



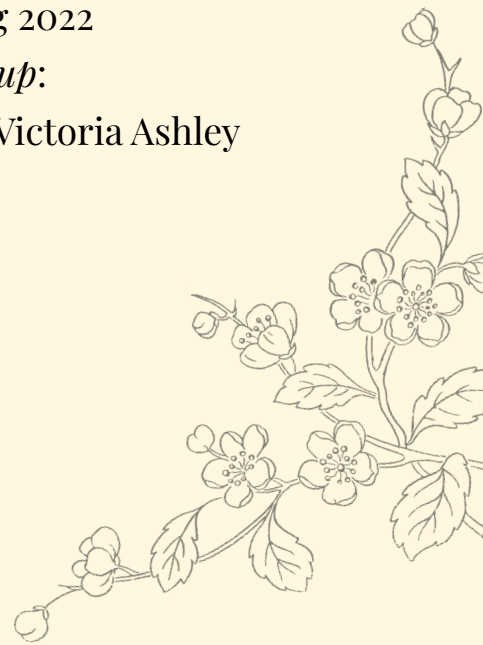
# Callie House

## Awareness & Advocacy Campaign

MLD-375 Creating Justice in Real Time, Spring 2022

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On behalf of the Callie House Advocacy Group, thank you too...

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# Callie House: History & Context

## History of Callie G. House

As well as can be determined given the lack of birth records for enslaved people, Callie House (née Guy) was born into slavery around 1861 in Rutherford County near Nashville – just a year or two shy of the start of the Union Army’s sweep through the Confederate state of Tennessee with the promises of *land* and *liberty*. As their campaign progressed, the Union increasingly relied on Blacks as a source of labor and recruited enslaved men – including House’s father, Tom Guy – as soldiers. And, with their aid, the Northern force was able to repel the Confederate cause within Tennessee, effectively destroying the fighting capability of the Army of Tennessee for the final year of the American Civil War in the city of Franklin, just south of Nashville. As American historian, Mary Frances Berry notes, however, though the war delivered on the promise of freedom for Blacks, it did not provide an immediate response to their suffering. For, their “fighting and the federal occupation devastated farms and communities in much of the surrounding area, including Rutherford County.”<sup>6</sup> And, to add an enduring insult to this overwhelming injury, once their victory was secured by 1865, the Union failed to honor its commitment to give freedmen allotments of the land they confiscated from Confederate forces.

It is within this period of chaos and confusion, triumph and tribulation, optimism and deep disappointment that House would come of age. By 22, she married William House, with whom she raised five children until William’s death. Thereafter, not unlike her mother and other women of her time experiencing similar familial circumstances, House became a washerwoman and seamstress to support her family, taking in laundry and, in exchange, often lending ear to the talk of post-war Rutherford County. Top of many conversations was a new idea for political action posed in a pamphlet by White journalist Walter Vaughan, entitled *Freedman’s Pension Bill: A Plea for American Freedmen*, which was sold throughout communities in the

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<sup>6</sup> Mary Frances Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2006), 10.



South and Midwest where ex-slaves lived.<sup>7</sup> It insisted that members of the newly formed Republic should:

Be just to the blacks of the days of slavery. Their recognition as citizens, worthy of compensation for past errors of the Government, will do more to elevate the fame of a great nation that dares to be just, even at a late hour, than all the story of its brilliant achievements in arms. The glory of American freedom will be made perfect in the pension of the surviving slaves of the antebellum period.<sup>8</sup>

Although distrustful of his motives, House paid careful attention as Vaughan goes on in his pamphlet to describe “how he gained support for ex-slave pension legislation,” and she begins to believe that something can be done to help those who toiled under the conditions of slavery for no pay, including black soldiers that played a significant role in the War and were experiencing difficulties “receiving the pension benefits that flowed freely to white veterans.”<sup>9</sup> And, with the support and connections of Isaiah Dickerson – schoolteacher, minister, and former associate of Vaughan who reinforced House’s belief that pension legislation could succeed – she began organizing a movement for ex-slave pensions and mutual assistance, and on August 7, 1897, she and Dickerson founded the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association (MRB&PA).

From that day on, life for the thirty-six-year-old laundress and seamstress transformed dramatically, as she stepped into public view as an activist and traveling promoter, working for the pension cause with a two-pronged mission: to petition Congress for the passage of legislation that would grant compensation for former slaves and to provide mutual aid and burial expenses. From 1897 to 1899, House traveled across the South, spreading these ideas of reparations, and gaining nearly 34,000 members for MRB&PA along the way. By the year 1900, membership would

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<sup>7</sup> “Walter R. Vaughan, former editor of the Omaha, Nebraska, Daily Democrat, native of Selma, Alabama, and white Democrat who first proposed the idea of ex-slave pensions. Wanting to indirectly increase the financial resources of whites in the South, he created a proposal that was patterned after the idea of the popular Union veterans’ pensions of the period.”

Ibid, 35.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory Laski, *Untimely Democracy: The Politics of Progress After Slavery*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 102.

<sup>9</sup> Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations*, 47.

swell to close to 300,000 people, making it the largest grassroots movement among African Americans at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Such growth, though celebrated among Black communities, did not go unnoticed by opposing forces, unfortunately. As made clear in a letter written on February 7, 1902, to the commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, the commissioner of pensions credited House's organization for "arousing false hope for 'reparation for historical wrongs, to be followed by inevitable disappointment, and probably distrust of the dominant race and the Government.'" <sup>10</sup> House and other national officers of MRB&PA would fall into the crosshairs of the US Justice and Post Office Departments who decided to have the postmaster general use his anti-fraud powers to suppress the association under the assumption that "cutting off their mail would strike a death blow to the movement."<sup>11</sup> Thus, between 1900 and 1920, House would face various attempts to harass and shut down MRB&PA for postal violations, several of which were led by the acting assistant attorney general for the post office, Harrison Barrett. Despite her efforts to fight back by letters and appeals to congress, communication among the Association was strangled, as leaders faced difficulties keeping in touch with local chapter members and their families. Nevertheless, their work in the field continued as best as it could, that is until legal action grew to overwhelming proportions.

In 1915, inspired by Homer Plessy's civil case victory in the lower court before ultimately losing at the appellate level, House gathered a legal team to push forward a class-action lawsuit in federal court for just over \$68 million against the US Treasury. The lawsuit, *Johnson v. McAdoo*, claimed that this sum, "collected between 1862 and 1868 as a tax on cotton, was due to appellants because the cotton had been produced by them and their ancestors as a result of their 'involuntary servitude.'" <sup>12</sup> Predictably, these claims – in what amounted to the first documented African American reparations litigation in the US on the federal level – were dismissed by the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia "on governmental immunity, and the U.S. Supreme Court, on appeal, sided with the lower court decision."<sup>13</sup> Given the impact of such a case, what House viewed as a reason to rejoice was noted as a cause for concern

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<sup>10</sup> Miranda Booker Perry, "No Pensions for Ex-Slaves How Federal Agencies Suppressed Movement To Aid Freedpeople," *Prologue Magazine*, Summer 2010, Vol. 42, No. 2,

<sup>11</sup> Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations*, 47.

<sup>12</sup> Miranda Booker Perry, "No Pensions for Ex-Slaves How Federal Agencies Suppressed Movement To Aid Freedpeople," <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/summer/slave-pension.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

for federal government officials who were now intent on breaking House's will, ending both her defiance and the pension cause once and for all. Subsequently, House was tried and – despite a lack of definitive evidence – convicted by an all-white male jury of mail fraud for allegedly claiming to recipients that reparations were forthcoming and jailed from November 1917 to August 1918.

While chapters of MRB&PA continued operating in her absence, House's conviction stopped all national legislative activities for the Ex-Slave Association. With time, however, even the local portions of the movement began to fade as the world as House knew it gave way to other concerns and configurations due to war, depressions, population migrations, and other major events sociopolitical. And, on June 6, 1928, House died from cancer at the age of 67. She was buried in the old Mt. Ararat Cemetery in Nashville in an unidentified grave.

There is very little of House that remains in the material world today. But what endures of hers, as her story hopefully confirms, is a lasting legacy of contributions to deep reservoirs of hope for the Black community. For, Mrs. House possessed the strength and the audacity to stand firm in her claims of citizenship rights and reparations for herself, freed people, as well as their descendants.<sup>14</sup>

## Context of the Work

In light of House's life, the purpose of The Callie House Advocacy Group's work is to build an awareness and advocacy campaign that will build local and national support around a posthumous pardon for her, collaboratively drafted with the Harvard Law School's Criminal Justice Institute and the William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice. For, we believe that a posthumous pardon for House would serve as dynamic, *symbolic* redemption. This is to say that such legislation – not unlike a monument or memorial – serves as a device that conveys particular social, political, and moral values, through their representational appeal to redemption and documented instantiation of a belief in a shared understating of what is just and right in all ages. In this way, a posthumous pardon serves as a means of effectively embedding a polity's values –for better or for worse, admittedly – in the lives of those who bear witness to the pardon until the values of that polity are understood and regarded as second nature. It bypasses the explicit use of rational faculties in favor of

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<sup>14</sup> Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations*, 187.

appealing to symbolism and narrative that have been invested with meaning and emotional significance to “shape the actions, habits, and character of citizens.”<sup>15</sup> Posthumous pardons, thus, operate among political symbols, rituals, mythologies, and traditions that stand between a citizen and a political structure, in much the same way that you would expect a cloth *veil* to stand between an observer and an object, abridging “historical details or aspects of the political apparatus, offering instead an idealized image of the system or a stylized representation of civic virtue.”<sup>16</sup> As American moral philosopher, Susan Neiman would add, such a symbolic gesture is less about the events that have transpired in the past or the people who are charged with remembering them, and more about “the values we deliberately choose to hold going forward.”<sup>17</sup>

What this means in the case of fostering awareness for a posthumous pardon for House, then, is that we have the opportunity to advocate on behalf of adding a strongly forward-looking dimension to a conception of justice that is dominantly backward-looking and restorative – *reparations* for Black Americans. For, pushing forward such a document will not only look toward making the world a better place going forward but also constructing a present that matches the past and speaks to the importance of restoring a balance and mending the torn fabric of the historical, political order. Holding this as our task at hand, we present to you the Callie House Awareness and Advocacy Campaign.

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<sup>15</sup> Ajume H. Wingo, *Veil Politics in Liberal Democratic States*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil*, (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019), 261.

# Evolution of the Work

It was course instructor Professor Cornell W. Brooks who heard House's story and recognized its potential to become a movement. Stories like the case of Cyntoia Brown<sup>18</sup>– a young woman from Tennessee who was granted clemency after serving 15 years for killing her assaulter– renewed Professor Brook's interest in clemency petitions, and he looked towards trusted colleagues at Harvard Law School to assist in a unique endeavor: to draft a posthumous presidential pardon and launch an advocacy campaign for the relatively unknown yet enormously impactful historical figure, Callie Guy House.

A united effort between Harvard Law's Criminal Justice Institute (HJCI), MLD-375 graduate students, and various national partners resulted in a dynamic and agile project which transformed as follows:

## Memorandum of Understanding: Draft #1

Draft #1 of the project's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) described two main "Project Objectives and Scope":

1. Create a posthumous pardon briefing collaboratively drafted by the Harvard Criminal Justice Institute and the William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice.
2. Create an advocacy campaign that garners the attention of President Joseph Biden's administration and builds support for a presidential pardon.

The objectives described in MOU Draft #1 gave our team the sense that the semester would be dedicated to drafting a clemency petition and seeing that it reached President Biden's desk. However, through course conversations related to the Arc of Advocacy, as well as team members' experiences in the advocacy and legislative spheres, we came to realize that a dedicated awareness and advocacy campaign would be necessary before legislative action should be made. Likewise, due to the masses of information delivered to President Biden on a daily basis, there must be excitement and buy-in around House and her story in order for the pardoning petition to be

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<sup>18</sup> Gafas (2019),  
<https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/07/us/tennessee-cyntoia-brown-granted-clemency/index.html>

achievable. Additionally, our initial conversations with the HJCI clients revealed that a pardoning petition had been previously drafted by their team (See Appendix E). It soon became apparent that a different approach than that stated in the original MOU Draft #1 would be necessary.

During the beginning stages of our work, we also became aware of the decentralized and informal network of stakeholders in House's story. Although crucial historical documentation of House had been put together in M. Berry's *My Face is Black is True* book, knowledge of House's legacy is extremely limited. Therefore, the team made the decision to prioritize awareness of House's story through media and coalition-building efforts. MOU Draft #1 transformed into a multifaceted advocacy, awareness, and pardoning campaign, as follows:

## Memorandum of Understanding: Draft #2

Draft #2 sought to shift the scope of the work to be more aligned with what we saw as critical in moving the movement for House forward:

1. Create an advocacy campaign that garners the attention of President Joseph Biden's administration and builds support for a presidential pardon.
2. Develop online and offline strategy to create traction
  - a. Build social media platforms to maintain a steady drumbeat
  - b. Design and execute community forum to engage Harvard community and beyond in the conversation
3. Develop national partnerships to amplify the message and highlight Callie House's story.
  - a. Draft and post Op-Ed focused on Callie House & reparations
  - b. Build partnerships with reputable organizations (i.e. NCBW, NACWC, Vanderbilt University, etc...)

With MOU Draft #2 settled, the campaign project began to grow, with Professor Sullivan from HJCI continuing to serve as our main client, and other notable advisors brought into the group.

## Client, Advisors, & National Partners

### Client

From the onset, Professor Ron Sullivan from Harvard Law's Criminal Justice Institute represented the project's primary client. His responsibilities included, "helping facilitate site visit(s) and interviews, providing periodic feedback on the team's direction, troubleshooting as necessary if potential problems arise, and working with the team to arrange a final presentation to relevant staff of the team's recommendations." Professor Sullivan will facilitate the delivery of the pardoning petition once our team has built momentum around House's story and legacy. The team also hopes to rely on his experiences as a Washington Post contributing writer in order to publish a drafted op-ed (See Appendix F).

### Advisors

Our team has received extremely valuable advice and instruction from a diverse and knowledgeable collection of advocates in the field, including:

- Jasmine Rand- A practicing attorney, media strategist, and impassioned advocate, known for her civil rights work and representation of Trayvon Martin's family and Michael Brown's family, and her current work as the international legal and media strategist for the George Floyd legal team<sup>19</sup>. Rand met with our group to discuss social media strategies, encouraging our group to think about branding, slogans, and strategic legislative roll-out.
- Lynn Dymally (NCBW)- As a lifelong learner, educator, and social justice advocate, Ms. Dymally serves as the co-President and CEO of the National Congress of Black Women (NCBW) and acted as an active participant throughout the campaign project<sup>20</sup>. As a lawyer, educational advisor, and daughter of the celebrated politician Mervyn M. Dymally, Ms. Dymally supported us in our coalition-building efforts and she helped imagine future advocacy projects, such as potentially installing a bust of House in the Tennessee Capitol building. Ms. Dymally and the NCBW represent a vast network of Black female leaders in the US and beyond. Championed by Ms. Dymally, the NCBW will work with our client and other national partners to build political momentum around the House campaign.

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<sup>19</sup> "About Rand Law," *Rand Law*, <https://therandlawfirm.com>.

<sup>20</sup> <https://lasentinel.net/lynn-dymally-elected-chair-of-national-congress-of-black-women.html>



- Erika Swaringen (NACWC)- Representing the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC), Erika is an expert student advisor and communications facilitator. With Erika’s advice in mind, our group worked to improve our project plan and main campaign goals. Erika was crucial in setting up a meeting between our group, NACWC President Andrea Brook Smith, and university students from TSU’s NACWC chapter, as described in the “Coalition Building” section. The NACWC has a youthful and passionate network of participants prepared to take on House campaign social media advertising, university outreach, and other grassroots events.

## National Partners

Several national organizations hold the capacity and excitement to keep momentum going around House’s legacy and petitioning efforts after the semester is over.

- Harvard Law School Criminal Justice Institute
- Vanderbilt African American Diaspora Studies Department Callie House Research Center
- National Congress of Black Women (NCBW)
- National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC)
- Nashville partners, including:
  - Brenda Haywood, Nashville Deputy Mayor of Community Engagement
  - Ashford Huges, Metro Nashville Public Schools DEI Executive
  - The Equity Alliance



# Building a Campaign

## Social Media

As compelling as Callie Guy House's story is, the movement and momentum needed to grant a posthumous pardon are as strong as the advocacy campaigning is. Our immediate thoughts in conversation with our group and Professor Ron Sullivan was to uplift House's story using social media. The Arc of Advocacy tells us that identifying injustice through research, history and moral framing is important, building out a coalition and developing media and narrative campaigns. All of these advocacy principles are built into our social media and narrative-building campaigns. We will take you through three of the advocacy principles and how they manifested in our creation of building a campaign that is both extending knowledge of House's story and involving the wider public in the movement.

### *Identifying Injustice Through Research History and Moral Framing*

In her book *My Face is Black is True* (2005) historian Mary Frances Berry documents the life of Callie Guy House who, as we know, was a former enslaved person and became the leader of the largest grassroots reparations movement in American history. Her scholarship has had many impacts including uplifting a story never told before, giving the conversation on reparations a birthplace, strengthening the value of grassroots movements, and allowing a new historical female figure to be at the forefront of a conversation on prominent African American leaders. Berry's work has fueled conversations on House's story, but predominantly in research fields of post-secondary institutions. On a wider public scale, House's story is still greatly unknown. As a team, we read this book and decided that it would be the best decision to use Twitter, which has an infamous record of advancing movements with hashtags and high user engagement, to tweet snippets of the book that are easily digestible. Accessibility is a strong point of using Twitter in this way because the public does not need to read the book in its entirety or at all to learn more about her story. Additionally, the general public should not have to pay to hear this story, and as outlined in Victoria's vision-making assignment, this book should also be purchased in large copies by Harvard and other higher education institutions to be used in multiple disciplines.

### *Building out a Coalition/Developing Media Campaigns and Narrative Campaigns*

The development of our media campaign required a great deal of planning and strategic engagement. Early on in creating the Instagram and Twitter account the social media team created a schedule of when we would tweet, what we would tweet, and who we would try to engage with on the platform.

Firstly, we decided three days a week we would tweet out the historical information, and digestible quotes that the audience could engage with. On other days, we would find relevant news sources, or events to tweet in connection with House's reparations movement.

Secondly, we needed to focus our tweets and determine what point of view our accounts would be telling this story from. We decided to frame it as the Callie House Advocacy Group giving information on her story. Both social media accounts began in March, and we started our movement with a Women's history month post which took off with many likes and retweets. House's story resonated with so many, especially Black Americans remembering her, or starting their journey knowing her, as the mother of a movement. As a note to stay true to historical facts, most of our tweets are direct quotes and cited from historian Berry's book, and we may tweet within a thread to ask the audience how they felt about it. Some aspects of life Berry described during House's lifetime felt resonant to today's cultural climate in America, and we wondered how that felt for our followers. We also tweeted posters created by us that gave an overview of House's life. This was for quick reading, and if anyone wanted to share it would be easy to take a screenshot and send it to wider audiences for informal learning. Additionally, we continued to tweet using the same hashtags of #reparations #CallieHouse #blm and #DontPlayWithHouseMoney. These did not necessarily take off beyond our account, but we will continue to use them in our campaigning. A huge part of media campaigning is this aspect of informal learning. In a movement, there is always more to know about the campaign and what is happening on the inside, and the general public can be of assistance. The main problem is how to keep the information flow consistent enough that people continue to care about your movement and see their role in it, and where they can find the information. The learning curve to understanding House's story first before signing onto something as grand as a posthumous pardon is one that we understand deeply. However, we hope that both of our social media platforms are spaces where people can easily find information about her and after that, we know House's justice will set itself.

The third aspect of our strategic planning was who to engage with on our platforms. Of course, we would hope that everyone who has a Twitter or Instagram account would want to engage with this story, but we did have to start with following certain people in order to gain momentum. Not only did this include Professor Cornell Brooks and Ron Sullivan, and some professors we knew would be interested to hear, and or retweet her story. It was imperative that we followed journalists, and social justice advocates so they could potentially see House's story on their feed. Our visionary minds followed Ava Duvernay, still thinking it could be possible that she wants to make a movie on Callie Guy House's story and legacy. We followed Jasmine Rand, with whom we spoke about the logistics and strategy of using social media, hashtags, and symbols in a movement. We also followed reparations-focused accounts generally speaking, which may have later come up in our nuanced discussion on reparations – all useful information to understanding the broader context of the movement.

### *Situating a Campaign within a Broader Movement or History*

Reparations movements are not easy to talk about, especially in America. In a broader context, we are looking at House's story, which is that of a formerly enslaved person looking for compensation and support. Today's reparations discussion takes on much more of what it means to be Black in America regardless of lineage to American slavery. The larger conversation on how reparations should be compensated, who should get it, and if money is enough to compensate for the legacy of slavery presents questions that America is grappling with. This came up with our social media advocacy as we had many people giving their opinions on how reparations looks for them. The conversation was divisive, and at times violent. Many right-wing, conservative Black groups came to Twitter to urge our group to cease using this Twitter account and using House's name in progressive, democratic conversations on reparations. Moving forward in the conversation on reparations requires a convergence of interests for people who desire to be compensated for the labor of their ancestors and those who insist that people burdened by systemic inequalities are also compensated accordingly. Our social media campaign hopes to continue dialogue and discourse in this area.

# Coalition Building

## Nashville, Tennessee Trip

With the aforementioned transformations to the project's MOU, new opportunities to invest in House's local community came about, giving our team an opportunity to develop a coalition-building excursion and create national relationships. In designing the trip, our team recognized the importance of connecting with House's familial roots and hometown, leading to an interest in Nashville, Tennessee. A visit to Nashville represented an excellent opportunity to identify grassroots work already being done in House's honor and to show Nashvillians their stake in the campaign by uplifting a hometown hero.

Research prior to the trip revealed a few recognitions of House, such as Vanderbilt University houses a Callie House Research Center within its African American Diaspora Studies Department; There is an unmarked gravesite where House is believed to rest at Mount Ararat Cemetery; And some local historians have worked to preserve House's story (See Appendix B). Beyond these symbolic efforts, House's story is seldom known throughout the area. As explained later in the "Proposing a Path Forward" section, our team hopes that uplifting House's story locally to Nashville can serve as a significant lever of momentum.

The Nashville coalition-building trip included several meetings and lessons learned, including:

- Vanderbilt Callie House Research Center (CHRC): Dr. Tracy D. Sharpley-Whittling and Dr. Gilman W. Whittling
  - The naming of the CHRC was a symbolic effort, meant to connect the work with African American history, Nashvillian locality, and both womanhood and motherhood. The CHRC is not exclusively focused on research pertaining to House or reparations, but African American research more broadly.
  - House's story is rarely taught or remembered throughout the Vanderbilt and Nashville communities. House is taught in some AADS courses, although no courses specifically focus on her or her work. CHRC partners explained that because the topic of reparations is not typically associated with the 19th century, bringing House into that conversation is

not standard. Student turnover is also high, diminishing student capacity to invest in House's story.

- Standing symbols of House's life are extremely dispersed throughout the county. The CHRC has been contacted on a number of occasions to provide information on where to find a plaque or grave marking for House, but none such exist.
- The CHRC believes a centralized website is a worthwhile and important process in maintaining House's legacy. The CHRC has the capacity to house the website within its domain and can then bring scholars to House as a historical figure.
- Because the CHRC is housed within Vanderbilt, the CHRC believes that a coalition of universities is also a worthwhile endeavor. The CHRC recommends pulling in Fisk, Tennessee State University (TSU), and other HBCUs. We might advertise publishing opportunities to university students through the AADS Journal, sharing student perspectives on economic justice in the context of House's legacy.
- Beyond the work being done at the CHRC, Prof and Dr. gave the team a tour of the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center, where we witnessed a strong, flourishing community of Black university students. Vanderbilt boasts a broad network of excellent Black scholarship, both from students and highly regarded professors. While the CHRC is not currently prepared to spearhead an advocacy campaign, tapping into Vanderbilt's scholarship and student networks is extremely valuable.
- Nashville Deputy Mayor of Community Engagement's Office- Reverend Brenda Haywood





- Deputy Mayor Reverend Haywood was extremely enthusiastic about our project and House’s story. She is deeply motivated by spirituality and the importance of our work.
- Reverend Haywood represents a crucial window into Nashville’s religious communities, as she has ties to an immense network of local clergy and around 900 churches throughout the state.
- Reverend Haywood’s longstanding relationship with Mayor John Cooper can be useful to the campaign. We must caution that, as explained later in the “Political Analysis” section, local Nashville politics may dissuade Mayor Cooper from participating in the reparations-related aspects of House’s legacy. However, there are various opportunities for the Mayor’s office to celebrate House as a local hero. Relying on Reverend Haywood’s relationship with Mayor Cooper is crucial.



- Metro Nashville Public Schools Executive, Ashford Hughes Sr.
  - Mr. Hughes offered several suggestions for other worthwhile contacts around the state and beyond, captured in Appendix A: Partner Contacts.
  - Although Mr. Hughes does want to learn more about House and her story, he was cautious about bringing a reparations campaign into TN. In his perspective, the progressive attitude in Nashville only goes so far. He recommended leveraging the “feel good” side of House’s history versus the reparations aspect.
  - Mr. Hughes explained that MNPS has its own curriculum team separate from the state education board, so finding avenues to include House as a Nashvillian historical figure is possible. The campaign should consider using Black MNPS teachers as a proxy to introduce House’s story.

- NACWC Meeting at TSU- President Andrea Brook Smith
  - The NACWC meeting was a lively and engaging session on House’s legacy and ideas for future work. The team captured many contacts, as included in Appendix A: Partner Contacts.
  - The NACWC meeting was attended by both TSU and Vanderbilt University students, representing a coalition-building opportunity. The NACWC’s network of young students can also provide social media support as the campaign spreads into youth-facing platforms like TikTok.
  - Nashville’s Centennial Park has a Suffrage statue which accomplishes similar goals to our potential House statue advocacy project with NCBW
  - A discussion on reparations and economic justice ensued, with university students reflecting:
    - “The debt needs to be paid for our service to society, so people like minorities who built this society and have a debt of blood, sweat, and tears must be repaid. With issues like gentrification and redlining, it’s all connected”
    - “When I think of reparations, I think of generational wealth. Growing up, my favorite show used to be *Gossip Girl* and while the main character’s grandma was buried with a \$20k bracelet, mine was a sharecropper. So it's really a generational issue.”
    - “People know about reparations but when it comes to an equal playing field between white and Black people they’ll always find a way to avoid the topic.”
    - “We do know what reparations are but now you’ve opened up the platform for more discussion so we want to help and use our own platform to support the Callie House project.”



- “Young people want to know how this issue relates to *us* and as students, we want to be active so we just need to know how to spread the word about Callie.”
- “Actually white students are the ones we need to make this story palatable to and emphasize it to them because we already know what reparations means to us.”
- Trip partner- Lynn Dymally, co-President and CEO of NCBW
  - Throughout the entire Nashville trip, our group was joined by NCBW co-President and CEO, Ms. Lynn Dymally. As previously described in the “Advisors” section, Ms. Dymally is an educator, lawyer, advisor, and experienced political advocate, who assisted us in our coalition-building efforts.
  - For the purposes of the Nashville trip, Ms. Dymally served as an NCBW representative and a future co-leader on the Callie House campaign. Ms. Dymally has offered the NCBW’s network of impassioned female advocates, connections with national political leaders, and experience in statue-installations as future pathways for advocacy.

By meeting with these core groups, we hoped to spread our advocacy efforts into several spheres of influence, including Higher education and research institutions, religious and spiritual networks, political and legislative spheres, public education, and national organizations. Our Nashville trip taught us that awareness of House in her own backyard is unfortunately limited, but excitement is certainly present. There are unique considerations for advocating for a figure connected to reparations in the American South, but, as later described in the “Political Analysis” section, there are viable projects. Overall, the experience in Nashville was a coalition-building effort that showed us the grassroots work being done locally in House’s honor, as well as promising levers for awareness and campaign momentum moving forward.

## Community Forum Events

To provide more space for public engagement with the story of Callie House and the history of the reparations movement we found it pertinent to plan a community-focused event. The breakdown of community engagement in an advocacy campaign should be within the realm of micro-, meso-, and macro-. This framework



was utilized in our campaign planning by envisioning the micro-level be accomplished through a Harvard community event given we are a team of Harvard University students working on a project overseen by the Harvard Law School and Harvard Kennedy School; ideating the meso-level would be a city-level event with two Boston City Councilwoman, Julia Mejia, and Tania Fernandes Anderson, who have pushed for reparations at the local level; and planning a community forum event with US Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, a prominent proponent for reparations, that would cater to the national public by broadening the scale of the conversation to the United States and abroad.

**LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING WORKSHOP**

JOIN US TO LEARN HOW TO DRAFT TRANSFORMATIVE LEGISLATION AND GAIN MORE KNOWLEDGE ON THE UNITED STATES THE BILL REFERRAL PROCESS

This workshop will be led by,  
**Janice Bashford, former  
Capitol Hill Senior Legal  
Counsel**

**LOCATION: WEXNER G02  
SEMINAR ROOM**  
**DATE: MONDAY, APRIL 25TH**  
**WORKSHOP TIME: 12 PM - 2PM**  
**LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED!**

BLACK STUDENT UNION  
HARVARD Kennedy School  
Center for Public LEADERSHIP

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In practice, the micro-level event transpired as a Harvard community Legislative Drafting Workshop. The intention of this workshop was to equip Harvard students with the practical tools and knowledge to empower them to turn transformative ideas into real change. Within the Harvard community, there are daily conversations amongst current and future world leaders where innovative thinking is put at the forefront yet intellectual conversation and the ideas formed from it are nothing unless acted upon. Thus, when thinking about an advocacy campaign for change, or more specifically reparations, there is the need to know tactical methods for achieving such a desired shift in the status quo.

The legislative drafting workshop was facilitated by Janice Bashford. Bashford is currently a Senior Policy Advisor at Arnold & Porter LLP, a Tier 1 law firm recognized globally as a No. 1 in ranking. Before working in corporate law, Bashford had 15 years of legislative drafting experience under her belt as former Legislative Director and Chief Legal Counsel for Congresswoman Karen Bass and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. In her time working in these two different offices amongst



other involvements on Capitol Hill, Bashford had partook in the creation of hundreds of bills, most notably is HR 40 the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act.

During the legislative drafting workshop, she offered students insight on how to be tactical when aiming to achieve the passage of transformative legislation. Advice consisted of building coalitions with likely and unlikely partners, building off the past for solutions to the present, and plugging into moral narratives as a tool for garnering support.

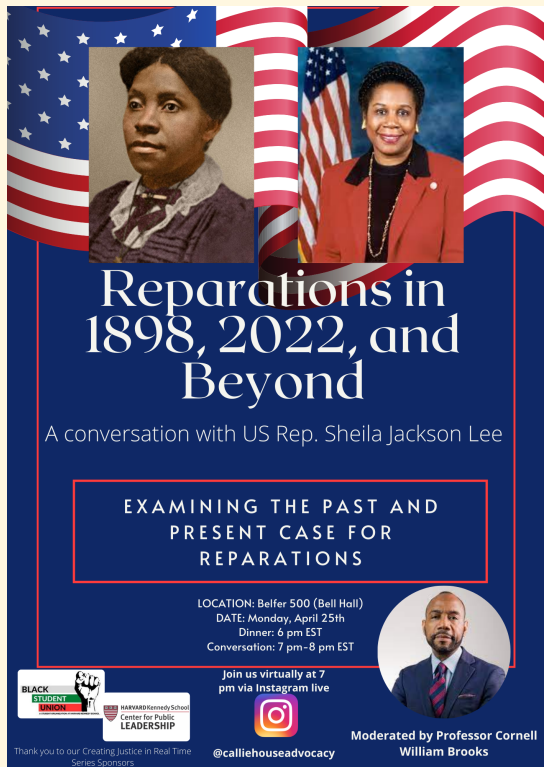


Overall, students had a positive experience in this meso-level event providing guidelines for implementing transformative legislation. Now, these students who will go off into the world as changemakers for a more equitable and liberated future have the practical tools and knowledge necessary to strategically enact change. Most importantly, the event offered a segue into national efforts to create transformative change for economic justice for Black Americans and the need to give visibility to the story of a hidden figure such as Callie House.





Moreover, the legislative drafting workshop laid the foundation for the following community event with US Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee where Professor Cornell William Brooks moderated a discussion on the case for reparations during the Harvard Kennedy School Center for Public Leadership sponsored event titled “Reparations in 1898, 2022, and Beyond”.



The in-person aspect of the event was limited to people with Harvard affiliation due to Covid-19 event policies, yet it was live-streamed via Instagram live for the general public to be engaged as well.

The conversation focused on the leadership of women in the reparations movement, more specifically the legacy of Callie House and the living legacy of Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee who has held the torch in continuously reintroducing HR 40, a US Congress House bill for a Commission to Study and Develop Proposals for Reparations, since the passing of US Rep. John Conyers Jr. who had originally introduced the legislation in 1989.

In the introduction of the event, Professor Brooks engaged the audience by opening the floor for participants in-house to elevate various perspectives relevant to reparations. In partnership, Professor Brooks, Lindsey Batteast, and Didier Dumerjean presented the audience with the story of Callie House. A woman who was a fearless leader and spearheaded a 300,000 following in the early 1900s reparations movement, a following that isn't even easily done in today's digital age with the aid of social media.

When Sheila Jackson Lee, was asked about how she reconciles with the fact the United States



government immobilized the efforts of Callie House and quintessentially robbed Black Americans of their first chance at economic justice, she said the following words.



“Not on my watch will I allow her voice to be silenced again... I will work until the very end to do what is right, historically” - US Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee

These words coming from the Congresswoman made clear her commitment to elevate our advocacy campaign for a posthumous pardon for Callie House and be a partner moving forward in any additional initiatives under the scope of reparations for Black people in America.

From these events we were able to solidify strong potential in a partner at the national scale, meeting the macro-level needs of this advocacy campaign for Callie House and the broader reparations movement. The meso-level in using local changemakers in the reparations movement to elevate the story of Callie House was not able to happen during our time on the project due to scheduling conflicts, yet there are also potential partners who can elevate the story of Callie House and add fuel to the larger reparations movement, as we work on this pathway to restorative justice that should first start with the posthumous pardon of House.

The potential partners in Boston, who through communication are already aware of this advocacy campaign, consist of Julia Mejia and Tania Fernandes Anderson.

Both women are members of the Boston City Council, and both women have been a part of the city-level push to start a commission for the proposal of reparations.



By way of background, Julia Mejia was elected to the city of Boston Council in 2020<sup>21</sup>. Since her start on the council, she has advocated for a commission to bring visibility to Boston's role in slavery and brainstorm solutions on how harms perpetrated against Black Bostonians from slavery to jim crow to modern-day systemic racism can be reversed<sup>22</sup>. Her city council partner in this endeavor has been Tania Fernandes Anderson.

Tania Fernandes Anderson was elected to the Boston City Council in 2021. As an elected official passionate about economic opportunity and mobility, Anderson co-proposed the commission for the study and development of reparations<sup>23</sup>.

This team is a resource in the case the coalition would like to utilize the strategy of creating satellite movements at the city level across pockets of the country in order to ease the task of garnering national support for the posthumous pardon of Callie Guy House and initiatives thereafter under the scope of reparations.

Altogether, from these community forum events, political figures on our side are US Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, Boston City council Member Julia Mejia, and Boston City Council Member Tania Fernandes Anderson.



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<sup>21</sup> "Julia Mejia." *Boston.gov*, 7 Jan. 2020, <https://www.boston.gov/departments/city-council/julia-mejia>.

<sup>22</sup> "Commission on Slavery Reparations Proposed in Boston." *Boston.com*, The Boston Globe, 1 Feb. 2022, <https://www.boston.com/news/massachusetts/2022/02/01/boston-commission-slavery-reparations/>.

<sup>23</sup> "Tania Fernandes Anderson." *Boston.gov*, 7 Dec. 2021, <https://www.boston.gov/departments/city-council/tania-fernandes-anderson>.

# Proposing a Path Forward

## Political Analysis

Assessing the prospects of a posthumous pardon, and determining the path forward requires, first, an analysis of the political context within which the pardon is situated. As such, we offer up a political landscape analysis that needs to remain centered on the overall approach for the campaign, and the pardon itself.

In the U.S., compensatory reparation for harm is not at all a new concept. In Professor Cornell William Brooks' and Professor Linda Bilmes' forthcoming research publication, "Restorative Justice: US Norms for Compensating Harms & Implications for Restitution to African Americans"<sup>24</sup>, we are reminded that the government, both at the federal and local level, spends hundreds of billions of dollars yearly on programs providing compensation for a number of harms, such as programs for workplace injuries, displacement through trade, veterans affairs, and Indian affairs. Furthermore, funding for these programs is also accepted in federal practice. To be clear, we don't believe their work to be saying that these programs as currently designed and implemented are just or ideal. However, the precedent suggests there is a capacity to be able to grapple with this idea of repairing the harms of chattel slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation writ large, and modern-day forms of slavery, including mass incarceration.

Yet, though the conversation around reparations for slavery has been a recurring topic in American politics, instituting a national program to repair these harms has been hard-fought but never won. In 2020, propelled by a dual pandemic, COVID-19, and the global reckoning around racism, and informed by H.R. 40, the national conversation around reparations has intensified. First introduced in the late 80s by the late Representative John Conyers, H.R. 40, now led by Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, would establish a 15-member commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African-Americans. Within an 18-month period from

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<sup>24</sup> Hughes, "A new HKS faculty study reimagines reparations using existing—and widely used—federal compensation mechanisms", <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/policy-topics/fairness-justice/new-hks-faculty-study-reimagines-reparations-using>



formation, the commission would be obliged to offer up its recommendations to Congress. During the 2020 Presidential Primary Debates, the topic was recurring. Many candidates, including President-elect Joe Biden, named their support for a commission on reparations. However, over a year later, various bills around reparations have seen no traction in the House or Senate. President Biden has cited concerns about Senate support for these bills as the primary reason for not pursuing it at this time.<sup>25</sup> Senior White House Advisor Cedric Richmond has indicated that though this is the case, President Biden's White House would begin work around repairing harms now.<sup>26</sup> Still, many questions—such as who will get reparations, how will they be distributed, and where will the funding come from—remain, and serve as the basis for inaction at the federal level.

Preempting federal action, at the local level, we have examples of states and cities that have passed reparations plans to remediate these harms. Evanston, Illinois, in early March 2021, became the first U.S. city to make reparations a reality, providing each qualifying household \$25,000 for housing repair or the purchase of a new property. Funded through an excise tax on recreational marijuana and donations, the city has promised to deliver \$10 million to its African American residents over the next 10 years.<sup>27</sup> In St. Petersburg, Florida, following a study led by the University of South Florida, five recommendations were given to the city, including “Examine and initiate actions steps to reparations to address disparities.”<sup>28</sup> In December 2021, the City Council approved a reparations program that would differentially invest in affordable housing, educational opportunities, and economic development activity for its African American residents. Despite backlash from the conservative state, the City Council has maintained its position and is moving ahead with its plan. Similarly in California, a two-year reparations task force created in 2020 recently decided on which of its Black residents would be eligible for reparations.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Daniels, “*Biden privately tells lawmakers not to expect much on reparations legislation*,” <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/06/02/biden-reparations-tulsa-491607>

<sup>26</sup> Allen, “*Biden adviser Cedric Richmond sees first-term progress on reparations*,” <https://www.axios.com/2021/03/01/biden-cedric-richmond-reparations>

<sup>27</sup> City of Evanston, “*Evanston Local Reparations*,” <https://www.cityofevanston.org/government/city-council/reparations>

<sup>28</sup> Parnel, “*City council votes to address structural racism in St. Pete following USF study*,” <https://www.wtsp.com/article/news/politics/city-council-structural-racism-st-pete-usf-study/67-2820e1e2-8ffb-495b-9e2f-129c066b0210>

<sup>29</sup> Karlamangla, “*California Task Force Votes to Offer Reparations Only to Descendants of Enslaved People*,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/30/us/california-reparations.html>

Given we find ourselves in Massachusetts at the beginning of this campaign, understanding our local context is critical in building a foundation that is solid. In the U.S., Massachusetts has often been deemed a seat of progressive politics. Though the state generally elects Republican governors, albeit moderate in their politics, the majority of its state legislature is aligned with the Democratic party, with all of its Congressional seats and both U.S. senators being Democrats. Across the state, cities are proposing pathways forward in remediating their role in the institution of slavery. The Town of Amherst's Council, during the summer of 2021, voted to create a fund to pay reparations.<sup>30</sup> With this vote in place, they will now begin to collect contributions for reparatory work and decide on a financing plan going forward. Like the state of California, the city of Boston, under City Councilor Julia Mejia's leadership, has proposed the formation of a commission that would, within two years, offer up its recommendations for remediating harms perpetrated by the city during the era of chattel slavery.

Though we hope greatly because of the examples being put forth by these cities and states alike, when we veered our attention to Tennessee, the home state of Callie House, we were met with some stark reminders. In particular, we began to grapple with what it means when a state has a Republican trifecta. The majority of pushback towards reparations programs comes from conservative politics, politicians, and the media. Endeavoring to locate such a cause in the state, from our seat, is a non-starter. Looking to Nashville, where House is interred, we find a relatively less conservative local government. However, we were reminded by a few of our partners on the ground that the ruling class of the city comes from a political dynasty, of which the father is a "well-known racist." We have no reason to believe that somehow Nashville would take a much different stance than the state overall. However, we also believe that while they wouldn't stand with reparations, they would be inclined to stand behind Callie House as a Nashvillian and seek ways to commemorate her within the city.

## Designing a Path Forward

We should hold on to the ideal of reparations while pushing forward Callie House's name. Recentering House's name in the struggle for reparations seems like low-hanging fruit. Still, we maintain that we should endeavor to get her name in the

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<sup>30</sup> AP, "*Amherst creates fund to pay reparations to Black residents*," <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/amherst-creates-fund-pay-reparations-black-residents-rcna1273>



mainstream first because it will catalyze a broader conversation about who she was, why her work was important, why she is deserving of a pardon, and why reparations must remain a central conversation until it becomes reality. Our understanding of the national and local political context leads us to recommend a bifurcated strategy to advance this cause:

1. Amplifying Callie House's Story
2. Connecting to Reparations & Economic Justice

House's story tells itself. Given our current global context and the continued reckoning around racism, telling the story of her unjust treatment will mobilize a base of people to ask for justice. While we are clear that we cannot remove the idea of reparations from Callie House as much as we cannot remove Callie House from the work she led, we need to differentiate the ask, by creating some space between the cause and the injustice she faced. This will enable us to garner a large enough base to propel her forward, and, ultimately, garner President Biden's attention towards her posthumous pardon. Once we have been able to garner a large enough base, and only then, we should reconnect her story to the movement for reparations today. We should offer a perspective as to what she would have envisioned for African Americans in the U.S. Leveraging her posthumous pardon, assuming it's granted, would serve as an example of the perfect victim, ensuring that no longer can people be victimized for taking up this cause. It would ensure a safety net for those who advocate for reparations.

# Implementation Roadmap

Below, we offer up a map that builds on the momentum garnered throughout this semester:

Amplifying Callie House's Story	Connecting to Reparations & Economic Justice
<p><i>Broaden social media presence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to amplify Callie House's story on Twitter &amp; Instagram.</li> <li>Leverage sample tweets and posts (<i>Appendix ?</i>) to engage the audience regularly on these platforms.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Partner with reparations organizations across the U.S.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage aggregated lists of orgs. and contact info to begin dialogue about partnership (<i>Appendix C</i>).</li> </ul>
<p><i>Leverage Vanderbilt CHRC partnership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue conversation with Dr. Tracey Sharpley-Whiting at Vanderbilt about the prospects of creating a site amplifying Callie House's story.</li> <li>Utilize the media package (<i>Appendix F</i>) as a frame for the site.</li> <li>Consider connecting with her surviving family, inviting them to tell their story of what she means to them.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Tell House's vision for reparations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage partnerships with Callie House experts and reparations orgs. to formally tie her history and her vision for change to the present day.</li> <li>Record short video reels with partners to link Callie House's story to their work. Post on Twitter &amp; IG.</li> <li>Consider doing a press release once a substantial list of partners has been confirmed.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Partner with Callie House experts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Archivists and Historians (<i>Appendix B</i>) have studied Callie House's legacy. Leveraging their expertise on her life and work can be done in two distinct ways:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite them to post quick snippets on Twitter &amp; IG.</li> <li>Invite them to record a collective video to be posted on the website created in partnership with Vanderbilt.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>Deepen ties to state &amp; local governments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct research on California, Massachusetts, Illinois, and Florida to identify who within the city councils and state legislatures have been spearheading the call for commissions on reparations.</li> <li>Leverage national partners to quickly identify these legislators.</li> <li>Reach out to formally get their support and buy-in to amplify Callie House's story in the movement for reparations.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Leverage connection with Nashville local government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue conversation with Deputy Mayor Brenda Haywood regarding the prospects of commemorating Callie House with a plaque somewhere in the city (<i>Appendix A</i>).</li> <li>• Aligning this work to fall on the anniversary of House’s death would be ideal for amplifying her legacy.</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Roll out the Petition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the release of the Op-Ed and coalition building amongst partners across the country, the clemency petition for Callie House must be submitted to the Department of Justice and released to the public. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Proposed Release Date: June 6, 2023</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A press conference should follow the release of the clemency petition. Run-of-show planning for the press conference is at the discretion of the coalition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Proposed Press Conference Date: June 6, 2023</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>Preparation for Media Coverage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All coalition members must complete media training because the release of the Op-Ed will not only spark momentum for the posthumous pardon for Callie House, it will also add more fuel to the reparations movement as a whole.</li> <li>• The coalition should be ready for a media frenzy on what the story of Callie House symbolically represents. If the US Government gives Callie House a posthumous pardon, then they are quintessentially accepting their wrongdoing not only for the wrongful conviction of a Black leader but also for killing what could've been a successful push for reparations if it had not been immobilized.</li> <li>• Moreover, the coalition must be ready to respond to tangential questions about what reparations should be and who should be the recipients of reparations or decide whether such questions should be met with a reiteration of the current priority being a posthumous pardon Callie House and everything else can be discussed after we reach this first stop on the pathway to restorative justice.</li> </ul>

## Appendix A: Partner Contacts

Partner	Area(s) of Support	Contact
Professor Ron Sullivan, Harvard Law	Legal advising, petition roll-out, publication support through Washington Post	Faculty Assistant to Prof. Sullivan: Kekely Dansouh <a href="mailto:kdansouh@law.harvard.edu">kdansouh@law.harvard.edu</a>
Lynn Dymally, NCBW	NCBW co-President, and CEO; political networking; public historical displays; advertising	Lynn V. Dymally <a href="mailto:lynndymally@gmail.com">lynndymally@gmail.com</a>
Erika Swaringen, NACWC	NACWC member & communications facilitator; project planning; social media advertising; university outreach	Erika Swaringen <a href="mailto:erika.swaringen@gmail.com">erika.swaringen@gmail.com</a>
Tracy D. Sharpley-Whiting, Vanderbilt CHRC	Director of Callie House Research Center; Vanderbilt Associate Provost and Chair of African American Diaspora Studies; research institution and higher education support; publishing opportunities; permanent website support; student networking	<a href="mailto:t.sharpley-whiting@Vanderbilt.Edu">t.sharpley-whiting@Vanderbilt.Edu</a>
Dr. Gilman “G” Whiting, Vanderbilt CHRC	Assoc Professor of AADS & Director of Graduate Studies for AADS; research institution and higher education support; publishing	<a href="mailto:g.whiting@vanderbilt.edu">g.whiting@vanderbilt.edu</a>

	opportunities; permanent website support; student networking	
Reverend Brenda Haywood, Nashville Deputy Mayor of Community Engagement	Access to Nashville Mayor's office, network of Nashville religious community	Scheduling Assistant: Codi Drake <a href="mailto:Codi.Drake@nashville.gov">Codi.Drake@nashville.gov</a>
Ashford Hughes, MNPS DEI Exec	Education initiatives, DEI initiatives throughout the state	<a href="mailto:Ashford.Hughes@mnps.org">Ashford.Hughes@mnps.org</a>
Elanor Bass, NACWC WOE Advisor at TSU	Student outreach and organizing in TN	<a href="mailto:ebass@tnstate.edu">ebass@tnstate.edu</a> 615-963-5520
Hailee B. Roye, NACWC member, Vanderbilt M.P.P. and MNPS Teacher	Student outreach and organizing in TN, Coalition-building between TSU and Vanderbilt, window into MNPS	<a href="mailto:haileebroye@yahoo.com">haileebroye@yahoo.com</a> 412-692-0573
<b>Unconfirmed Potential Partners</b>		
US Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee	Verbally committed to bring light to story of Callie House and her efforts, yet is not an official member of our coalition	Chief of Staff Terron Sims <a href="mailto:terron.sims@mail.house.gov">terron.sims@mail.house.gov</a>
Professor Learotha "Lee" Williams Jr., TSU	Scholar of African American, Civil War and Reconstruction, and Public History at TSU	<a href="mailto:lwilli22@tnstate.edu">lwilli22@tnstate.edu</a>
Dr. Greg Carr	Howard University Associate Professor of Africana Studies, Chair, Department of Afro-American Studies,	<a href="mailto:gcarr@howard.edu">gcarr@howard.edu</a>

	well known scholar throughout TN	
Julia Mejia	Boston City Councilwoman working towards city-level commission for reparations and aware of our advocacy campaign.	Julia.Mejia@Boston.gov
Tania Fernandes Anderson	Boston City Councilwoman working towards city-level commission for reparations and aware of our advocacy campaign.	tania.anderson@boston.gov
Linda Winn		
Beth	Legislative assistant to Sen Campbell at TN Capitol, Leader in TN Democratic party	<a href="mailto:beth.ioslin.roth@capitol.tn.gov">beth.ioslin.roth@capitol.tn.gov</a>
Sen. Brenda Gilmore	TN State Senator	<a href="mailto:brenda.gilmore@comcast.net">brenda.gilmore@comcast.net</a>

## Appendix B: Historians

Person	Background	Contact
V.P. Franklin	Distinguished Professor History – UCRiverside & Author "African-Americans & Movements for Reparations"	vp.franklin@ucr.edu
Ana Lucia Araujo	Professor History – Howard & Author "Reparations for Slavery and the Slave Trade"	aaaraujo@howard.edu
James Turner	Professor Af.Am Politics & Social Policy – Cornell & Author "Callie House: The Pursuit of Reparations as a Means for Social Justice"	jet8@cornell.edu
Darlene Clark Hine	Highest Distinction Professor History – Michigan State & Author "From the Margins to the Center: Callie House and the Ex-Slave Pension Movement"	hined@msu.edu

### ***Sample outreach email:***

Subject: An Opportunity to Partner – Callie House

Dear <Person Name>,

We hope you are well in this place and time.

We are the National Congress of Black Women. Over the last few months, we have entered into a partnership with the [William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice](#), led by Professor Cornell William Brooks – former President of the NAACP; the student leaders of the Callie House Advocacy Group, formed in the Creating Justice in Real Time: Vision, Strategies, and Campaigns class; the Criminal Justice Institute at the Harvard Law School; and the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs to lead a campaign aimed at garnering President Biden's attention to grant a posthumous pardon to Callie House. As you are an expert in her life, and in the history of the movement for reparations, we need not to tell you about her.

We are seeking your partnership in continuing to amplify her legacy. In particular, we hope to partner with you to create <Insert Direct Ask>. Please let us know your thoughts at your earliest convenience.

All the best,

NCBW

## Appendix C: National Reparations Organizations

Organization	Purpose	Contact	Website
N'COBRA	The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparation in America - a mass-based coalition of organizations for the sole purpose of obtaining reparations for African descendants in the United States.	info@ncobraonline.org	<a href="http://ncobraonline.org">ncobraonline.org</a>
Fund For Reparations Now	White-Ally Initiative dedicated to the immediate implementation of a 10-pt Reparations Plan.	info@fundforreparationsnow.org	<a href="http://fundforreparationsnow.org">fundforreparationsnow.org</a>
National African-American Reparations Commission	Established in 2015, committed to fighting for reparatory justice, compensation, and restoration of African-American communities that were plundered by the historical crimes of slavery, segregation, and colonialism, and that continue to be victimized by the legacies of slavery and American apartheid.	info@reparationscomm.org	<a href="http://reparationscomms.org">reparationscomms.org</a>
The Reparations Project	Multifaceted redress initiative that seeks to narrow the wealth gap and promote equity by centering descendants of those who were enslaved and supporting descendant families of enslavers to pursue ancestral healing through repairing generational harm.	info@reparationsproject.org	<a href="http://reparationsproject.org">reparationsproject.org</a>
Reparation Generation	National organization providing direct reparative transfers to Black	info@reparationgeneration.org	<a href="http://reparationgeneration.org">reparationgeneration.org</a>



	Americans for wealth-building pursuits.	g	
Reparations Legacy Project	Organizes white people with access to financial wealth to take a stand in repairing the economic and social damage of enslavement and ongoing exploitation of African people through the redistribution of resources toward the Black self-determination programs of the Uhuru movement.		<a href="http://uhurusolidarity.org/reparationslegacy/contact">uhurusolidarity.org/reparationslegacy/contact</a>
Coming to the Table	Organization bringing together descendants of enslavers and descendants of the enslaved to promote racial healing.	info@reparations4slavery.com	<a href="http://reparations4slavery.com">reparations4slavery.com</a>
Soul 2 Soul Sisters	Faith-based, Black Womxn-led, racial justice organization focused on Black healing and Black liberation.		<a href="https://soul2soulsisters.org/contact/">https://soul2soulsisters.org/contact/</a>
Liberation Ventures	Field builder that fuels the Black-led movement for racial repair in the United States. By providing resources and technical assistance to efforts working toward truth, reconciliation, and reparations, LV is building momentum toward a comprehensive federal financial and non-financial racial repair program		<a href="https://www.liberationventures.org/contact-us">https://www.liberationventures.org/contact-us</a>
Truth Telling Project	Amplifying voices for truth-telling and reparations since 2014.	thetruthtellingproject@gmail.com	<a href="http://thetruthtellingproject.org">thetruthtellingproject.org</a>

The Amendment Project	We are an organization of impassioned students pursuing the rectification of the racial wealth gap by driving the implementation of reparative policies for Black Americans and highlighting the importance of racial reconciliation in our political discourse.	contact@theamendmentproject.org	<a href="http://theamendmentproject.org">theamendmentproject.org</a>
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**Sample outreach email:** (Only to be used once website has been built and ample momentum garnered around the posthumous pardon)

Subject: An Opportunity to Partner – Callie House

Dear <Org Name>,

We hope you are well in this place and time.

We are the National Congress of Black Women. Over the last few months, we have entered into a partnership with the [William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice](#), led by Professor Cornell William Brooks – former President of the NAACP; the student leaders of the Callie House Advocacy Group, formed in the Creating Justice in Real Time: Vision, Strategies, and Campaigns class; the Criminal Justice Institute at the Harvard Law School; and the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs to lead a campaign aimed at garnering President Biden’s attention to grant a posthumous pardon to Callie House. Callie House, a formerly enslaved woman, founded the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief and Pension Association (MRB&PA). MRB&PA on August 7, 1897. One of its main goals was to seek compensation for formerly enslaved people. By the late 1890s, MRB&PA became the leading grassroots association for ex-slave pensions. With momentum built by the MRB&PA with a member base of over 300,000 followers, Senate Bill 1176 was introduced in both Houses of Congress on Dec. 11, 1899. With growing momentum came increased surveillance. The Bureau of Pensions, the Post Office Department, and the Department of Justice sought to end this movement. Without evidence, she was indicted for mail fraud, bringing the movement to a screeching halt.

We only have our imaginations to determine what might have become of the nation had this movement been allowed to prosper. We know that you have a strong perspective on this matter given your work in the movement for reparations. We believe that granting House a pardon would catalyze the national conversation around reparations. So, we seek your partnership in amplifying her message, rectifying an injustice, and continuing to push the movement forward.

Will you join us?

In partnership,  
NCBW

## Appendix D: Guidelines for Press Conference

Over the next year, the coalition should use the following guidelines to solidify a concrete plan for a press conference we recommend to be scheduled for June 6, 2023, due to it being the day Callie Guy House passed away yet a day we will be bringing her story to life.

- Define the Message of the Press Conference
  - We recommend this press conference focus on the posthumous pardon for Callie Guy House being a pathway to restorative justice
- Date and Time
  - Proposed Press Conference Date: June 6, 2023
  - Proposed Time: 3 pm EST/ 12 pm PST
- Location
  - Washington, D.C.
    - Exact location can be determined by partners
- Participants
  - At the discretion of the organizers
- Contact the Media
  - National news companies like CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News should be contacted in advance to brainstorm framing in the media
  - National news publishers like the Washington Post and New York Times
  - Local news organizations in Nashville, Boston, and city's with initiatives working towards reparations should be sent public explainers about the clemency petition release and press conference details
- Develop a Press Kit
  - This should include the following:
    - A list of press conference participants
    - Press Release
    - Less-than-one paragraph bios of Press Conference Speakers
    - Background information about Callie House and US wrongdoing
    - Related news stories on Callie House and reparations circulating media

### **Sample outreach email for press conference partners:**

Greetings [Org Name],

We hope this email finds you well. We are the National Congress of Black Women. Over the last few months, we have entered into a partnership with the [William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice](#), led by Professor Cornell William Brooks – former President of the NAACP; the student leaders of the Callie House Advocacy Group; the Criminal Justice Institute at the Harvard Law School; and the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs. Our team is working on an effort to seek a posthumous presidential pardon for Callie House, a formerly enslaved woman who founded the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief and Pension Association (MRB&PA). MRB&PA on August 7, 1897. One of its main goals was to seek compensation for formerly enslaved people. By the late 1890s, MRB&PA became the leading grassroots association for ex-slave pensions. With momentum built by the MRB&PA, Senate Bill 1176 was introduced in both Houses of Congress on Dec. 11, 1899. By 1900, House amassed a movement of over 300,000 followers for reparations and accomplished her first goal of a reparations bill being introduced in Congress.

With this growth in influence, came increased government surveillance. Three federal agencies -- the Bureau of Pensions, the Post Office Department, and the Department of Justice sought to end this movement. Without evidence the Post Office Department accused House of mail fraud, making it forbidden for the MRB&PA to send mail or cash money orders. Despite House's efforts to invoke her constitutional rights, the Post Office Department was determined to invoke the fraud order in order to limit the MRB&PA's influence. In the midst of her rise, she was unjustly convicted of mail fraud by an all-white male jury. With the tactical actions of the federal government, the reparations movement Callie House led dissipated.

We can only imagine what the current state of the nation would have looked like if Callie House were not immobilized by the US Government. Would Black Americans have received reparations under her continued fearless leadership? Would the economic crisis we bear witness to in what is the racial wealth gap be non-existent? So many questions are left unanswered, yet we have the opportunity to seek justice for the House, and thereafter refuel the push for economic justice for Black Americans.

We would be honored to partner with [organization name/individual] to amend past wrongs. We plan to build a coalition of organizations and leaders alike to influence President Joseph R. Biden to absolve Callie House of her conviction and thus continue the pathway toward economic justice for Black Americans.

Please respond to this email with whether you accept or decline to join us in this journey for justice. If you have any questions or would like to schedule a meeting with us then please feel free to email me at [\[point of contact email\]](#). Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Guidelines for phone call:**

Can be impromptu rapport but needs to contain the following:

- Framing of government involvement in immobilizing the efforts of House and MRB&PA
- Speak to their potential contribution/influence if they sign on
  - Think of ways to persuade them to see this as opportunistic for them



## Appendix E: Draft Petition

In 1916 Callie Guy House was convicted and sentenced to a prison term for obtaining money by “false and fraudulent pretenses”—a crime there was never any evidence she committed. Callie House had been targeted and harassed by federal officials for years because of her legitimate political activities encouraging former slaves to demand that the U.S. government provide them with assistance as they aged in abject poverty. Exercising the very rights denied to her, we petition the Office of the Pardon Attorney to recommend that the President grant a posthumous pardon for Callie House.

### I. Historical background

<explain impoverished situation of former slaves immediately after Civil War—grab from last chapter of Ed Baptist, “The Half Has Never Been Told”; House book; check Foner’s “Reconstruction”>

### II. The fight for reparations

With no meaningful welfare programs provided by the government at this time, there was little hope that the formerly enslaved people would receive any relief. Yet models for financial assistance were developing in the United States and abroad. At home, soldiers who had fought in the Civil War were eligible for pensions that would offset the costs incurred as a result of injury and time spent away from their previous occupations. Similar legislation was being proposed in England. While slaves had not worked for the United States government (with some notable, shameful exceptions), they had worked with the tacit approval of the government—a reality that only changed for enslaved people in the South with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and for enslaved people elsewhere in the country with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment.

It is one of history’s great ironies that the idea of providing pensions for formerly enslaved persons came not from any formerly enslaved person themselves or former abolitionists continuing their humanitarian cause, but from a Confederate apologist. Walter R. Vaughan wrote and sold a pamphlet entitled “Freedman’s Pension Bill: A Plea for American Freedman.” In 1891 the pamphlet sold 10,000 copies at \$1.00 each, and more editions followed.<sup>1</sup> Vaughan, white Democrat from Alabama, proposed legislation

that he modeled after the Union veterans' pension bills then being discussed in Congress. He persuaded Nebraska congressman William J. Connell to introduce the legislation in 1890. His proposal called for a \$15 a month pension plus a one-time payment (or "bounty") of \$500 for every formerly enslaved person over the age of seventy, with payments starting lower for younger people and increasing as they aged. Those responsible for the caretaking of their aging, formerly enslaved relatives would also be eligible for the pension.

Vaughan's intent was not really to benefit the former slaves, but to provide a subsidy for the South, which had been economically devastated by the war. He explained his own interest in the state of formerly enslaved people by describing seeing groups of freedpeople in a "tattered condition" while travelling through Mississippi in 1870, which he believed to be in stark contrast to the kindly care he asserted they received while in slavery. His plan was to give the ex-slaves money with the express intention that this money should sooner or later be spent and given to white southerners, thereby reviving their fortunes.

Whatever its source, the idea of a pension for former slaves captured Callie House's imagination as she read Vaughan's pamphlet. Though Vaughan had not made much headway with his proposal in Congress, he had made inroads in developing an organization that would lobby for it. To spread word of his proposal, Vaughan hired travelling agents who would sell his pamphlet for \$1, often after delivering a speech or sermon. One of those agents was Isaiah Dickerson, a schoolteacher and minister who parted ways with Vaughan over disagreements over the direction of the organization. After the split, Dickerson worked with other black people to create a new organization to organize for a pension, but this time with the wellbeing of formerly enslaved peoples as the true and only goal.

That organization was called the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association. While the bounty and pension provisions they organized for were straight out of Vaughan's playbook, the mutual aid element was wholly new. For the oldest ex-slaves, the agricultural work that was sometimes the only employment available was not feasible. Living out the ends of their days sometimes in abject poverty, they needed the assistance of their communities just to survive. The Association stepped in where other civic and religious organizations could not fill the gap in need, raising

money from its members to help pay for the medical expenses in life and burial costs in death of the aging former slaves.<sup>2</sup>

### III. The Association grows

The Association grew quickly, in large part because of Mrs. House's leadership. When newly elected to the role of assistant secretary (an unusual distinction for a woman in those times), she reflected on the time she spent "among strangers laboring to the best of my ability for the rights which [her] race [was] justly entitled,"<sup>3</sup> efforts she would valiantly continue despite immense persecution until it was made impossible by her incarceration. She travelled selling pamphlets and memberships in the Association, encouraging former slaves and their families to contact their congressional representatives to vote for the pension bills that were continually put on their desks. HouseShe argued that the U.S. government had a moral obligation to help the former slaves: "If the Government had the right to free us she had a right to make some provision for us and since she did not make it soon after Emancipation she ought to make it now."<sup>4</sup>

Though accurate numbers are hard to come by, it is clear that the Association was an impressively large organization. One federal official estimated that the organization may have had 300,000 members.<sup>5</sup> White Southern Democrats, who had defeated the Reconstruction Republican governments and were busy setting up Jim Crow, certainly noticed. A pension bureau inspector told his supervisors that "[t]he ex-slave pension movement 'is setting the negroes wild, . . . making anarchists out of them. . . [if this continues, the government] will have some very serious questions to settle in connection with the control of the race.'"<sup>6</sup> There is, of course, no evidence of any political unrest resulting from the actions of the Association.

### IV. Persecution by the federal government

Nonetheless, through some combination of paranoia and spite, federal officials began pressuring the Association in an effort to limit its effectiveness. Understanding how important her leadership was in the movement, those efforts were focused on Mrs. House. Shortly after her election as assistant secretary, she received a first notification that the federal government was paying attention: a letter from Harrison Barrett, acting assistant attorney general of the Post Office Department, which informed her

that he was issuing an order that would prevent the Association from using mail because it allegedly engaged in fraud.

The order dealt a crippling blow to the Association. Mail was its bloodline, allowing House and her colleagues to spread information to local chapters, to organize their affairs, and to collect the dues that paid for Mrs. House and others to travel and give lectures. Without the U.S. postal service, they would have to rely on private carriers which would be much more expensive, or have members pass along their mail through private hands, which would be slow and unreliable.

Today deprivation of a public benefit based on the content of political speech and without evidence, notice, or hearing would raise a host of constitutional objections. Yet it was the audaciousness of the Association, not the government that eventually caught the public's attention. In an effort to discredit the Association more publicly, the Post Office sent the fraud order to local newspapers in 1899.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to the Acting Assistant Attorney General explaining the necessity of this action, the Nashville postmaster wrote that Mrs. House was "defiant in her actions, and seems to think that the negroes have the right to do what they please in this country."<sup>8</sup>

In April 1900 House received another notice, reiterating the scope of the Post Office's order. The allegation against her and the Association was that it had promised the former slaves that they would receive pensions if they paid the membership dues. While there is some evidence that such fraud had taken place, there was no evidence linking it to the Association: rather, hucksters impersonating Association agents seemed responsible for the very few incidents of this type of fraud.

"The Post Office Department, at the behest of the Pension Bureau, continued to attack all ex-slave pension groups whether they were suspected swindlers or sincere promoters of the cause. They also made no effort to ascertain whether the Ex-Slave Association officers actually owned property or bank accounts or to determine the costs of their travel and petitioning or in any way to document their accusations. Instead they simply labeled pensions for ex-slaves a hopeless cause and held that anyone who promoted such pensions, by any means, had ulterior motives."<sup>9</sup>

The Nashville postmaster, A. Wills, wrote that “in order to eventually wipe out the whole thing, I feel justified at times to resorting to extreme measures.”<sup>10</sup> It seems he, or those around him, did. Isaiah Dickerson was arrested on trumped up fraud charges. Newspaper descriptions say he “deluded darkies” in thirty-four states and was sued by the Atlanta chapter of the Association—which was, of course, false. In fact, the Association paid for his appeal to the Supreme Court of Georgia, which overturned his conviction in 1901. Yet Wills was disappointed that only Dickerson had been prosecuted, since he thought House was “as bad, if not worse than Dickerson.”<sup>11</sup>

There was no evidence that the Association committed fraud. There was no evidence that Isaiah Dickerson committed fraud. There was no evidence that Callie House committed fraud. The same cannot be said of the Post Office officials responsible for the order and the prosecutions. “[I]n 1904 the Justice Department indicted Harrison Barrett and Assistant Attorney General James Tyner, nephew and uncle, as well as the two principal Justice Department officials who harassed Mrs. House and the association, for collusion to profit by abusing their discretion under the fraud laws. Tyner, age seventy-seven, who had served as postmaster general under President Hayes, was planning to close out his career as assistant attorney general for the Post Office. However, first, Barrett left for private practice. Then he and Tyner colluded to influence business to retain his services for protection against the possibility of a fraud order. Since Tyner remained in the government, he could ostensibly have decided to target any business he chose. . . . Upon entering office, the Roosevelt administration found the Post Office Department filled with corruption and opened an investigation. As a result, Tyner was accused of bribe taking. His wife and her sister, apparently Barrett’s mother, went to his office and secretly took all the documents from the safe. When Postmaster General Payne learned they had been there, he chased them through the streets of Washington in his carriage, ending up at their house. . . . Tyner and Barrett admitted that the charges were valid. However, based on a legal technicality they were acquitted.”<sup>12</sup>

## V. Trial and Conviction

The Association struggled and survived—barely. But what little life remained was still an attractive target to federal officials in the South under Jim Crow. In 1916, the U.S. Attorney in Mobile, Alabama suggested to the Justice Department that under newly modified fraud language Mrs. House could be prosecuted. If House could be

prosecuted successfully, the Association would finally fail. The Postmaster General, Albert Sidney Burleson, agreed. All of the senior leaders of the Association were arrested in the hopes that at least one of them would say something incriminating.<sup>13</sup> Still, no evidence. Nonetheless, a grand jury indicted Callie Guy House with obtaining money by means of false and fraudulent pretenses, identifying no one who had been victimized. In the indictment and at trial it was merely asserted that the pamphlets—all written truthfully—were misleading because they came emblazoned with a picture of a star, which prosecutors argued could be thought to signify the power of the federal government and thus confuse a reader into thinking that it was a promise by the United States rather than a plea to the United States. The all white, male jury convicted her.

Born a slave, she wanted the opportunity to exercise her First Amendment rights to share her ideas, to peaceably assemble, to petition the Government for redress of the grievances she shared with hundreds of formerly enslaved people. For exercising these rights she was reduced to a status tragically close to that into which she had been born: forced labor, this time in a prison in Jefferson City, Missouri.

## VI. The Pardon Power

<Here I want to very briefly describe the pardon power, and then I need to explain why this is an exceptional case where the President should grant a posthumous pardon despite the general policy of the Pardon Attorney being to reject them>

## VII. Conclusion

<quick conclusion & prayer for relief>



## Appendix F: Op-Ed

### America's Halt on the Pathway to Restorative Justice

Given the attacks on teaching accurate US history, unless you had an atypical K-12 experience, it is highly unlikely you were taught holistic historical accounts of slavery in America and life for formerly enslaved Black people after its abolishment.

It is important to note that since the first Black enslaved persons set foot on America's soil in 1619, this land has witnessed the black-and-white backdrop of enslavement, emancipation, the end of Reconstruction, Jim Crow terrorism, lynching, legally mandated segregation, mass criminalization of Black Americans, and more. Not every injustice can be listed because there are too many to count.

Throughout the centuries, the oppression of Black people in America has amounted to considerable moral and legal obligations for the United States government since the enactment of the [13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments](#), but not much weight is focused on the financial obligations.

Considerations of the financial obligation of the United States government to compensate for the harm it has done against Black Americans began sparking attention before the civil war ended. With approval from President Abraham Lincoln, General William Tecumseh Sherman issued [Special Field Order No. 15](#) to distribute 40 acres of Confederate land and the loan of an Army mule to each formerly enslaved Black family. After the assassination of President Lincoln, the order was reversed by President Andrew Johnson and the land given to Black families was returned to White Confederate landowners, the very people who declared war on the United States of America.

From this failed push, everyone has come to know the phrase “40 acres and a mule”, when thinking of the history behind compensating for harms, or reparations as it is referred to more commonly.

A less known push for reparations is the national movement sparked by [Callie Guy House](#).

By way of background, House was born into slavery around 1861 in Rutherford County, near Nashville – a year or two shy of the start of the Union Army's sweep through the Confederate state of Tennessee with the promise of *land* and *liberty*.

As American historian, [Mary Frances Berry](#), notes in her book highlighting the story of Callie House, though the war delivered on the promise of freedom for Blacks,

it did not provide an immediate response to their suffering. Therefore, after the emancipation of Black people, ex-slave Callie House began organizing a movement for ex-slave pensions and mutual assistance for Black families.

On August 7, 1897, Callie House founded the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association (MRB&PA) alongside [Isaiah Dickerson](#). The organization had a mission to petition Congress for the passage of legislation that would grant compensation to ex-slaves, in addition to providing mutual aid and burial expenses.

By 1900, nationwide membership for the MRB&PA was estimated to be around 300,000 people, a significant following, given the US population was about 25% of our current population. Sadly, with national attention, came strong opposition from the United States government.

Three federal agencies, the Bureau of Pensions, the Post Office Department, and the Department of Justice worked together collectively to disrupt the movement because the US government had no intention of compensating formerly enslaved people. Harrison Barrett, the acting Assistant Attorney General for the Post Office Department, admitted in an 1899 circular that "there has never been the remotest prospect that the bill would become a law."

With no surprise, the Post Office Department became the biggest factor in the killing of the movement, Barrett issued a fraud order against the MRB&PA, thus restricting the delivery of all mail and payment of money orders.

While under investigation for fraud, pension bills for ex-slaves were submitted to the US Congress but received little to no consideration. The next effort led by House was her association filing the first lawsuit for reparation for slavery, [Johnson v McAdoo](#) in 1915, but the DC District Court and U.S. Supreme Court held the U.S. was protected from such lawsuits.

Shortly thereafter, in 1917, Callie House was arrested and convicted of mail fraud by an all-White male jury with no legitimate evidence. Consequently, the movement sparked by a fearless leader audacious enough to fight for economic justice was shut down against the insurmountable efforts of the United States government.

From the story of Callie House, we witness two major injustices. First, the wrongful conviction of a Black woman who was advocating for Black people to be paid the economic debts owed to them after years of involuntary servitude. Labor that indeed [built the United States](#) into an economic global power. Secondly, the inaction on part of the United States government to ensure the full liberation of Black people

post-slavery; without reparations, Black people were not able to gain similar economic footing to that of their White counterparts.

This is even a phenomenon; we still must grapple with today. Even the impact of the Civil Rights era legislation in the 1960s and policy thereafter, where the US government tried to make up for previous failures, has not done enough for equalizing the economic status of Black Americans.

[According to the Washington Post](#), “in 1968, a typical middle-class black household had \$6,674 in wealth compared with \$70,786 for the typical middle-class white household, according to data from the historical Survey of Consumer Finances that has been adjusted for inflation. In 2016, the typical middle-class black household had \$13,024 in wealth versus \$149,703 for the median white household, an even larger gap in percentage terms”.

Moreover, we are now in a situation where we must think critically about how we move forward to achieve economic equality for Black Americans, and although the answer to a centuries-old problem is not easy, it does start by acknowledging where wrongdoings occurred.

The first step in that acknowledgment is reconciling with history. For this reason, the reputation of Callie House should be revisited with a presidential posthumous pardon and an award of appreciation for trying to solve one of the most significant national issues of her time. With that acknowledgment of wrongdoings, we can continue to move forward in the conversation of imagining the future of reparations for Black Americans. Meaning, a posthumous pardon for Callie House is not a symbolic act but a pathway to restorative justice.

## Appendix G: BlogPost

Callie G. House (née Guy) was born into slavery around 1861 in Rutherford County, near Nashville – a year or two shy of the start of the Union Army’s sweep through the Confederate state of Tennessee with the promise of *liberty* and *land*. Though the Northern forces would deliver on the former, House would grow up to discover all-too-well that the newly united federal republic, which African Americans helped to build, had no intentions of honoring the latter or, for that matter, providing any substantive aid to mitigate her people’s struggle to build on solid ground after emancipation.

It is within this landscape of chaos and confusion, triumph and tribulation, optimism and deep disappointment that the widowed, thirty-six-year-old seamstress and mother of five would feel inspired to begin organizing a movement for ex-slave pensions and mutual assistance. And, on August 7, 1897, she co-founded the largest African American grassroots movement for reparations at the turn of the century, which would meet its demise only two decades later following a coordinated federal campaign to cripple the organization that would see House falsely imprisoned for a year and effectively silenced until her death in the year 1928.

In light of House’s life and legacy, which has been all but forgotten in the century since her passing, the work of the Callie House Advocacy Group is singularly focused on building an advocacy campaign that garners the attention of President Joseph Biden’s administration and generates support for a posthumous clemency petition for House, drafted in partnership with the Criminal Justice Institute at Harvard Law School and the William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice. The scope of this work is threefold, beginning with honing House’s narrative.

To do so, our group has drafted an OpEd that summarizes and retells the story of House’s work, underscoring both the rise and fall of her organization as well as her historic contributions to the work of reparations. This includes shining a light on House’s role in initiating the first documented African Americans reparations litigation in the US on the federal level, which pushed forward a class-action lawsuit in federal court for just over \$68 million, or the sum claimed to be “collected between 1862 and

1868 as a tax on cotton [that] was due to the appellants because the cotton had been produced by them and their ancestors as a result of their ‘involuntary servitude.’”<sup>31</sup>

Given that such a compelling story almost ‘tells itself,’ the ‘real’ and second focus of our group’s work has been to develop both an online and offline strategy to create traction for her narrative, which will progressively translate into support for her posthumous pardon. We have started this endeavor by building a social media platform as a space to engender interest in House as a primary historical actor in the work of reparations for black folks in the US through telling her story using short, digestible texts and images. At the same time, we have used this platform to present House as a person of current concern – a debarred icon of both civil and women’s rights in the US who was unjustly incarcerated for her work. Additionally, our group has designed a community forum with a federal legislator as further means of engaging the Harvard University community and beyond in collective conversation about the story of House and her life’s work.<sup>32</sup>

The third and final focus of our work has been to develop national partnerships that will actively amplify House’s story and foster further, nationwide support for her posthumous pardon. We have committed to this work through building partnerships with national associations dedicated to Black women, as well as their student chapters. We are also in consultation with a university research center in her name in the city of Nashville that supports us through providing more local and scholarly knowledge of House, breathing even more life into the story of her dynamic life.

As a product of the threefold scope of this work thus far our group has come to realize that advocacy for House is not simply a push to make enough noise to reach the ear of the president. But rather it is a symbolic surge that engages the story of House in the attempt to clear her name and honor the cause or reparations for which she fought. In this way, it makes clear not only the *historical* wrong of unjustly imprisoning House, but also the *present* harm to the ongoing reparative work in this country caused by not rectifying this wrong. For, as moral philosopher Susan Neiman writes, symbolic

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<sup>31</sup> Miranda Booker Perry, “No Pensions for Ex-Slaves How Federal Agencies Suppressed Movement To Aid Freedpeople,” *Prologue Magazine*, Summer 2010, Vol. 42, No. 2, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/summer/slave-pension.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Tomiko Brown-Nagin, “The Transformation of a Social Movement into Law? The SCLC and NAACP’s Campaigns for Civil Rights Reconsidered in Light of the Educational Activism of Septima Clark,” *Women’s History Review*, vol. 8, no. 1, (1999): 81.

gestures are less about the events that have transpired in the past or the people who are charged with remembering them, and more about “the values we deliberately choose to hold going forward.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil*, (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019), 261.



## Appendix H: Colorized Image



# Appendix I: Social Media Posts





## Appendix J: Media Package

Link to Media Package: [Access Callie House Media Package](#)



# CALLIE HOUSE

## AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

Media Package

2022

Prepared by  
The Callie House Advocacy Group

[@Calliehouseadvocacy](#)  
[@CallieHAdvocacy](#)


# ABOUT CALLIE

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**Callie Guy House** (1861–1928) was a pioneer in reparations activism, born into slavery near Nashville, Tennessee around 1861. As a young child, House became a freed person and went to elementary school up until 8th grade. In adulthood, House worked at home as a washerwoman and seamstress like many women of her time and had a greater vision for what life could be like for Black Americans than what currently was. **She was a widowed mother of five, and co-founded the largest grassroots reparations movement in African American history.** The National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, Pension Association (MRB&PA) was on a mission to grant former slaves monetary compensation and mutual aid.

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[@Calliehouseadvocacy](#) 

[@CallieHAdvocacy](#) 

# CALLIE'S LIFE AND LEGACY

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1861

- Callie House was born into slavery near Nashville, Tennessee

1891

- Callie married William House and supported a family of five children after his passing
- She worked as a washerwoman and seamstress where she made relationships with community members where many of her reparations conversations began

1897

- Callie Co-founded the MRB&PA: The National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty, and Pension Association

1899

- Lecture and toured across the South, gained 340,000 members initially and grew to 300,000 members by the turn of the 20th century


1917

- House faced various attempts to be shut down
- She was charged on postal violations, and claiming false and fraudulent pretenses (that reparations were coming)
- House served jail time from November 1917 to August 1918

1928

- Callie House died from cancer at age 67, and is buried in an the old Mt. Ararat cemetery in Nashville in an unidentified grave

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[@Calliehouseadvocacy](#) 

[@CallieHAdvocacy](#) 

# CALLIE HOUSE ADVOCACY GROUP EFFORTS

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Our team is working on an effort to seek a posthumous presidential pardon for Callie House, a former enslaved and wrongly incarcerated woman who founded the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief and Pension Association (MRB&PA). We plan to build a coalition of organizations and leaders alike to spread Callie's story, influence President Joseph R. Biden to absolve Callie House of her conviction, and thus continue the pathway toward economic justice for Black Americans.

## AWARENESS

1. Callie's Colorized Image
2. Op-Ed Release
3. Trotter Collaborative Blog



## COMMUNITY

1. Social Media: @Calliehouseadvocacy @CallieHAdvocacy
2. Nashville Coalition-Building Trip
3. Grassroots Organizing Partners

## ADVOCACY

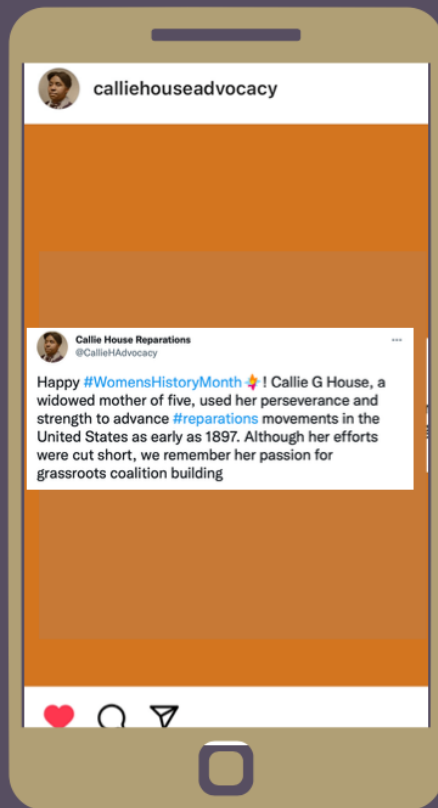
1. Pardoning Petition
2. Community Forum Series at Harvard Kennedy School
3. Advocacy Partners

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# ADVOCACY PARTNERS

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## AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

Media Package

2022

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