

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Lecture
“When Sorry Isn’t Enough”: Reparative Justice in California and Beyond
Prof. Dr. Aneta Dybska | University of Warsaw

Monday
19 January 2026
6:15 – 7:45 pm
(CET)
Senatssaal



Aneta Dybska will offer an overview and analysis of the modern Black reparations movement, with a focus on the incorporation of international human rights law into the activism and advocacy for reparations for slavery. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, numerous truth-telling initiatives, known from transitional justice contexts, have mushroomed across American communities, seeking interracial reconciliation and healing. But it was the California legislature that established the first ever Reparations Taskforce whose Final Report, published in 2023, is a blueprint for a nationwide study of the historic harm of slavery and ongoing discrimination, and puts forward a range of reparative measures to redress the harm. Despite never having been a slave state, California has become a testing ground for reparative justice solutions including, but not limited to, restitution, compensation, and guarantees of non-repetition.

Aneta Dybska is associate professor of American Studies at the University of Warsaw, Poland. She is the author of *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s* (2010), a study of 20th-century Black nationalist thought and the discursive formation of masculine identities, and of *Regeneration, Citizenship and Justice in the American City since the 1970s* (2016), which explores the intersections of race, citizenship, and place-building. Her current research on the Black reparations movement investigates the history and legal foundations of the advocacy and activism on reparations for slavery. Prof. Dybska is a member of the DFG research network “The Cultural Politics of Reconciliation.”