
Symbolic reparation in kind will not do.

For example, Georgetown University has proposed admissions preferences for [descendants of the 272 people](#) (houses) its Jesuit owners sold in 1843 to “good Catholic people-owners” in Louisiana to pay its debts.

But most of the eligible—even those who are college-minded—live elsewhere (many still in Louisiana), and slots are fungible so the University can net any places thus taken up against other slots earmarked for minorities.

So all that is much cheaper for the Catholic University than to compensate according to the current price of 272 houses sold in 1838, or 272 houses sold now, or taking minimal account of agency, 544 houses.

Far better to address the matter as part of a broader national settlement, as proposed, given that the Jesuits, however inconsistent their behavior was from their own teaching, were following the law of the land. So it, rather than they, should ultimately be held responsible.

If that broader settlement is not forthcoming, then the Descendants of the 272 are fully within their rights to pursue their claims against the University, and it should be held responsible for its conduct in any settlement it proposed.

Even more ridiculously, [David Cameron's proposal to build a prison](#) as British reparations to Jamaica while hectoring it to “get past” all that, is woeful even by his standards of Eton mess. Meanwhile, his personal share of inheritance from the compensation his people-owning forbears received from the British government as part of the 1833 Abolition settlement for the loss of 202 people they owned was not something he felt any need to “get past.”

Peter Doyle
Washington DC
March 24, 2019
