

Towards Equity in Reparative Education

Lessons from the MSc/MA in Reparatory Justice



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Background

In 2018, the **University of Glasgow (UofG)** published a report based on a comprehensive investigation of its historical links to slavery. The report acknowledged that whilst the UofG played a leading role in the abolitionist movement in the 18th and 19th centuries, the institution also received significant financial support from people whose wealth was derived from slavery and the Scottish trade in the Caribbean.

Since the publication of the report, several reparative initiatives have been implemented, particularly through the Glasgow-Caribbean Centre for Development Research (GCCDR), a partnership established in 2019 between the UofG and the **University of the West Indies (UWI)**. The GCCDR aims to: facilitate research, coordinate academic collaborations with other universities, host events and activities, and stimulate public awareness of the history of slavery and its impact worldwide. The UofG has also committed to raising £20 million via the centre for joint work on topics relevant to the Caribbean nations over the next 20 years.

A Reparative & Equitable Partnership

One of the outcomes of this reparative movement was the founding of the Beniba Centre for Slavery Studies, followed by the launching of the world's first Master's (MSc/MA) in Reparatory Justice. The double degree Master's programme was launched in 2023, targeting current and emerging social activists and academics, Caribbean citizens, and members of the Caribbean and African diaspora with an interest in reparatory justice. It offers students an unparalleled opportunity to work with scholars in reparatory justice at The UWI and the UofG.

The UWI is at the forefront of the global reparations movement, leading activism and academic research underpinning claims for reparations for slavery. The UofG offers access to primary source materials and material culture holdings and draws on a range of expertise across the study of slavery, genocide and human rights violations.

World's first reparatory justice master's launches in Glasgow and West Indies

Partnership between Glasgow University and University of the West Indies was established as part of a reparatory justice programme



Educating World Changers

The MSc/MA in Reparatory Justice is a collaborative educational project. It aims to address the need for further study and research on contemporary and historical campaigns for reparations. The programme offers students the opportunity to engage with experts in Scotland and the Caribbean on these topics and develop a trans-Atlantic cohort of reparations experts to engage with new campaigns, academic research, and support new areas of policy development.

Students can choose to study at one of three campuses: Cave Hill Campus in Barbados, Gilmorehill Campus in Glasgow, UK, or Mona Campus in Jamaica. The MSc/MA can be completed in 1 (full-time) or 2 years (part-time). All courses are offered in a hybrid format, and both universities offer two core courses, along with optional courses.

Students receive guidance to design and produce a dissertation focusing on either a historical case study related to reparatory justice or a particular issue of contemporary debate around reparations.

Student Experience



Left to right, the first cohort of graduates: Nicole Whyte, Fer Ortiz Vivas, Fergal O'Donohoe, Fanny Olsson and Cordelia Asamoah. Credit Martin Shields, 2024.

Fer Ortiz Vivas, who graduated with distinction, said: "The Reparatory Justice Masters has been a transformative experience. Not only have I gained specialised knowledge, but I've had the opportunity to connect with incredible scholars and activists from all over the world. My research on Spanish compensation schemes for enslavers in Puerto Rico is just the beginning. This programme has encouraged me to explore intersections between archival research, artistic practices, and healing, and I'm excited to continue my studies at the PhD level."

Fanny Olsson, who completed her undergraduate studies in History at Glasgow before applying to the Masters programme, also graduated with distinction, and said: "It's starting to sink in that I'm part of the first cohort of students to graduate from this programme, and it's such a privilege. The research we have done and the connections we've made are crucial in shaping my future academic work. I'm excited to continue exploring reparatory justice beyond the scope of slavery, focusing on the intersection of gender, sexuality, health, and class in specific US towns."

Achievements

- 62 applicants from 21 different countries.
- 11 graduates from 2 cohorts (2023-24, 2024-25).
- 5 funded scholarships (50% waiver).
- Diverse cohort of students: activists, academics, professionals.
- A wide range of dissertation topics, based on research projects conducted in (or about) Scotland, Jamaica, Haiti, Ghana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Puerto Rico, and the United States, among others.

Challenges & Areas for Improvement

- The rising cost of visa fees and restrictions on international students in the UK disproportionately affect applicants from Africa and the Caribbean, reflecting the contrast between applications and enrolment.
- We aim to improve fundraising and provide full scholarships.
- Provide financial support for a mobility scheme that enables students to move between the three campuses: Jamaica, Barbados, and Glasgow.
- Strengthen and expand partnerships with international stakeholders and similar programs.
- From 2025-26, the MSc/MA will be offered both in person and online to make it more accessible and inclusive.