

LWVMA Reparations Study for Black Americans

February 28, 2025

Background Information

At the 2023 League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) Convention, the LWV Amherst proposed a study of reparations to determine whether the LWVMA should adopt, by consensus, a position on reparations. Delegates voted by a wide margin to form a study committee. The study committee was tasked with studying four questions: Why are reparations needed? Who should receive reparations? What reparations should be provided? How should reparations be provided? The culmination of that study resulted in the preparation of two study reports: (1) a [Study Guide with consensus questions, background, and arguments in favor and against](#) and (2) a [Study Report addressing the four questions: Why, Who, What, and How](#).

Local leagues are being asked to form local reparation study groups and conduct consensus meetings to review these two reports and give the state league its consensus on the four questions presented in the reports.

What LWVBrookline is Doing

LWVBROOKLINE has a small working group working on reparations and will be holding a consensus meeting on **Wednesday, March 12, 2025**, after which it will submit to LWVMA its consensus (or the collective opinion or general agreement of its members) on the four questions being asked by the reparations study. The Consensus Meeting will take place at the **United Parish Church located at 15 Marion Street in Brookline, MA** from **4:00-6:00pm**.

Special newsletters with digested information from the Study Report and Study Guide were distributed by the LWVN which they have been kind enough to share with us as outlined below. While this is a lot to take in on such short notice we encourage everyone to review the reparations study materials as thoroughly as possible. If you would like to share your thoughts in advance of the Consensus Meeting, please email us (we will keep all opinions shared in advance of the meeting confidential).

See our first special newsletter, sent January 20, 2025: [Consensus Study on Reparations Part I](#).

See our second special newsletter, sent February 3, 2025: [Consensus Study on Reparations Part II](#).

See our third special newsletter, sent February 17, 2025: [Consensus Study on Reparations Part III](#).

If you would like to get involved with this study, or have any comments or questions regarding the study, please [Contact Us](#).

How You Can Learn More

See the [LWVMA Reparations Study Page](#) for more information.

Background for the Proposal

The proposal was set against a background of a number of recent and on-going reparations efforts, including but not limited to:

- The town of Amherst, MA, created a reparation fund, and assigned creating a plan to its African Heritage Reparations Assembly (AHRA).
- Other Massachusetts cities such as Boston and Northampton are considering studies of reparation.
- A bill proposing a commission to study reparations had been filed in the Massachusetts Senate (currently SD2393) as had a bill creating reparations for the descendants of American slavery. (SD2019).
- HR40 has been introduced at every Congressional session since 1989; in April 2021 it was for the first time moved to the House floor for full consideration, but did not receive a vote. It was reintroduced in January 2023.

Study Scope

The scope of the study is to review the evidence for and against taking a position in support of Reparations for Black Americans (or for a more limited group, the descendants of enslaved African Americans). If local Leagues and subsequently Convention decide to support such reparations, local Leagues will be able to advocate for reparative activities in their localities, while the State League will be able to advocate statewide for legislative and other action in support of such reparations.

The Questions Asked by the Study Committee

The Study Committee undertook to answer the following questions:

1. *Why are reparations needed?* In its research the committee soon realized that it had to consider not only the horrors of enslavement, but also what has happened since emancipation: the Jim Crow era, and the ongoing racial discrimination which has led repeatedly to failed programs and policies. It has been necessary also to consider the perspective that reparations are not needed. Both arguments are presented in the Study Report.
2. *Who should receive reparations?* In the course of its research, the Committee realized that the question might not simply be: should reparations be deserved by the descendants of the Africans enslaved in the United States from 1619 to the abolishment of slavery? Arguments also exist that they might be deserved by all Black/African Americans. Both points of view are presented.
3. *What reparations should be provided?* A broad range of reparations has been studied, and is presented.
4. *How should reparations be provided?* Federal, state, and local governments, business enterprises, faith-based organizations, and academic institutions are all considered.

New Discussion Google Group

The study committee is offering LWVMA Members an opportunity to exchange information relevant to the LWVMA Study on Reparations for Black Americans in a monitored, group email format. If you are interested in joining this new google group, please send the email address that you want to use, your name, and league affiliation to shepard.patty@gmail.com. Please continue to address any comments or questions about the Study on Reparations for Black Americans, directly to: reparations@lwwma.org.

To contact the study committee email reparations@lwwma.org.