



A Way Forward

Defining Restorative Justice and Exploring Reindigenizing UNC

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Introduction

It begins with a question. . .

After coming to know the historical context of theft, exploitation, and extraction that shapes the public university system in the United States, we are asking: **What does restorative justice look like for the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and what steps can be taken to reindigenize the institution?** In order to answer that question more fully, we must first investigate what this question is really asking.

What is Restorative Justice?

First, there must be a collective understanding of what restorative justice is before any meaningful answers can be offered.

Restorative justice is a concept that emerged as a field for

advocacy in the context of criminal justice and court processes in the 1970s, and Howard Zehr is commonly cited as being one of the "grandfathers" of this field (Armour 2010). While there is considerable work and a number of contributors to the restorative justice movement both in academic and social movement settings, the main principles on which restorative justice operates have origins in many North American Indigenous cultures. In truth, the approach of contemporary restorative justice has historically been vital in the "peacemaking" process of Indigenous cultures in a global context (Pika 2020).



Image accessed at <https://www.reed.edu/restorative-justice/introduction-to-restorative-justice-at-reed.html>

Principles of Restorative Justice

While the applications of restorative justice have been gaining traction in movements dedicated to criminal justice reform, understanding the original intentions and practices employed by Indigenous societies can offer a much broader range of use. Restorative practices offer a framework that focuses on the victim's needs and the offender's responsibilities. From a community

standpoint, these clear and distinct priorities represent a more holistic and empathetic approach that can build the kind of trust and faith that holds a community together.

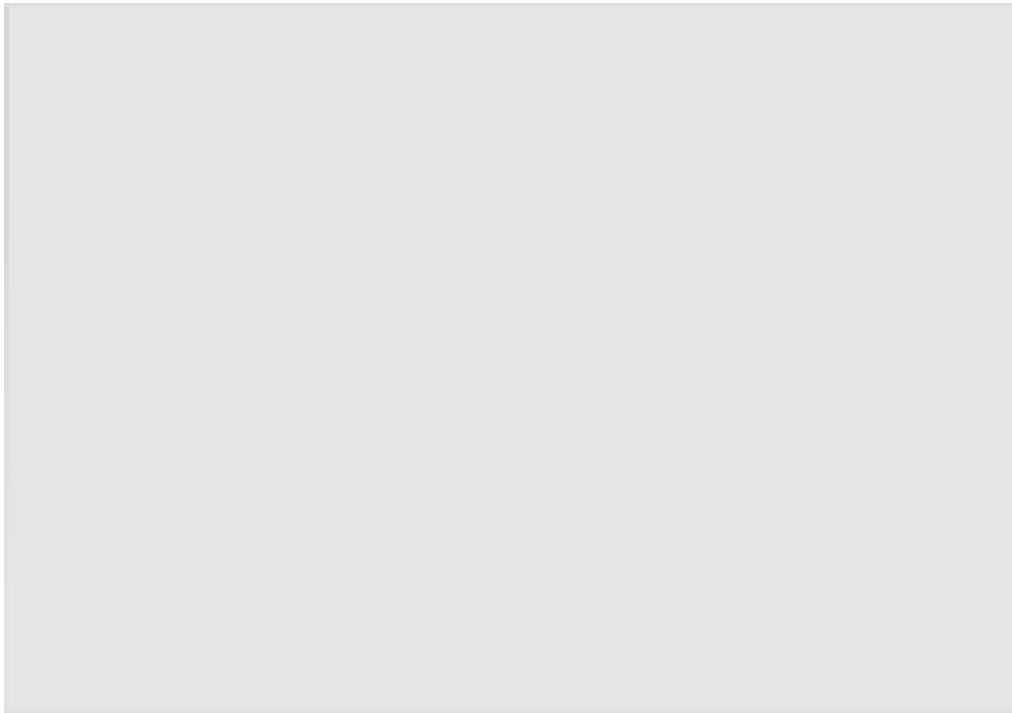
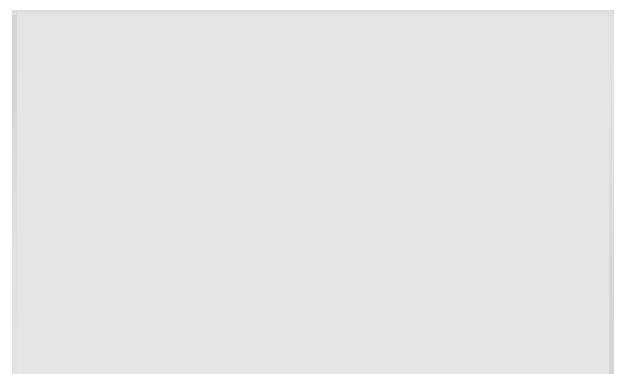


Image uploaded by Kris Vanspauwen at https://www.researchgate.net/figure/TARR-Model-in-relation-to-restorative-justice-principles-Source-S-Parmentier-and-K_fig2_237148641

Historical Context

A history of exploitation, theft, and erasure. . .

While there is a strong history at UNC Chapel Hill of exploitation of Native lands, use of enslaved people to secure free labor, and ongoing systemic issues regarding racism and the perpetuation of inequity, we felt that the focus of our question was less about justifying the



Taliajah "Teddy" Vann, President of the campus Black Student Movement, speaking at a conference hosted at UNC to discuss Nikole Hannah-Jones' decision to turn down UNC Chapel Hill's

historical context that demands restorative justice and more about focusing on what a potential future could look like if serious efforts at restoration, conciliation, and reparations were undertaken. The other StoryMaps completed by the students in the GEOG435 Global Environmental Justice class have been incredible at developing these specific contexts while our storymap is focused on asking: **Knowing all of that, how can we do better?** So let's explore what's happening in other places to combat systemic oppression and the efforts being made to decolonize.

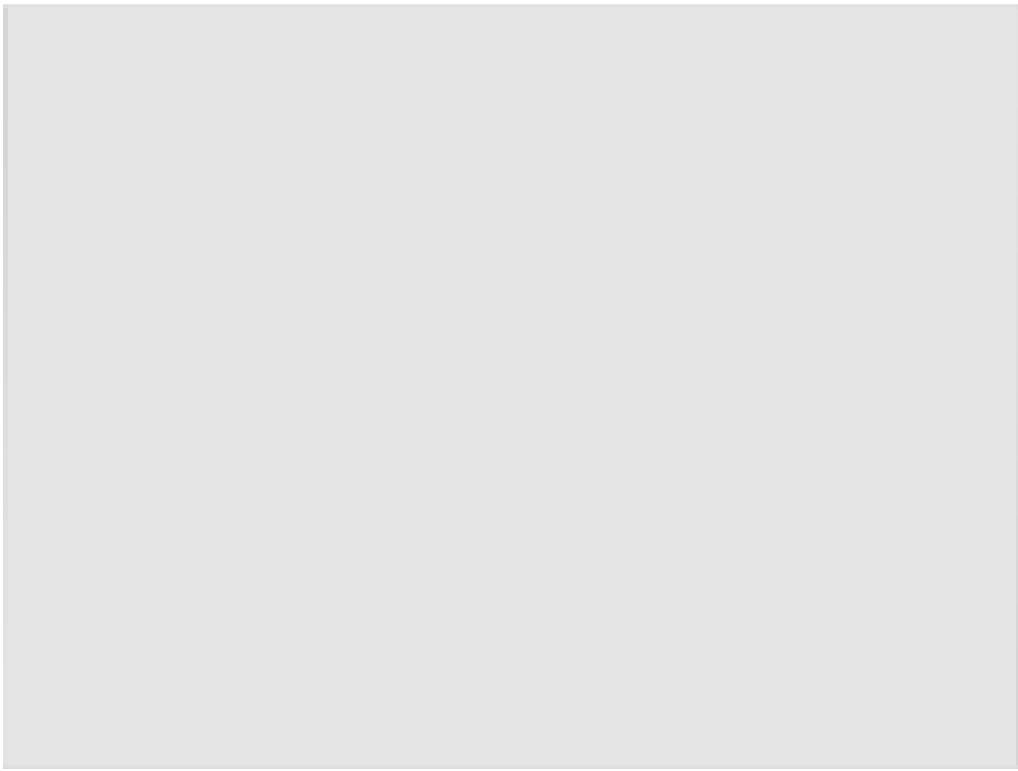
offer for tenure, safety concerns for black students and discuss demands to make life for black students better on campus.

Current Efforts

What is happening in other places?

Georgetown University

In 1838, Georgetown University sold 272 enslaved individuals to support the university financially. When this history resurfaced, the University formed a working group to study how to remedy this past injustice. The group writes “we are convinced that reparative justice requires a meaningful financial commitment from the University.” However, the first action towards this financial commitment came from the student body rather than the university administration. In April 2019, Georgetown undergraduates voted to tax themselves \$27.20 per semester to create a fund that would benefit the descendants of the 272 enslaved people the university sold. The tax would raise over \$400,000 in the first year, though this sum is small compared to their \$2 billion endowment.



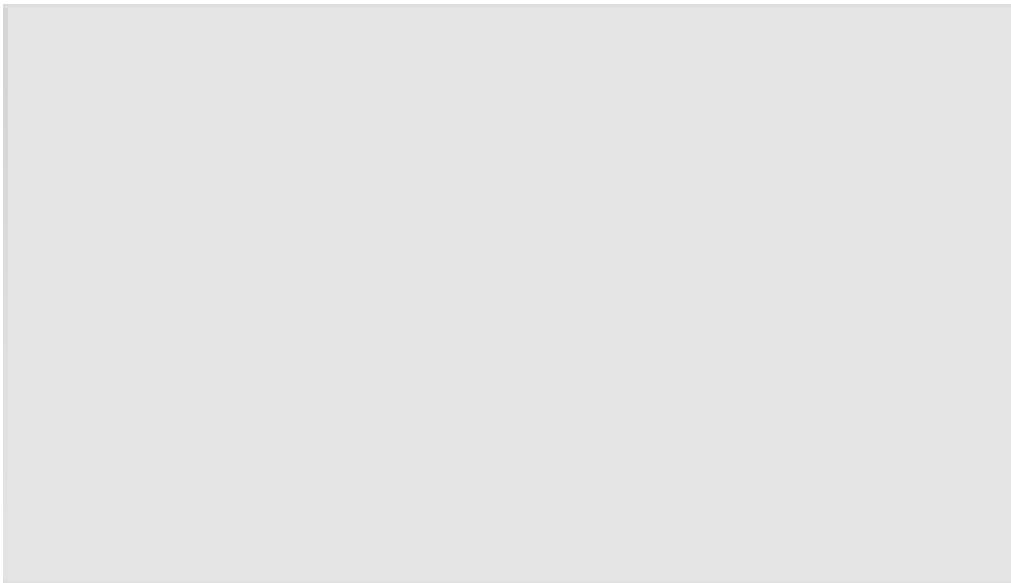
This is a photograph obtained from the Georgetown website dedicated to a reflection on slavery, memory, and reconciliation. Pictured are some of the descendants of enslaved people held by Georgetown University. This was taken as part of the engagement program GU has undertaken to better meet the needs of the people whose lives they have directly affected with exploitative practices.

Read more about Georgetown's efforts and it's criticisms:

[The Atlantic article](#)

[Georgetown Reconciliation Fund](#)

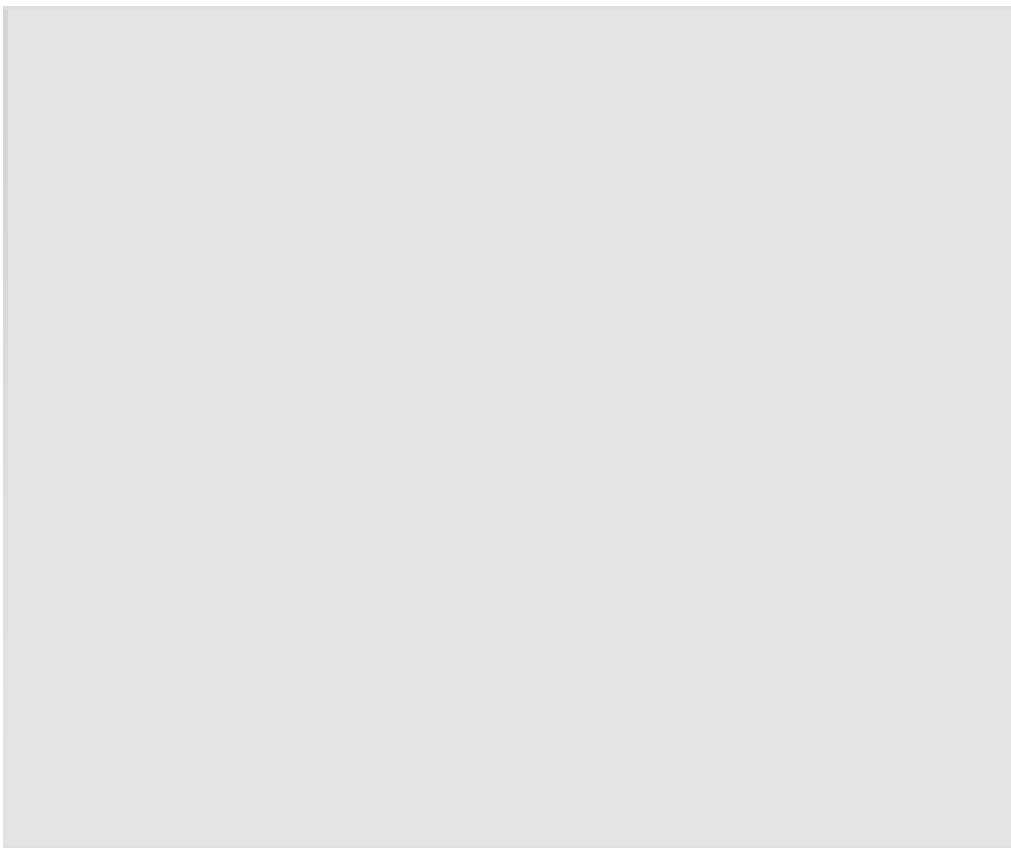
Why University Action Matters



"The Student Body" Originally located in front of Davis Library, 1990

Performative Activism

Carolina has a long history of modulating and inhibiting protests done by UNC staff and students. By doing this, they make UNC-Chapel Hill more palatable to white supremacists and people who uphold colonial structures and they ensure that UNC remains a powerful Western institution. At the same time, growing protests from UNC's student body and staff has pushed UNC to make certain efforts in order to appear as though they are trying to create a more equal and productive atmosphere on campus. "The Student Body" is an installation piece that was located in front of Davis Library (a central part of campus) and received a significant amount of backlash due to its racist and stereotypical depictions of POC. It is clear that no real thought or analysis went into this piece of art; it was a performance put on by UNC in order to appear as though they care.



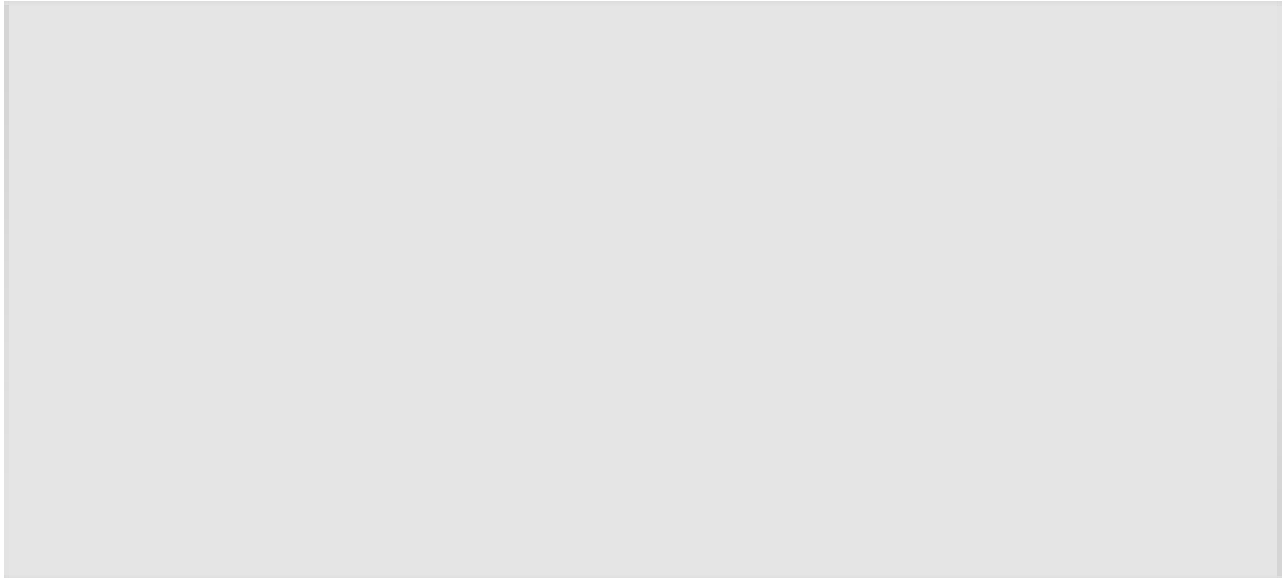
James Cates Memorial - Picture from Twitter account "Black Congress" (@_blackcongress)

The Bare Minimum

Student action and protests have been significant and meaningful on campus. However, it is difficult when the structures you are trying to work in were designed from inception to be harmful. Our project focuses on throwing aside how we know and have been taught to do things within these systems; rather than working within the system an entirely new system must be imagined. Only in this way can we move past only achieving the bare minimum. James Cates was a student in 1970, who was murdered by a violently racist all white gang. At the time of his murder, all his murderers were acquitted by an all-white jury. UNC only announced a permanent James Cates memorial within this last semester. Though a memorial is meaningful to many, and the hard work that UNC student and staff put in in order to make this possible should not be ignored, it still does not acknowledge any structural problems within UNC's system.

Applications to UNC

How can we bring restorative practices to UNC?



Wero Challenge Matrix

In their paper *Te Wero—the challenge: reimagining universities from an indigenous world view*, Edwina Pio et al. argues for "universities to reimagine their policies and practices by drawing from the complex richness of indigenous world views." They include the matrix above, which provides tangible steps for universities to take as they begin the process of re-indigenizing.

Marcelle C. Dawson argues in *Rehumanising the university for an alternative future: decolonisation, alternative epistemologies and cognitive justice* that in order for substantive decolonization to take place, it must incorporate intellectual element that is aimed at transforming the current knowledge structures in place. She suggests that university staff and students can begin to co-create a counter-university within the university. Dawson challenges traditional diversity initiatives, explaining how they expect marginalized groups to follow rules set by dominant group, thereby reproducing privilege rather than challenging it.

Both of these papers come from scholars of out New Zealand, where universities are expected to follow and uphold the Treaty of Waitangi through cooperating with Māori, providing opportunities to assist, develop and advance Māori, developing curriculum content which acknowledges Māori perspectives and preparing Māori to participate in the country's society culturally and economically. While they are both written in the context of New Zealand and Māori history, they present pathways for Westernized universities across the world to begin to reindiginize.

Connections to Class Themes

Kincentric Ecologies

- Essential that humans view surrounding life as kin
- Enhance and preserve the ecosystem
- Humans as one aspect of the complexity of life

Fish, Kin, and Hope

Zoe Todd



<https://sakai.unc.edu/access/content/group/d34e2ba2-5b79-4621-b2fd-ef15e736f0c4/FishKinHope.pdf>

Land as Pedagogy

- Advocate for a reclamation of land as pedagogy
- Nurture a generation of Indigenous peoples that have the skills, knowledge and values to rebuild
- Break away from systems that are mainly designed to produce communities of individuals willing to uphold settler colonialism
- Land based education

As We Have Always Done

Selections from "As We Have Always Done" by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson



<https://sakai.unc.edu/access/content/group/d34e2ba2-5b79-4621-b2fd-ef15e736f0c4/SimpsonIntroCh4.pdf>

Reconsidering Reparations

- Reparations as future-orientated project engaged in creating a more sustainable and thoughtful future
- Inequalities in climate vulnerability are the legacy of colonialism and racism

Reconsidering Reparations

An excerpt from "Reconsidering Reparations" by Olúfẹ̀mí O. Táíwò



<https://sakai.unc.edu/access/content/group/d34e2ba2-5b79-4621-b2fd-ef15e736f0c4/ReconsideringReparationsCh1.pdf>

Afterword

Our goal with this project is to show *possibilities* rather than to focus on the way that the system is built now: working within the system only furthers the illusion that the current colonial and violence-based system is worth saving. Since Western power structures were designed to keep certain people in power, it will never be possible to "fix" what is wrong without fundamentally changing the way things are done now. Our project follows fundamental change; rather than performative activism and accomplishing the bare minimum, we hope to highlight the ways that structural change can make deep and meaningful impacts on the people who have faced the most inequality and violence from the current systems in place.

References

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