return for the withdrawal of all federal troops from the South. With their withdrawal, Southern states passed more laws to ensure Blacks were second-class citizens. Though Blacks gained some rights in the ten-year period of Reconstruction, the backlash from Southern white supremacists was harsh. “It was during Reconstruction that a century-long era of racial hierarchy, lynching, white supremacy, and bigotry was established—an era from which this nation has yet to recover.” (Equal Justice Initiative)

22. **Reparations:** “a program of acknowledgment, redress, and closure for a grievous injustice” (Darity and Mullen, pp. 2-3). In the instance of African Americans, it is (1) the acknowledgment of the wrong done to African Americans in slavery, legal segregation (Jim Crow), and ongoing discrimination by white Americans; (2) restitution through practices that move descendants of slavery to a more equitable position with white Americans, a position they would have held had the injustices not happened, and (3) “mutual reconciliation” between African Americans and white Americans so that closure can occur.

23. **Redlining:** “the practice of denying loans in certain neighborhoods because of socioeconomic characteristics rather than physical, design, or structural characteristics” (Josh Poe). The term *redlining* comes from the color-coded maps of U.S. cities made by the Home Owners Loan Corporation, a government-sponsored corporation created in 1933 as part of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal (1) to refinance home mortgages so that foreclosure was prevented, and (2) to create opportunities for citizens to buy homes during the Depression. Areas were graded from A to D according to how desirable for investment they were. On the maps A areas were green, B were blue, C were yellow, and D were red. Neighborhoods with Blacks, immigrants, and low-income people were typically coded red and therefore excluded from loans.

24. **Restrictive covenant:** a clause in a property deed or lease that places restrictions on what an owner can do with the property. Since surrounding property owners often have the same restrictions, the restrictions can be upheld in a court of law. Land developers often use restrictive covenants as they develop the lots and blocks. In the past many neighborhoods had restrictions barring Blacks and immigrants to buy a house in their neighborhood.

That enforced segregation affected how some neighborhoods were rated on the redlining maps (see Redlining). As an example, the Indian Hills and Mockingbird Valley neighborhoods of Louisville “were described as the best areas of the city in large part because they were also ‘one of the highest restricted areas’ in the city. St. Matthews and areas surrounding Cherokee Park were described as ‘well restricted,’ and having ‘restrictions well observed’ (Josh Poe, “Redlining Louisville.”

25. **School-to-prison pipeline:** “Our public-school system sees Black and Brown children as violent, disruptive, unpredictable future criminals...[This is a phrase] commonly used to describe the alarming number of Black and Brown children who are funneled directly and indirectly from our schools into our prison industrial complex, contributing to devastating levels of mass incarceration.” (Oluo, pp. 124-125).

26. **SURJ:** An acronym for Showing Up for Racial Justice, a national organization with local chapters. “SURJ’s role as part of a multi-racial movement is to undermine white support for white supremacy and to help build a racially just society.” SURJ employs three core strategies: (1) delegitimize racist institutions, (2) fight for a fair economy that refuses to pit communities

against each other, and (3) shift culture (meaning the underlying beliefs folks have about people and the world) in a way that undermines support for white supremacy.

www.showingupforracialjustice.org

27. **Wealth/racial wealth divide:** Wealth is assets and investments minus debt. Wealth, rather than income, is the means to security in America, the best indicator of economic well-being. It is accumulated across generations. The racial wealth divide is the result of 400 years of slavery and then continued discrimination. Today, “the average black family with children holds just one cent of wealth for every dollar that the average white family with children holds.” (Nikole Hannah-Jones, pp. 5–6)

28. **White fragility:** a term coined by Robin DiAngelo that refers to the defensiveness and resistance of white people when they are challenged about their ideas of race and racism and particularly when they feel they are being implicated in white supremacy. (Robin DiAngelo)

29. **White privilege:** “an institutional (rather than a personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions. One of the primary privileges is that of having greater access to power and resources than people of color do; in other words, purely on the basis of our skin color doors are open to us that are not open to other people. . . . All of us who are white, by race, have white privileges.” (Francis E. Kendall, p. 1)

30. ***White silence = violence:** The idea that when white people refuse to speak about racism and racial injustices they directly and indirectly contribute to a violent, racist culture. The challenge, then, is to practice non-violence by speaking out publicly and privately against racism.

31. **White supremacy/supremacy of whites:** a set of practices that organizes American society with the fundamental belief that white people are superior to nonwhite peoples and are therefore valued more. “White people’s superior nature thus entitles them to hold positions of power over black and other nonwhite people” (Robert P. Jones, p. 16).

Sources for Word List

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Origin and Ministry of Highland's Anti-Racism Team, 2017-present

Highland Baptist's Anti-Racism Team grew out of the Mission and Justice team, the work of Highland's Shelby Park ministry, and a training by the organization Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training, held November 5, 2016, with about 80 people in attendance. That was followed by an antiracism training on Wednesday nights in January until Ash Wednesday 2017, using the PBS series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* and the book *Waking Up White*. The Anti-Racism Team hosted its first meeting on June 20, 2017.

Mission Statement

Highland's Anti-Racism Team seeks to educate its members and the members of Highland Baptist Church about racism and becoming antiracist, to find ways to stand against systemic racism, and to serve alongside communities of color to promote bridge-building.

Opportunities Sponsored by Highland's Anti-Racism Team

Actions and Events

- * Held an event about redlining in Louisville at Highland, presented by Jeana Dunlap, director of Redevelopment Strategies with Louisville Metro Government, Nov. 16, 2017
- * Had letter-writing campaign to support DACA students gaining citizenship, Sept., 2017
- * Sponsored a reading of the play *Building the Wall* by Actors Theatre at Highland, Oct. 15, 2017
- * Donated books to Books and Breakfast Louisville through a Highland alternative gift card
- * Sponsored a Highland alternative gift card for Mexican mother of two and hosted tamale events for her prior to creation of Immigration Team
- * Held a book drive for a new children's book club at Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church, fall 2017
- * Co-led a children's book club with members of Portland Memorial Missionary Baptist Church, winter-spring 2018
- * Did voter registration in West Louisville with Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, with participation by Highland members, August-September 2018
- * Contributed \$2,000 to the Louisville Community Bail Fund through a Highland alternative gift card supplemented by team funds, enabling a young man to be released from Juvenile detention, February 2019; the team has continued to befriend the young man.
- * Had a bail-bond training with Chanelle Helm of Black Lives Matter, September 14, 2019
- * Provided Black Lives Matter signs that Highland members and members of the community purchased, summer 2020

*Encouraged Sunday Bible classes to take the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge, and held a weekly Zoom class for interested members, August 2020

* Developed Black History Month lobby displays for 3 years, focusing on . . .

2020: Callie Guy House, Toni Morrison, Sojourner Truth, the Harlem Renaissance, the destruction of Black Wall Street, post-Reconstruction black leadership

2019: Black Lives Matter founders Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullers, Opal Tometi; Medgar Evers; Marsha P. Johnson; Thurgood Marshall; Bryan Stevenson; Harriet Tubman; the National Museum of African American History and Culture

2018: Bayard Rustin, Recy Taylor, Bree Newsome, Ta-Nehisi Coates, James Baldwin, Ruby Sales

Wednesday Night Classes

*book study of *No Innocent Bystander* led by the author Rev. Dr. Shannon Craigo-Snell

*discussion of James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* led by Dr. Tyler Mayfield

*study on reparations led by Rev. Dr. Lewis Brogdon (co-sponsored with Carol Harston)

*study on Martin Luther King Jr. by Rev. Dr. Lewis Brogdon (co-sponsored with Carol Harston)

Worship Events

*Crosses on the Lawn in Advent for 2018 and 2019 (former years sponsored by the Justice Ministry Group)

*January 20, 2019, worship service honoring Martin Luther King Jr. (with Kathy Collier)

*Crosses on the Lawn in memory of Blacks killed by police, June 25, 2020

Books and Articles the Team Has Studied

**So You Want to Talk about Race* by Ijeoma Oluo

**Tears We Cannot Stop* by Michael Eric Dyson

**The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander

**The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin

**Waking Up White* by Debby Irving

**"The Case for Reparations" by Ta-Nehisi Coates

**"White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo

Films Shown and Discussed at Highland

- **Armor of Light*, documentary about gun violence
- **Race: The Power of an Illusion*, 3-part PBS documentary about race
- **13th*, documentary about mass incarceration, directed by Ava DuVernay
- **More Than a Word*, documentary about Washington R*dskins team name
- **When They See Us*, 4-part series about the Central Park 5, directed by Ava DuVernay

Events and Activities Attended and Highland Members Encouraged to Attend

- March for Our Lives, March 24, 2018
- Occupy ICE Louisville rallies and marches, Summer 2018
- Women's Day March, March 2017
- Higher Ground Moral Declaration Rally, September 12, 2017
- West Louisville Forums (Simmons College, monthly)
- Empower West City-wide Book Read (annually)
- Angela Project conferences (annually from 2017 through 2019)

Financial Contributions

- *Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (annual contribution)
- *Simmons College of Kentucky (annual contribution)
- *La Casita (before Immigration Team was formed)
- *Louisville Central Community Center
- *Donated funds to a local elementary school so that Black students could attend showing of the movie *Black Panther*