

Call for Participation

REPARATION FOR AFRIKAN ENSLAVEMENT BEYOND NATIONAL BOUNDARIES, TOWARD INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITIES

An International, Interdisciplinary Workshop for Scholars, Activists and Practitioners

Sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)'s research networking grant for the creation of the International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR), a collaborative project between the University of Edinburgh (UK) and Wheelock College (Boston, USA)

Date: 17 March 2018

Location: Birmingham City University (UK)

Reparations—and repairing for harm done—are ancient concepts that have resurfaced in recent public debates over the legacies of the European-led enslavement, forced deportation and genocide of Afrikan peoples, also known as the Afrikan Holocaust or Maangamizi. Reparation claims are linked historically to the failure of the former enslavers and enslaving nation-states to provide restitution after abolition to those they had forced into slavery. Instead, the enslavers were richly compensated for the loss of their workforce, while the system of slavery and so-called 'trade' gave way to new forms of labour purchase and exploitation, structural racism and discrimination, segregation and inequality of opportunity for Afrikan peoples that continued to benefit the former plantocracy and facilitate its global dominance of resources long after the abolition decrees.

The long-term result has been the creation of socio-economic imbalances, or what Randall Robinson (2001) defines as a static, structural 'gap' widened by the multiple forms of racial discrimination and human rights violations against the descendants of enslaved Afrikans. These legacies were recognized in both the Abuja Proclamation of 1993, which called 'upon the international community to recognize that there is a unique and unprecedented moral debt owed to the African peoples which has Yet to be paid', and the Durban Declaration of 2001, which stated that 'slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity' and that 'Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent, and indigenous peoples were victims of these acts and continue to be victims of their consequences' (Article 13). Indeed, the decision to host this event in Birmingham is directly linked to the fact that the Abuja proclamation led to the foundation of the Africa Reparations Movement UK in Birmingham in December 1993 under the late Labour MP Bernie Grant, resulting in the publication of the 'Birmingham Declaration'.¹

If reparations remain politically taboo, countless actions have taken place at local, national and international levels to lobby the former enslaving nations to attend to the consequences of this history, the most recent being the creation of the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), which, in 2014, published a ten-point reparatory justice programme calling for Europe to address the ongoing effects of slavery upon Caribbean communities today. The longstanding refusal at political, societal and academic levels to understand the rich variety of meanings and potential of reparations provides the underlying rationale for the establishment of

¹ Africa Reparations Movement UK, 'Birmingham Declaration', 1 January 1994, <https://app.box.com/s/pv9u2z5unh4gu8uoqq7ny155q53wubf5> (accessed 29 November 2017).

the International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR). Facilitated by an AHRC research networking grant entitled 'Reparations for Slavery: From Theory to Praxis', and falling under the aegis of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent, the INOSAAR includes scholars, activists and grassroots organizations, artists and many others interested parties covering a wide range of expertise. We aim to address the lack of arts and humanities research into reparations and connect to existing work in the social sciences and to ongoing grassroots and political activism. In doing so, we aim to establish a strong trans-disciplinary base from which to examine reparations and seek new ways to tackle the legacies of racism, racial discrimination and oppressions that are linked to the global history of Afrikan enslavement.

We are calling for participation in our next workshop, to be held in the symbolic and central location of Birmingham in collaboration with Birmingham City University. This is the second in a series of four events that are facilitating exchanges between scholars and activists in Europe, the U.S., Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and India. Following on from our official launch event in Brixton (21 October 2017), as well as two preceding events—an international conference in Edinburgh (November 2015) and a pre-colloquium in Porto-Novo, Benin (June 2017)—our focus in Birmingham is to elevate the discussion beyond the national border, while addressing specific national concerns. We are urging a closer examination of the challenges facing reparations movements within different national contexts, while also seeking to understand how the concept of reparations and reparative social movements can function across national borders and world regions.

BIRMINGHAM WORKSHOP AIMS AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

Aims: To showcase the existing work of UK-based scholars and activists and its international focus, while exploring the potential for international collaborations.

Intended outcomes: To identify problems and find potential solutions to working across national borders with a view to building international solidarity around reparations.

We also aim to address the lack of scholarship on reparations outside of African-American and nation-centred contexts. To this end, attention will be paid to the long history of reparation movements beyond the U.S, while the INOSAAR network will move towards more transnational responses. By uniting research across the globe, we seek to provide the impetus for the creation of new comparative, historical and transnational research and activists interventions.

BIRMINGHAM WORKSHOP THEMES

I. Working across International Boundaries

1. How do we connect the work of scholars and activists on a global scale in order to advance research on reparations?
2. How do we unite research across the globe to create new comparative, historical and transnational research interventions?

II. Creating Global Legitimacy

1. How do we create a Pan-Diaspora aesthetic?
2. How can we support the work of activists and scholars for visibility in the reparations debate?
3. How can we centre the contributions and creations of scholars and activists of the humanities: literary and visual artists, historians, musicians, theatrical performers, and others to validate their work in the reparations movement?

III. Connecting International Reparations Movements and Pan-Africanism

1. How do we promote African Diaspora scholarly legacies and researchers and activists' engagement in bilateral knowledge exchange?
2. How do we contribute positively to the work of activist organisations?
3. How can we establish greater links to Caribbean, Latin American, African, U.S. and Indian-based scholars and activists to draw out different national contexts and cross-cultural perspectives?

PARTICIPATING IN BIRMINGHAM

Abstracts or expressions of interest for short 10-minute interventions inspired by some of the above themes should be sent to inosaar@ed.ac.uk by **Friday 22 December 2017**. Discussants will be chosen and organized into workshop sessions.

Additional contacts

For further information on any previous events in Edinburgh, Porto-Novo or London, or inquiries about joining the INOSAAR, please contact us at inosaar@ed.ac.uk or contact one of the project coordinators: Nicola Frith (Nicola.Frith@ed.ac.uk) or Joyce Hope Scott (jscott@wheelock.edu). Follow us on Twitter [@INOSAAR](https://twitter.com/INOSAAR) [#INOSAAR](https://twitter.com/INOSAAR).