

## MEDIA CONTACT

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## CLEVELAND'S OWN BAKARI KITWANA JOINS "DEMOCRACY UNCHAINED" TO TALK ABOUT REPARATIONS AS THE STARTING POINT TO REBUILDING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Bakari Kitwana, acclaimed author, journalist and activist (and Cleveland resident), joins State of American Democracy's new conversation series, "Democracy Unchained," for an important conversation about America's original sin of slavery and the need for reparations, now.

On Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 7 p.m. EST/4 p.m. PST, the State of American Democracy Project—a nonpartisan collective of acclaimed thought leaders, journalists, political leaders, and theologians founded by northeast Ohio native, David W. Orr, Ph.D., environmental activist and professor emeritus at Oberlin College—will stream the next episode of "Democracy Unchained: A Conversation Series" on Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, Roku and Fire TV.

This fourth episode in the series faces the topic of America's original sin of slavery—and a discussion about reparations for Black Americans as an important part of rebuilding democracy in the U.S.

Bakari Kitwana, an acclaimed author, journalist and activist (and Westlake, Ohio resident), leads the conversation about the romanticism that many White Americans have about how American democracy was built—forgetting (even innocently) about the bodies, minds and labor that were provided by African Americans for 248 years.

"Amidst the coronavirus pandemic and the George Floyd protests, more and more Americans are opening their eyes to racial disparities in policing, incarceration, unemployment, education, health, housing, and more," says Bakari Kitwana, acclaimed author and activist. "But none of these are resolved if the US imagines it will ever be a truly inclusive democracy without paying reparations to address the compounded debt this country owes Black Americans that began with the 250 years of slavery, which set in motion today's racial and economic inequalities."

The episode, "Original Sin and Reparations," features conversations with Kitwana, along with **Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharris**, Co-Chair, Poor People's Campaign; **Amilcar Shabazz**, Ph.D., Chair, W.E.B. Du Bois Department Afro-American Studies, University of Mass. Amherst; **Deadria Farmer-Paellman**, Executive Director, Restitution Study Group; **Betty Lyons**, President and Executive Director, American Indian Law Alliance; and, **Ron Daniels**, Ph.D., Convener, National African American Reparations Commission.

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### About the State of American Democracy Project

The State of American Democracy initiative began with a conference at Oberlin College in 2017, with a goal to clarify the historic and institutional origins of the election of 2016 and the breakdown in governance, civility, and fairness that transcends party politics. The second phase of the work through the election of 2020 focuses on repairing and strengthening democratic institutions to serve the aims of justice, fairness, prosperity, and resilience.

Today, the State of American Democracy is a nonpartisan collective of individuals and organizations from across the country who are passionate about rebuilding politics and government in America for the benefit of all

Americans. Democracy Unchained, the book, edited by David W. Orr, Andrew Gumbel, Bakari Kitwana and William S. Becker (New Press, March 2020), brings together more than 30 contributors, and “Democracy Unchained: A Conversation Series” brings together more than 100 thought leaders from a variety of disciplines. Today, more than 50 organizations have also partnered and/or sponsored this project, as well.

The State of American Democracy project is made possible through the generous support of Ford Foundation, Germeshausen Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, Wallace Global Fund, Park Foundation, and Kallopeia Foundation.

To learn more, visit [stateofamericandemocracy.org](https://stateofamericandemocracy.org).