Designing Your Reparations Shabbat

Adapted from the 2025 Reparations Shabbat Guide created by the Tikkun Olam Commission in partnership with Rabbi Ash Sofman and Rabbi Micah Weiss

REPARATIONS SHABBAT

from RECONSTRUCTING JUDAISM

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Step-by-Step Guide

1. Gather your Reparations Shabbat team. Members may include racial justice task force/committee members, rabbis and other clergy, teachers, Board members, programming staff, etc. If clergy and staff are not on your team, please make sure you keep them in the loop and/or include them in discussions at every stage.
2. Reparations Shabbat will always fall on **Parashat Bo**, which tends to land in January/February. Confirm the upcoming dates for Parashat Bo and put them on your congregation's calendar.
3. Decide on the scope and scale of your Reparations Shabbat activities. Considering both your audience and your resources (including volunteer time and energy), how much can you effectively do? What are the most likely activities to succeed? For inspiration, you can see examples of previous programs here.
4. Secure speakers, guests, volunteers, and necessary materials (e.g., movies, venues, food) as early as possible.
5. Promote, promote, promote. View templates and examples of promotional materials below.
6. When Reparations Shabbat arrives, learn, enjoy, and be deeply present to one another.

* Outside of the U.S.? Please read this letter as encouragement to participate and inspiration to join your own local reparative initiatives.

1: Reparations Shabbat Activities

A. Suggestions for Programs and Activities

- Invite a local reparations leader or leaders to speak during services and chat informally with congregants during the following oneg or kiddush.
- Have clergy lead a text study on one or more relevant Jewish texts. View example studies here.
- Watch and discuss a movie on reparations using the Tikkun Olam Commission's discussion guides.
- Bring K-12 students together for a family-friendly learning session using any or all of the activities on this Collective Teshuva lesson plan.
- Incorporate reparations-themed readings, prayers, or sermon starters into your regular Shabbat services, like this Prelude to the Aleinu that quotes the Reconstructionist Reparations Resolution.
- Invite a congregant involved in reparations to give a drash and/or lead discussion about what they do.
- Look into reparations events in your area, like local fundraisers or hearings, and join them with members of your congregation.
- Lead an art or creative writing workshop to open emotional pathways towards action.

B. Resources for Shabbat Services

- **Full collection of ritual resources for Reparations Shabbat**
- Holy Breath of Liberation by Rabbi Dr. Koach Baruch Frazier
- A Protest Prayer by April N. Baskin
- *Mi Shebeirakh* / Healing Blessing for the US by Kohenet Ahava Lilith evershYne
- *Al Het* for Our Racial History by Rabbi Gilah Langner and Herb Levy
- A Blessing for Black History Month by Rabbi Sandra Lawson
- V'ahavta by Aurora Levins Morales
- Kaddish for Black Lives by Jewish Multiracial Network
- What is the *halacha* for Racial Justice? by Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation
- *El Maley Rakhamim* for Victims of Racial Violence by T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
- Land Acknowledgements Through a Jewish Lens by Yoshi Silverstein, Rabbi Dr. Koach Baruch Frazier, and Samia Mansour of Mitsui Collective

C. Learning and Discussion

- Reparations Movies and Discussion Guides for Reparations Shabbat
- Reparations Curricula for Congregational Study
- Reparations Shabbat K-12 Lesson Plans
- Reparations4Slavery: an education portal designed to help non-Black families understand the history, nature, and routes

of repair for institutional racism. Reconstructing Judaism has partnered with them for reparations programming.

D. Action and Activism

- Reparations in Action: A Recorded Panel
    - This program presents four different reparations projects as replicable initiatives other synagogues and communities of faith might take on in their local contexts.
- Order reparations artwork commissioned by Reconstructing Judaism:
    - Reparations by Ayeola Omolara Kaplan
    - Hineni by Marjorie Attignol Salvodon
- Reparation Generation: a national organization that mobilizes charitable contributions to develop, implement, and evaluate model reparations programs. Reconstructing Judaism has partnered with them for reparations programming.
- First Repair: Find local and state reparations initiatives and other resources to support your reparative efforts.

- Additional Resources:
    - Resource Guides:
        - Resource Guide: State and Local Reparations Work, by Liberation Ventures and First Repair
        - Legislative Toolkit for State and Local Reparations Work, by First Repair and Osiris
        - National Resource Center for State and Local Reparations
        - Jews on Ohlone Land - Land Back Movement
        - Movement for Black Lives Reparations Toolkit
        - Reparations Toolkit - Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism
        - Redressing Historical Racial Injustices: A Toolkit for Policymakers and Advocates, Northwestern University School of Law
        - Slavery Disclosure and Redress Ordinance Toolkit
    - **Reparations Platforms**
        - NAARC's 10-Point Reparations Plan
        - UN Framework on Reparations
        - Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: 94 Calls to Action
        - National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations Coalition Agenda
    - **Individual Wealth Transfer**
        - Reparation Generation
        - Restorative Actions

- **Organizational Reparations Policies**
  - Sacred Design Lab reparational payments

2: Promoting Your Programs

A. Share Kit

For all of our promotional materials in one place, download the Reparations Shabbat 2027 Share Kit. You'll find a few of its sample emails and posts in the templates below, but the Share Kit has everything you need to spread the word.

[DOWNLOAD THE SHARE KIT]

B. Templates

EMAIL TEMPLATES

Subject: Reparations Shabbat at [**CONGREGATION**] on [**DATE(s)**]!

Body:

[GREETING],

We're joining fellow Reconstructionist congregations from [**DATE(s)**] in **Reparations Shabbat**, a special Shabbat weekend dedicated to Reparations. This movement-wide initiative is a great opportunity to re-engage in the deep reckoning with racial harm and accountability that we began as a movement with the passage of the Reconstructionist **Reparations Resolution** in January 2023.

Here's what we have planned:

[EVENT 1] **DATE, TIME, TITLE:** DESCRIPTION
[EVENT 2] **DATE, TIME, TITLE:** DESCRIPTION
[EVENT 3] **DATE, TIME, TITLE:** DESCRIPTION

(*OPTIONAL*: "Why do we continue to focus on the movement for reparations and on reparative work more broadly? Because we, as a movement, made a commitment to racial justice and healing that is still needed. We must honestly learn our past and be accountable for the harm done to create the conditions for societal healing. We consider it our duty to continue this soul-healing work for ourselves and those we love..."

Read more on the Reparations Shabbat webpage.)

To register for these events, please sign up here: [**LINK**]. We look forward to seeing you there!

[SIGN-OFF],

[YOUR NAME]

Reparations Shabbat is Jan. 15-16

This January, our community will join Reconstructionist congregations across the movement in marking Reparations Shabbat.

Reparations Shabbat invites us to explore questions of racial justice, historical responsibility and repair through Jewish learning, reflection and action.

At [CONGREGATION NAME], we'll mark Reparations Shabbat with [BRIEF DESCRIPTION].

When: [DATE/TIME]

Where: [LOCATION/ONLINE]

What: [PROGRAM DETAILS]

We hope you'll join us as we learn together and consider what the work of repair asks of us today.

EMAIL SAMPLE



Reparations Shabbat 2027

***Parashat Bo:* January 15–16, 2027**

Reparations Shabbat is a movement-wide opportunity to continue the deep reckoning with racial harm and accountability that the Reconstructionist movement began with the passage of the Reconstructionist **Reparations Resolution** in January 2023.

The work of reparations is just as important now as ever before. Reconstructing Judaism invites you to host an immersive weekend of Reparations Shabbat with **our freely available online resources**. Take another deep dive into the visionary world of collective teshuvah and act as a community towards truth and reconciliation for the foundational harms of our past.

EXAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Announcement

We're joining Reconstructionist communities across the movement for **#ReparationsShabbat, Jan. 15–16, 2027.**

Reparations Shabbat invites Jewish communities to make space for learning, reflection and action around racial justice, historical responsibility and repair.

At [CONGREGATION NAME], we'll mark the weekend by [PROGRAM/ACTIVITY].

Learn more: https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/reparations-shabbat/

Invite Your Community

What does repair ask of us?

Join us Jan. 15–16 as we mark **Reparations Shabbat** with [PROGRAM/ACTIVITY].

Together, we'll explore how Jewish values can help us engage questions of racial justice, responsibility and reparations.

Share the Initiative

This Jan. 15–16, Reconstructionist communities are coming together for Reparations Shabbat, an opportunity to learn, reflect and take action around reparations and racial justice.

We're proud to be part of this movement-wide effort toward learning, reckoning and repair.

Learn more about Reparations Shabbat: https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/reparations-shabbat/

C. Bring Reparations Shabbat to Your Board

Bring the Conversation to Your Board

Reparations Shabbat can also provide an opportunity for congregational leadership to consider how questions of reparations, racial justice and repair connect to your community's values and priorities.

The Reparations Shabbat board resolution provides a starting point for discussion and can be shared with your board or adapted for your congregation.

[DOWNLOAD THE BOARD RESOLUTION]

D. Informal Language

WHAT IS A REPARATIONS SHABBAT?

A Reparations Shabbat is a weekend of congregational programming dedicated to the topic of reparations. It can be as simple as a single *d'var Torah* or as elaborate as a **full weekend of events.** Each congregation is empowered to build a schedule that is the right fit for its own community. We've created a menu of ready-to-go programs and resources that we hope will be helpful in customizing your Reparations Shabbaton.

Parashat Bo is the week we read the story of the Israelites receiving reparations from the Egyptians on our journey from slavery to freedom, and it is a great time to re-engage with the commitments we collectively made in our **movement's reparations resolution.**

We suggest an arc of the weekend that **starts in study** – re-engaging the need to understand the foundational harms our societies are built upon, and **leads toward action** – taking inspiration from the dozens of local reparations projects emerging around the world and putting steps in motion for your own congregational reparations initiatives.

WHY ORGANIZE A REPARATIONS SHABBAT NOW?

Following the summer of 2020, the North American Jewish community's commitment to racial justice work was the strongest it's been since the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. As the uncertainty of the stability of the world seemingly increases each day, the threats to Jewish safety and well-being grow in our mind's eye, and the collective dedication of the Black Lives Matter movement fades with time, these commitments have been difficult for many Jews and Jewish institutions to sustain. In addition, the October 7th massacre and subsequent war in Gaza have deeply strained relationships between many Jewish communities and their progressive movement partners for racial justice, leaving many Jews uncertain of whose lead to follow in this moment. We are living in a moment of great uncertainty about what the future of Jewish life in Israel, America, and around the world will look like in the coming years.

The Reparations Shabbat weekend is designed to be a supportive container to help a congregation re-orient itself to the racial justice work of the present moment.

Despite these many great unknowns, our commitment to the transformative power of racial justice work to help Jews and our fellow travelers is **unwavering**. We will continue to fight for the full dignity and equality of BIPOC Jews and our non-Jewish BIPOC neighbors and community members, and work to transform our societies into ones that live up to our highest democratic ideals of justice and liberty. Our movement's work on reparations began as a response to a direct

ask in 2019 from Representative Sheila Jackson Lee *z"l*, who said, "If you in the Jewish community want to partner with us [the Congressional Black Caucus], help us get that reparations bill [HR40] out of committee and move it forward. That's what we need you to do – do that – and we'll know you really want to build this partnership."

In January 2023, the entire Reconstructionist movement responded to Representative Lee's challenge by passing a historic reparations resolution, committing ourselves to the practice of reparations as a Jewish roadmap to societal healing and transformation. We dedicate the Reparations Shabbat weekend program to her memory, may it be for a blessing.

That work of reparations is just as important now as ever before. We invite you to host an immersive weekend of Reparations Shabbat, to take another deep dive into this visionary world of collective teshuvah and make moves as a community towards action for truth and reconciliation for the foundational harms of our past.

E. Program Descriptions

- **Title:** Reparations and Repairing the World: A Workshop on the Racial Wealth Gap
    - **Description:** Racial justice is a Jewish value. To help turn our commitments to equality into real equity, Reconstructing Judaism is proud to partner with Reparations4Slavery and Reparation Generation to bring you an intensive workshop on the United States' racial wealth gap. Ground yourself in Jewish understandings of *teshuvah, tzedek*, and *tikkun*. Discover your own place in the story of wealth generation, access to homeownership, and practices like redlining and neighborhood disinvestment that uphold institutionalized racism. Then put that learning into practice through housing repair, one avenue for reparations that affects people now, tangibly, and forever changes the lives of future generations.
    -
- **Title:** Reparations in Action: a live Zoom panel for Reparations Shabbat
    - *January 17, 2027*
      1-3 p.m. EST; 12-2 p.m. CST; 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. MST; 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. PST; 7-9 p.m. CET; 8-10 p.m. IST

      Reparations in Action: Moving from Resolving to Repairing is a live Zoom event hosted by Reconstructing

Judaism, presenting four congregational reparations projects as part of the **Reparations Shabbat weekend**.

As a model of **individual giving**, Rabbi Rachel Weiss will talk about how both members of JRC and the congregation as a whole came to support the Evanston Reparations Community Fund. For an example of **organizational giving**, Lucy Duncan will share how, as an act of reparations, The Green Street Monthly Meeting of Friends allocated endowment funds to create a legal fund for housing in Philadelphia. Rabbi Micah Weiss will describe a seminar he co-taught, investigating the history of RRC's move from the city to the suburbs as part of a process of **symbolic reparations**. And Rabbi Devorah Jacobson will speak about how creating and teaching the Stolen Beam curriculum has led to engaging with coalitions across the country in **political advocacy** for reparations.

We present these projects as examples of the variety of forms reparations can take. Join us for a frank, engaging, empowering conversation that can inspire action in your own local contexts.

3: Where to Next? Steps Towards Reparations

A. Identifying Next Steps for Your Congregation

Either a) pick **a site of reparations work to focus on** or b) identify at least one concrete next step in each of these three domains:

- **Personal**
  - Where are we on our individual journeys of how "engaging in deep learning has led us to understand that in response to acknowledging all that was stolen from enslaved people and their African American descendants, and the large degree to which our nation's economy has prospered from what was stolen, something is owed to African Americans"?
  - What might we learn together to support each of our individual journeys of transformation?
- **Communal**
  - What do we know of our own congregation's history of "the ways in which we have participated in or benefitted from racial injustices in our communities"?
  - Can we locate our own community in the histories of harm of our local context? How well do we know those histories?
- **Larger World**
  - Who is already leading the work in our community of identifying specific past harms and designing a

program that will effectively remedy the harm caused?

B. Resourcing Action

Browse the resources above to better resource your congregation's reparations work and to connect to other organizations and initiatives.