

Comment by Lisa Holder, Esq. to United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (Geneva 4/16/24)

I am [Lisa Holder](#), a California-based civil rights lawyer, a Commissioner on the California Reparations Task Force, a UCLA law lecturer on constitutional policing, the President of the [Equal Justice Society](#), a U.S. civil rights nonprofit that is changing the nation's consciousness on race through law, social science, and the arts, and the co-lead convener of the [Alliance for Reparations, Reconciliation, and Truth \(ARRT\)](#), a multiracial coalition of civil society groups advancing California reparations.

White supremacy in America is still a reality and the centrality of whiteness continues as the normative construct that undergirds all systems in the U.S.

The anti-Black discrimination that originated in 1619 to underwrite slavery continues to resonate today and replicates racial disparities in wealth, health, education, and access to justice to such a degree that Black people are at the bottom of nearly every indicator of economic and social status in the U.S.

Anti-Black racism is institutional and systemic, and its eradication requires systemic fixes at the level of the Great Society programs undertaken to end the Great Depression. Whereas, California was the first state to convene a Reparations Task Force and, whereas, after two years of research and thirty public hearings, the task force delivered to the governor, legislature, and polity, three groundbreaking items: (1) an eleven-hundred-[page book of truth](#) that documents past and continuing harm of anti-Black discrimination in every facet of American life and on every sector of California civil society; (2) the irrefutable legal case for reparations that can and will withstand judicial scrutiny; and (3) one hundred and fifteen legislative bills and policy proposals for retooling every California social and economic system so that California institutions that – by design – underserve Black people, are transformed to serve, and where necessary, center Black health, wealth, and well-being.

The [California Reparations Task Force report](#) constitutes a placeholder for a national report on reparations that has yet to be undertaken and will serve as a resource for state and local reparations efforts emerging across the country until the federal government finally takes ownership of this process and convenes a federal task force to make the case for national reparations.

Thirty multiracial civil society groups and six commissioners of the nine-member Task Force, formed the Alliance for Reparations and, Reconciliation, and Truth

(ARRT) as a grassroots coalition to ensure that the 115 reparations policy proposals are passed by the legislature and implemented as the rule of law in California.

More than 600 organizations and entities have [endorsed the task force report](#) and/or the study of reparations.

This multi-racial, grassroots effort will benefit all Californians by repairing the harm that slavery and apartheid exacted on the soul of American democracy. Indeed, this accounting and reckoning in the form of reparations is the prerequisite and a necessary predicate for multiracial democracy.

The United Nation's reparations standards – restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition – were the touchstone for the task force reparations report and its 115 policy proposals and are the prism through which we define our advocacy and messaging at ARRT.

International human rights norms have a direct influence on the American legal system, and high courts in the U.S. invoke the evolving standards of decency articulated in the global discourse to course correct and reverse entrenched, misguided U.S. policies, such as the death penalty. Indeed, what happens in this international forum can and will have a direct impact on the outcome for reparations in California and the U.S.

ARRT solicits UN-PFPADS action in two areas, general and specific: 1) Undertake concrete steps to support local reparations efforts, recognizing that local reparations initiatives are more likely to succeed with the imprimatur and stamp of approval of the UN-PFPAD and members of this august body; and 2) Endorse the California Reparations report at www.supportreparations.org

