

Thomas McCarthy, "Coming to Terms With Our Past, part II" *Political Theory*, December, 2004

A. Background: examples of honored reparations claims: U.S. govt to interned Japanese Americans; German govt, European banks and corporations to Jews for Holocaust

B. Corporate agents (corporations, nation-states, governments) are most appropriate object of reparations claims. Group victims (incl. individuals victimized *as* members of groups), not necessarily corporate in form.

C. Possible forms of reparative compensation: monetary; programs and institutional reforms; "symbolic" reparations (public acknowledgment; museums; monuments; school curricula and other educational)

D. Basic moral intuition behind reparations: perpetrator has obligation to repair harm to victim, including later effects of harm. Acknowledgment of harm, apology, or being punished for the harm is not enough.

E. 753: Collective compensation. TM rejects *individual* reparations in favor of *collective* reparation, because the harm was done to a collective group. Contrast J. Thompson view that groups that have no legal standing as groups (such as ethnic/racial groups) should not be compensated, that compensation should go only to individuals. 754:TM: This view omits group nature of the initial and still ongoing harm, and need for group-based efforts to remedy these historical inequities. TM says ultimate moral basis for reparations is nevertheless violation of individual human rights (756).

F. 755: Need for broader model than "tort" (A gives B something equivalent in value to what A took from B).

G. 755-56 (Boxill argument): Reasonable assumption that had it not been for slavery and discrimination, AfAms would be much more nearly equal to whites today. [elaboration of this in terms of history we have studied: If freed slaves had been given land and political protection to work the land and vote, AfAms would be more equal. If New Deal housing policies had not favored whites and discriminated against blacks,etc.]

H. 756: Collective/corporate responsibility of legally constituted body that persists over time through changes in personnel—namely, U.S. as a nation-state, a political community. [Views of entity responsible for reparations that TM rejects: white people; descendants of slave-owners; descendants of white people who lived at the time of slavery {segregation}.]

1. Issue of immigration subsequent to end of slavery, or of segregation: responsibility is based on civic membership. Membership/citizenship in U.S. polity brings *benefits* and *burdens*, neither of which is earned by the citizen; a new citizen takes on both. [757: TM also mentions that immigrants of color have benefited from struggles of African Americans for civil rights, although this point is not essential to his basic argument.]

2. National inheritance, from which all benefit (including contemporary AfAms, in a way) was unjustly acquired at the expense of AfAms. So there is also a national debt to AfAms

3. Model is *collective responsibility/liability* rather than *collective guilt/punishment*

I. 758: Argument requires showing that current inequities are a product of slavery and segregation. 759: American individualist ideology gets in the way of this.

J. 759: Argument can't dispense with slavery, which put in place hierarchy of privilege and respect, stigmatization of Blacks, and which all subsequent discrimination built on and reinforced. (But reparations are not *only for* slavery.)

K. 760: Causal narrative includes the failure to rectify *previous* injustices as part of the cause of *current* injustices. TM focuses the causal narrative on the creation and reinforcing of urban black ghetto "underclass," and particularly on the role of government in this process (761-764). [Q: how does this focus on the "underclass" square with TM's emphasis on *all* African Americans as being victimized by slavery and segregation?] Underclass behavior seen in mainstream racial narrative as a *cause* of black disadvantage [e.g. D'Souza], but is actually an *effect* of it.

L. 765: Material and symbolic aspects of reparations. How to get mainstream America to recognize consensus of historians and social scientists about slavery, segregation, and their impact on current racial inequality (766)? Possible role of reparations in making this happen.

M. Value of public debate over reparations in raising level of, and reforming, U.S. historical consciousness. Dismal state of public awareness regarding slavery and segregation, as well as their legacy on the present. 3 criticisms of TM's view on value of debate: {What are TM's responses to these arguments?}

1. Racism is both irrational and based on perception of racial self-interests, and will not be affected by rational argument and information through public educational efforts.

2. pursuing reparations will exacerbate racial divisions

3. promotes sense of victimization in AfAms which is detrimental to their progress

N. Unacknowledged, unaddressed historical injustice demoralizes the common life of a nation