

## Reading:

# Where Do 2020 Candidates Stand On Reparations?

## Democratic Candidates (partial list)

### Joe Biden

At a Democratic candidates' debate on September 12, Biden was asked about reparations. He repeated a statement he had made in the past: "I'll be damned if I feel responsible to pay for what happened 300 years ago." The quote was part of comments then-Senator Joe Biden made in a Delaware-based weekly paper in 1975: "I do not buy the concept, popular in the '60s, which said, 'We have suppressed the Black man for 300 years and the white man is now far ahead in the race for everything our society offers. In order to even the score, we must now give the Black man a head start, or even hold the white man back, to even the race. I don't buy that... I don't feel responsible for the sins of my father and grandfather. I feel responsible for what the situation is today, for the sins of my own generation. And I'll be damned if I feel responsible to pay for what happened 300 years ago." The former vice president now says he supports a commission to study reparations (H.R. 40, a bill introduced by Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee and Senator Cory Booker) so he can make an informed decision on what to do next.

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/mar/8/joe-bidens-1975-comments-slamming-slavery-reparati/>

### Corey Booker

On April 8, 2019, Senator Corey Booker introduced a companion bill to Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee's (D-TX) H.R. 40 bill on reparations. Booker stated in a press release: "Since slavery in this country, we have had overt policies fueled by white supremacy and racism that have oppressed African-Americans economically for generations. Many of our bedrock domestic policies that have ushered millions of Americans into the middle class have systematically excluded Blacks through practices like GI Bill discrimination and redlining. This bill is a way of addressing head-on the persistence of racism, white supremacy, and implicit racial bias in our country. It will bring together the best minds to study the issue and propose solutions that will finally begin to right the economic scales of past harms and make sure we are a country where all dignity and humanity is affirmed."

<https://thegrio.com/2019/04/08/reparations-for-real-sen-cory-booker-pushes-reparations-commission-to-senate/>

### Pete Buttigieg

In July 2019, Mayor Pete Buttigieg announced what he called his "Douglass Plan" named after abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The plan includes a \$10 billion fund for black entrepreneurs

over five years, \$25 billion for historically black colleges, the legalization of marijuana and the expungement of past drug convictions. He likens his plan to the Marshall Plan of 1945 through which the U.S. government spent what today would be \$100 billion to rebuild Europe after World War II. He stated, however, that he still supports a study of reparations: "I think [my Douglass Plan] does not take the place of the conversation around reparations. I also support passing H.R. 40. I would sign it, which would create a commission to look at reparations. But I do think that this is also restorative, in the same way that reparations is intended to be. This is not a gift. This is a restoration. It is trying to address generational harms and specific intentional theft that took place."

<https://www.unz.com/sbpdl/democrat-candidate-for-potus-mayor-pete-buttigieg-promises-reparations-to-blacks-and-additional-hundreds-of-billions-of-white-taxpayer-money-to-blacks-to-fight-systemic-racism-if-elected/>

### **Julian Castro**

Castro supports reparations for African Americans, and in an April 2019 CNN town hall meeting, gave reasons for his support: "We have never fully addressed in this country the original sin of slavery," and "because of that, we have never truly healed as a country...If somebody is out there that's 25 years old and they say: 'Why are you talking to me? I never owned slaves.' I'd say that, you know, that 25-year-old person never fought in the Pacific, that 25-year-old person never had a hand in writing the Constitution of our great country, that 25-year-old person never marched with the women who were marching for the power to vote, they didn't march at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. ... In other words, even though we weren't there in past generations, we've inherited a lot of moral assets, but you know what? We've also inherited some moral debts, and one of those debts we've never paid is the debt for that original sin of slavery."

<https://theweek.com/speedreads/834796/2020-presidential-hopeful-julian-castro-makes-clear-moral-case-slavery-reparations>

### **Kamala Harris**

Senator Harris co-signed Sen. Corey's Bookers reparations bill calling for a study of reparations (as did Senators Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and other candidates). Harris has not, however, said that African Americans should receive financial recompense. "If we're talking about writing a check, I don't think it is that simple," Harris said August 11, 2019 while meeting with editorial board members of the Des Moines Register. "And frankly, I don't support an idea or a notion that after all this, we're going to say, 'Okay, I'm going to write you a check, and then be quiet.' Because that won't solve the problem, which is the systemic issues that are present and will continue to exist, whether or not you write a check. So I'm just saying it's just not that simple. And I don't buy into an argument that it is. ... This stuff needs to be studied because America needs a history lesson, to be honest about it, and we need to study it in a way that we are having a very comprehensive and fact-based conversation about policies and the connection between those policies and harm if we're going to have a productive conversation."

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/elections/presidential/caucus/2019/08/11/kamala-harris-reparations-iowa-register-editorial-board-iowa-fair-disparities-caucus-election/1981037001/>

### **Amy Klobuchar**

In an interview on NBC's Meet the Press, Sen. Klobuchar of Minnesota said that she supports investing in "those communities that have been so hurt by racism," but that "it doesn't have to be direct pay for each person." She added: "Acknowledge what happened... Making sure we have that shared dream of opportunity for all Americans." Klobuchar is a co-sponsor of H.R. 40. <https://thehill.com/homenews/sunday-talk-shows/434437-klobuchar-on-reparations-we-have-to-invest-in-communities-affected>

### **Beto O'Rourke**

In an article published on Medium in July, O'Rourke wrote about the recent discovery that his ancestors had owned slaves. He wrote: "In the aggregate, slavery, its legacy and the ensuing forms of institutionalized racism have produced an America with stark differences in opportunities and outcomes, depending on race. I benefit from a system that my ancestors built to favor themselves at the expense of others. That only increases the urgency I feel to help change this country so that it works for those who have been locked-out of — or locked-up in — this system. As a person, as a candidate for the office of the Presidency, I will do everything I can to deliver on this responsibility." O'Rourke has said he supports H.R. 40, the bill to study reparations. But he said that pursuing a cash reparations policy would stop the conversation on the issue: "Starting at the end precludes us from being able to take the necessary steps to be able to achieve it," he said. "That conclusion, that policy action, stops the conversation for so many millions of our fellow Americans."

<https://medium.com/@BetoORourke/rose-and-eliza-51d8be9fb675>

<https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/450226-orourke-cash-reparations-policy-stops-the-conversation-on-the-issue>

### **Bernie Sanders**

At a CNN town hall, Senator Sanders of Vermont was asked his stance on reparations. He said: "I think we have to do everything that we can to end institutional racism in this country... We're going to do everything we can to put resources into distressed communities and improve lives for those people who have been hurt by the legacy of slavery." But Sanders has said he does not support reparation payments to individuals: "I think that right now, our job is to address the crises facing the American people and our communities, and I think there are better ways to do that than just writing out a check." Senator Sanders co-sponsored Sen. Corey Booker's bill to study reparations, H.R. 40. Sanders also supports a bill introduced by Rep. Jim Clyburn, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (also called the 10/20/30 bill), which would concentrate federal funds on the areas of greatest need.

<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/3/1/18246394/bernie-sanders-reparations->

[slavery-2020-harris-booker-warren](#)

<http://theintercept.com/2019/02/26/reparations-bernie-sanders/>

### **Elizabeth Warren**

Senator Warren co-sponsored H.R. 40, Corey Booker's bill calling for a study of reparations. "We must confront the dark history of slavery and government-sanctioned discrimination in this country that has had many consequences including undermining the ability of Black families to build wealth in America for generations," Warren said in a statement to Reuters in February 2019. In an interview with CNN, Warren was pressed on what form reparations should take. She would only say that the issue needed to be studied: "I'm saying that there are a lot of scholars and a lot of activists who have put multiple proposals on the table. But we're never going to get any of those proposals if we don't begin with an acknowledgement of the wrong of slavery and the obligation to address it."

<https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/heres-where-2020-democrats-stand-on-slavery-reparations>

<https://www.kbzk.com/cnn-us-politics/2019/03/11/elizabeth-warren-declines-to-say-if-she-supports-financial-compensation-as-a-form-of-reparations/>

### **Marianne Williamson**

Marianne Williamson has called for a 30- to 50-person reparations council, descendants of enslaved Africans to determine how a proposed \$200 to \$500 billion would be dispersed over the course of 20 years. The money would be used for economic and educational renewal. "The reason I feel strongly about reparations as opposed to race-based policies is because race-based policies leave open the question whose fault it is that this economic gap exists," Williamson said in an interview with CNN anchor John Berman. "With reparations, there's an inherent mea culpa. It is an acknowledgment of a wrong that has been done, a debt owed and the willingness of a nation to pay it." In the first Democratic debate Williamson stated emphatically that, "anything less than \$100 billion is an insult" and that her proposed \$200 to \$500 billion is "politically feasible today."

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/07/politics/marianne-williamson-reparations-plan-cnntv/index.html>

## **Independent Candidate**

### **Mark Charles**

Mark Charles is a tribal citizen of the Navajo nation who announced his candidacy for president in May 2019. Charles, a speaker, writer and consultant, is calling for a national reparations dialogue. “[Reparations] is the question that terrifies the U.S. government. One of the challenges the U.S. government faces today is while there might be some way to calculate the number to pay reparations for slavery, how do you begin to calculate that number for the genocide of entire native nations – the ethnic cleansing and genocide of an entire continent? I am calling for a national dialogue on race, gender and class. A conversation that I would put on par with the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that happened in South Africa and Rwanda and Canada. I would call ours “Truth and Conciliation” because “reconciliation” implies there was a previous harmony, which is not accurate.”

<https://www.ksjd.org/post/mark-charles-i-am-win#stream/0>

## **Republican Candidate**

### **Donald Trump**

During the summer 2019 hearings on reparations, President Donald Trump stated his views on reparations in a USA Today interview. The President stated that the concept of the federal government giving reparations to descendants of enslaved Africans was both unusual and interesting and that he didn’t see it happening. "I think it’s a very unusual thing. It’s been a very interesting debate. I don’t see it happening.”

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2019/06/25/trump-slave-descendants-reparations/1557041001/>