

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Rectification & Reparations

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Comment

Last summer marked the 100-year anniversary of the Tulsa race massacre. As a result, the topic of reparations remains an important and topical subject, especially after reading about Robert Nozick's entitlement theory of justice. However, I also know that reparations can be hard to talk about. After all, Nozick himself only cites a book on the subject in endnote 2 on page 344 of *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* without going into any further detail.

Even so, reparations deserve careful consideration and thoughtful discussion, and that is what I want us to do at this class meeting. I know that all of you are concerned about justice. I know that all of you want to work in good faith to figure out the best outcome for victims of government-sanctioned abuse. Of course, even with such common ground, I expect our class will have both advocates and opponents of reparations.

With such disagreements, please remember our goal in this class is *not* to win some debate. Our goal is to *understand this issue better* along with the different perspectives concerning it. Each of you has something valuable to contribute to that effort.

Reading

Desai, M. A., Antoniou, S., & Fan, L. (2021). *The Tulsa massacre and the call for reparations*. Harvard Business School. <https://courseware.hbs.edu/public/tulsa/>

Optional: Coates, T.-A. (2014, June). The case for reparations. *The Atlantic*, 54–71.

Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. Why did many black families, like Regina Goodwin's, move to Tulsa?
2. What events happened in Tulsa from May 31 to June 1, 1921?
3. What has the City of Tulsa and/or the State of Oklahoma done to rectify for the harms of that massacre?
4. Why does it seem that the outcome for victims of the Tulsa Massacre been so different from other, more successful, calls for reparations, such as those in Rosewood, Germany, and South Africa?
5. Is there a time limit (or some kind of "statute of limitations") for when reparations are owed for past harm? If so, after what length of time do claims for reparations lose their power? If there is no such time limit, why not?
6. In the final analysis, are you in favor of or against reparations to the survivors of the Tulsa Massacre and their descendants? Why?

If you are in favor of reparations, why should more be done than what has already? How exactly would you implement those reparations? Who would receive them and what would they receive? Would all claims be equal? Could reparations worsen racial relations?

If you are against reparations, how else can the victims receive proper recognition without reparations? How else can the City of Tulsa and the State of Oklahoma address the massacre and its legacy? Does this mean it was wrong for the reparations that were paid in Rosewood, Germany, and South Africa?

(The optional article by Ta-Nehisi Coates argues that there is a whole host of areas for reparations to black Americans.)

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.