

In Pursuit

צדק צדק תרדוף

Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof. Justice, justice shall you pursue. Deuteronomy 16:20

The TBA Tzedek Committee provides opportunities for social justice learning, dialogue, and action to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). Our commitment to *tzedek* (justice) is covenantal and rooted in a Torah of *b'tzelem elohim* (we are all made in the image of God), and *chesed* (compassion for each other).

Temple Beth Abraham, Nashua, NH

Reparations

September 2022

Did you know? First introduced in 1989 by the late Congressman John Conyers, Jr., and introduced every year since, **H.R. 40** is the *Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act*: “To address the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery in the United States and the 13 American colonies between 1619 and 1865 and to establish a commission to study and consider a national apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery, its subsequent de jure and de facto racial and economic discrimination against African Americans, and the impact of these forces on living African Americans, to make recommendations to the Congress on appropriate remedies, and for other purposes.” Read the full text of the bill here: [H.R. 40 Text](#)

Making Sense of Reparations, PBS Newshour Video, 1 August 2019

The first African slaves arrived in North America 400 years ago this month, landing at Jamestown in what is now Virginia. Economics correspondent Paul Solman examines the question of whether a debt might be owed to generations of slave descendants. Watch the 10 minute video here: [Making Sense](#)

Why Reparations Now in New Hampshire? An Introduction, 19 June 2020

Everyone bears the cost of those not able to support themselves. A conversation led by James McKim, President, Manchester NAACP, and Aron DiBacco, Granite State Organizing Project (GSOP), for NH residents to learn about and discuss reparations and why it's important racial justice work to do in our state. Watch the 30 minute video here: [Why Reparations in NH](#). Note: this video mentions the above PBS video, so you may want to watch that first.

5 Questions about Reparations: Answered

Ben & Jerry's, 11 June 2020

[S]lavery isn't some long-ago evil that we've dealt with and moved on from—its legacy lives on today in the systemic racism that affects every aspect of contemporary American life. That's why [we support H.R. 40](#), a bill that would establish a federal commission to study slavery's legacy and recommend appropriate remedies for the generations of discrimination it spawned. But we understand that people might want to learn more about reparations and why we believe they're needed. We hope you find the following Q&A helpful. Read it here: [Reparations Q & A](#)

Calling on white Americans: Reparations for Slavery are Due

The legacy of slavery is far from resolved. It persists every day and everywhere.

David Gardinier and Karen Hilfman, Boston Globe, 17 August 2020

In 1865, formerly enslaved people were promised 40 acres of land and, later, a mule. More than 150 years since then, some politicians are trying to make good on a version of that promise through reparations.... True Black history, which few white people — including us — learned in school, points to numerous calls for

reparations for Black Americans. In 2014, the call for reparations was brought into wider public circulation when The Atlantic magazine published Ta-Nehisi Coates's seminal article "The Case for Reparations." [See below.] In this influential piece, Coates deftly and exquisitely lays bare, for a predominantly white, liberal audience, how America's enslavement of Black people resulted in structures intended to create systemic racial disparities in housing, wages, lending, voting, and more. A debt is owed. Read the full article here: [Calling](#)

The Case for Reparations

Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Atlantic, June 2014

Two hundred fifty years of slavery. Ninety years of Jim Crow. Sixty years of separate but equal. Thirty-five years of racist housing policy. Until we reckon with our compounding moral debts, America will never be whole.

And if thy brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing today.

Deuteronomy 15: 12–15

Read the entire article here: [The Case for Reparations](#). Regarding the Holocaust, see, in particular, Section X: There will be no "Reparations" from Germany: [Reparations from Germany](#)

Transforming Our Unjust World and Personal Teshuvah: Considering Reparations for Slavery

Mark A. Pinsky, Evolve: Groundbreaking Jewish Conversations, 26 Oct 2021

*....We stand in the midst of the burning world
primed to burn with compassionate love and justice,
To turn inward and find holy fire at its core,
To turn outward and see the world that is all
of one flesh with us ...*

Nishmat excerpt by Marge Piercy in "The Art of Blessing the Day"

[In 2020], Rabbi Toba Spitzer of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek [Newton, Mass] explained that the freedom gained in the Exodus has as its end the creation of a society founded on a web of mutual obligation and care, in which the communal good enhances our personal well-being. There is a continuous line from Exodus to the state of our nation and our world today, including the places where mutual obligation and care have grown stronger and those where it has broken down.

That line runs through and lifts up the history of social, economic and political justice movements, and struggles against oppression: the American Revolution, the abolitionist movement, trust-busting, the women's movement, the labor movement, the civil-rights movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the environmental movement, Black Lives Matter.

And so, each year on Yom Kippur, we gather together to affirm the communal good by acknowledging, naming and seeking to repent and atone for the wrongs we have done. We ask one another for forgiveness for the oaths and vows we have not kept. We forgive others as we hope to forgive ourselves.

....What is the connection between personal *teshuvah* and transforming an unjust society? How can we respond through *teshuvah*, *tefillah* and *tzedakah* to the wrongs done in our names, and those done on our behalf, with and without our consent? How do we oppose and overcome structural and systemic sins? How

do we transform our unjust world?... I think about the world in terms of structures (laws and rules) and systems (practices, norms, and cultures). I wonder: Is structural and systemic *teshuvah* even a thing? I am struggling with those questions in two ways — with the scale and scope of structural and systemic wrongs; and with the cynicism that I realize has infected me....

In a free society, only some are guilty, but all are responsible.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

....Following the murder of George Floyd, our daughter Clara scolded me for my skepticism that the outcry for police system reforms would result in real systemic change. “Can’t you just let yourself imagine it?” she asked me, angrily. “We have to be able to imagine better ways!” What she didn’t say but I heard was, “Because your old ways didn’t get it done!” She is right. I need to open my mind. For her *and for me*.

... The case for slavery reparations rests in no small part on the scale of Holocaust reparations. Germany has paid more than \$60 billion since 1952 to victims of the Holocaust and their families. Holocaust restitution is proof that slavery reparations can be done, even if takes 70 years. Or even 400 years.

Read the full article here: [Personal Teshuvah and Reparations](#)

Reparations Efforts Past & Present

- Belinda Sutton’s 1783 pension claim: [Sutton's Petitions](#)
- Henrietta Wood sued her enslaver in 1870, and won: [Henrietta Wood](#)
- Georgetown University: [What Can We Do?](#) & [Georgetown Memory Project](#)
- Virginia Theological Seminary: [Virginia Seminary](#)
- Evanston, Illinois & Amherst, Massachusetts: [Reparations at State and Local Levels](#)
- California: [California Reparations Report](#)

Take Action

Fill the Bus for Kids in Need: Caties’ Closet Drive, www.catiescloset.org, September 7 to 30

Help our students in need go back to school with confidence with your donations of New & Gently Used Clothing and New Full Size Toiletries. For specifics, see the flyer here: [Fill the Bus](#) Bring donations to TBA, 4 Raymond St., Nashua, NH. Items can also be brought in when attending High Holiday services. For questions, contact Helen Honorow at Helen@barrylawoffice.com

Reparations for Slavery Now: ACLU Message to Congressional Representatives

Send a message to your members of Congress urging them to support H.R. 40 here: [Send a Message](#)

Reparations: Partial Reading List

- The Case for Reparations, Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Atlantic, June 2014: [Case for Reparations](#)
- H.R. 40: The Path to Restorative Justice, Abibat Rahman-Davies, Friends Committee on National Legislation, 15 March 2022: [Path to Justice](#)
- Reparations for Japanese American internment, Native land seizures, massacres and police brutality: [History.com story 2019](#)
- Japanese-American campaign for reparations: [NPR story 2020](#)
- Holocaust Restitution / German Reparations: [Jewish Virtual Library](#)
- Holocaust reparations offer a model for the US to address slavery: [Quartz story 2020](#)

Tzedek Committee News: Laura Hegfield, Micah Hero Award Winner

Each year we are honored to recognize Micah Heroes who are nominated by their local congregation,

community group or union as exemplifying the spirit of Micah (6:8). These are people who have a passion for justice, who love mercy and who walk humbly in service to others and the community. The Tzedek Committee of TBA has chosen Laura Hegfield for our Micah Hero this year. Read the nomination letter here: [Nomination Letter](#)

Laura's teaching and meditation leading are frequently about how we can develop spiritual practices to ground our justice work and sustain us in that work through its challenges.

Rabbi Jon Spira-Savett

Please join us as we honor Laura on Sunday September 18, 2-4 p.m. at Stark Park, River Road, Manchester. See more information here: [Micah Hero Awards program](#) and in **Upcoming Events** below.

Upcoming Events

The Lies We Were Taught: The Black Family, Sunday 4 September, 2 pm, 222 Court St., Portsmouth
In Portsmouth, never enslaved and newly freed Black adults share households with still enslaved children and elders. It is a time of possibilities, hope, and tension. True stories about these families describe how a community of African refugees was claiming their place as Americans. Read about the tour and register [here](#)

Micah Hero Awards (see Tzedek Committee News article above), Sunday 18 September, 2-4 pm, at Stark Park, River Road, Manchester. No tickets required; light refreshments will be offered and donations will be gratefully accepted.

WHOSE FREEDOM?: Book Challenges in Our Schools and Libraries

Tuesday, 20 September, 6:30-7:30 pm, Exeter Public Library, 4 Chestnut St, Exeter, NH
To educate the public about a recent uptick in book challenges across the U.S., the Racial Unity Team, the Exeter Public Library, and Oyster River Equity & Justice will co-host a panel discussion covering a range of topics from the history of book censorship in the U.S. to how recent laws passed in New Hampshire have raised concerns about community access to ideas. In addition, the panel will offer participants thoughtful strategies for responding to such challenges. Learn more here: [Book Challenges](#)

New England BIPOC Fest, Sunday 25 September, 12-6 pm, Vida Cantina Parking Lot, Portsmouth
A celebration of food, art, culture, and community, the NE BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, People of Color] Fest organizers hope this event will encourage conversation about the important threads of equity and social justice that hold the fabric of our community together. Learn more here: [NE BIPOC Fest](#)

Where the Money Resides: An Exploration of Racialized Access & Historic Exclusion from Wealth
Black New England Conference 2022 (BNEC 22) opens on Friday, 21 October, with two panels on the historic barriers African Americans faced as they sought to accumulate wealth. Each panel recommends carefully vetted books and articles so you can prepare in advance or dig deeper later. The **BNEC 22 Reading List can be found** [here](#). Register for the Conference here: [Registration](#)

NOTE to readers: *In Pursuit* will return in November

To learn more about the work of the TBA Tzedek Committee, contact us here: tzedek@tbanashua.org Committee co-chairs are Laura Hegfield and Liz Macedo. Send newsletter comments or suggestions to editor Fern Blood at feblood@comcast.net.