

# Reparations

## Lesson ii



[www.genocidememorialday.org.uk](http://www.genocidememorialday.org.uk)

(c) IHRC  
gmd@ihrc.org

# Imagining Injustice

Imagine that your land has been stolen, along with all the crops and resources that you and your family have harvested for generations. Those who stole your land eat well and live comfortable lives, and they make rules (laws) that say that if you try to come on to the land that was previously yours, you can be killed or imprisoned.

Are the laws just?

Who is the criminal? Are you a criminal if you do not obey these laws?

# Laws and morality

- Some Laws are made by human beings
- Those who have the power to create laws, can create them in their favor, meaning that laws are not always based in morality.
- In this way, those who commit heinous acts of violence can justify that violence if they have the power to make laws
- Different laws can be applied to different people at the same time. For example, as the trans-Atlantic slave trade took root, it was illegal to enslave white people in Europe, but legal to enslave black people in the colonies

# Changing Laws and Reparations

Once an act is made unjust and criminal, victims of the previous laws should be compensated by the perpetrators (reparations)

After the abolition of slavery, what happened instead, was perpetrators were compensated and victims left in precarious positions. Slave owners were compensated for the loss of their “property” (enslaved people).

Abolition of slavery was not a “gift” to enslaved black people. Enslaved black people and abolitionists of various races fought tirelessly for freedom that should have always been theirs

# Using Laws for Reparations

What would the political repercussions be if formally colonized and/enslaved people could sue the metropole (ex. Britian, Spain, Belgium)?

Ex. 2001, Lebanese and Palestinian survivors of 1982 massacre in Sabra and Shatila filed a law suit against Ariel Sharon, using Belgium law

# Implementing Reparations

Material  
Reparations

Immaterial  
Reparations

# Examples of Material Reparations

Return of Stolen Land or Art

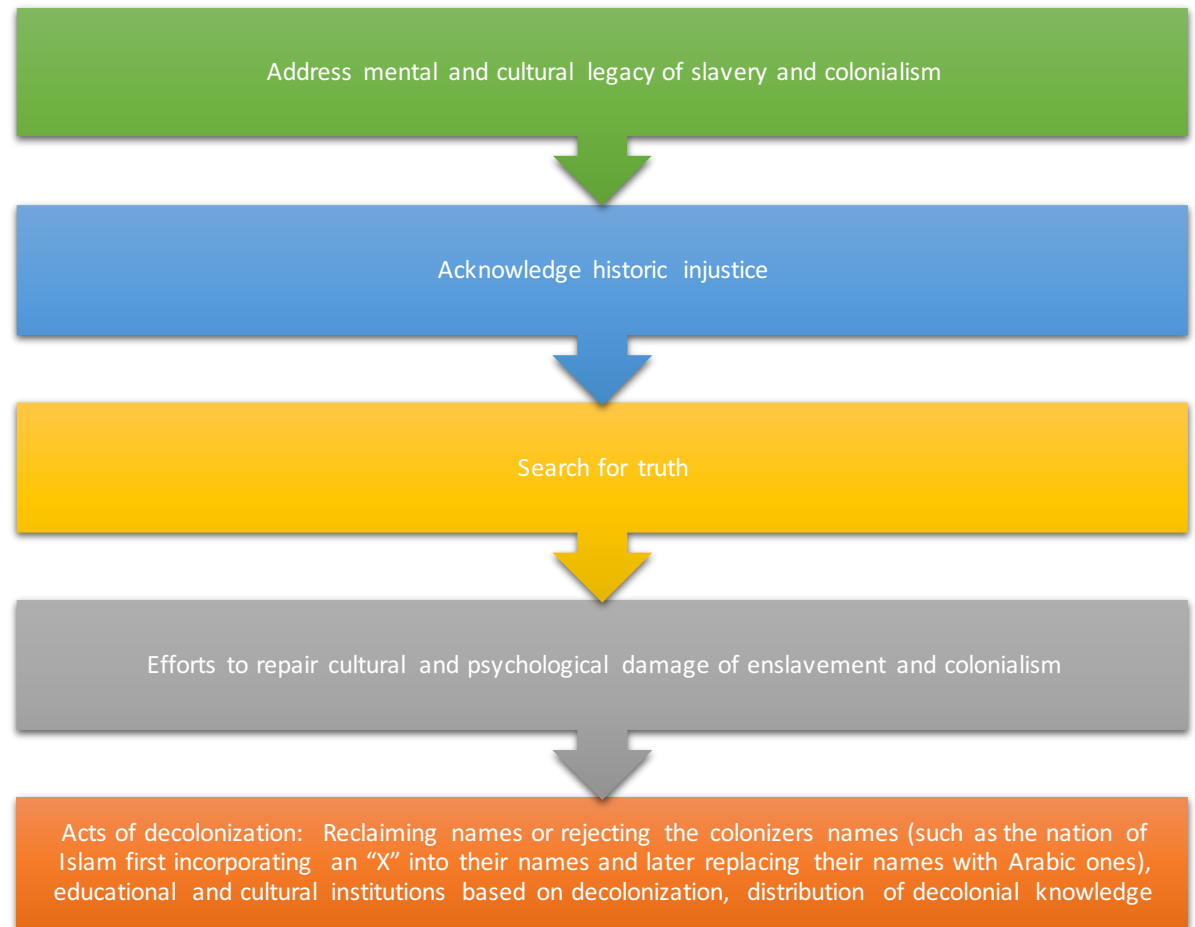
Ex. British government, 2005, enabled the restitution of looted art from 1939-1945 to return art stolen from Jewish peoples

Monetary Payments

Ex. American government, 1971, granted \$1 billion and 44 million acres of land to Alaskan Natives

Construction of Material Infrastructure (buildings, facilities)

# Examples of Immaterial Reparations





# Apologies and Reparations Made through the use of Law

Aetna INC., 2000– After being confronted with a law suit, this large health insurer apologized for providing insurance to slave holders for financial losses after the abolition of slavery.

Wachovia, 2005– This bank offered an apology for their role in slavery and was required by the city of Chicago to investigate its complicity in enslavement in order to be able to participate in the development of a city housing project.

Canada, 1999– First Nations Land Management Act– Transferred administration of land to First Nations

Are our  
present-day  
laws enough?

- Do the present-day laws reflect what is moral, and can they adequately address historical injustice? Do they provide a legal framework for reparations?