

RESOLUTION IN FAVOR OF REPARATIONS FOR SLAVERY

Resolution to Endorse the Call to Obtain Reparations for the Harm to Africans and Their Descendants who were Enslaved; Held in Bondage; Forcibly Removed From Their Land and Brought to North America; Forced to Perform Hard Labor; Forced to Submit to Sexual Relations; Often Forcibly Separated from their Partners and Children; Forced to Submit to Severe Physical Punishment, Oftentimes to the Extent of Brutal Mutilation and Murder; Forcibly Removed from their Land; Deprived of all Civil Rights; Deprived of Health Care and Education; and Subjected to Continuing Racial Segregation, Discrimination and Land Theft.

Submitted by John Royal and Desiree Ferguson, on behalf of the Michigan/Detroit Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild.

John Royal will be available to present this Resolution at the Convention Plenaries.

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WHEREAS 2019 marks the 400th Anniversary of the arrival of the first kidnapped Africans to the shores of the Virginia Colony in 1619;

WHEREAS from 1619 through 1865, millions of kidnapped Africans were forcibly brought to the parts of North America that eventually became the United States of America (“U.S.A.”);

WHEREAS from 1619 through 1865, millions of kidnapped Africans and their descendants were enslaved; held in bondage; and compelled to work at hard labor without compensation for their entire lives, to generate wealth and surplus value for the wealthy, white land owners who “owned” them;

WHEREAS from 1619 through 1865, enslaved Africans and their descendants were subjected to severe physical punishments or death when they were accused of disobedience to their white owners, or when they attempted to escape from bondage;

WHEREAS from 1619 through 1865, millions of African women and their descendants were compelled to submit to sexual relations with white men, and subjected to severe physical punishment if they resisted;

WHEREAS from 1619 through 1865, enslaved African men, women and children were subjected to being forcibly and permanently separated from each other at the decision of white owners, by being sold to other white people, who often transported them to distant areas of the country;

WHEREAS from 1619 through 1865, enslaved Africans and their descendants in the United States of America were forcibly deprived of basic civil and human rights, including the rights to education, to health care, and to travel;

WHEREAS, after 1865, descendants of Africans who were brought to the U.S.A. in bondage (“African-Americans”) were subjected to severe segregation and discrimination, both by law (“Jim Crow”) and by social practice, throughout the U.S.A.;

WHEREAS, since 1865, racially discriminatory federal and local government housing policies have resulted in the inability of African-American families to accumulate family wealth through property ownership. See: “The Case for Reparations,” by Ta-Nehisi Coates, June 2014 Atlantic;

WHEREAS, since 1865, state and local governments have regularly engaged in racial discrimination in the financial support provided to schools primarily attended by African-American students; in spite of court-ordered efforts to desegregate public education after 1954, American public schools are today just as racially segregated as they were in the 1970’s. See: “It Was Never About Busing,” by Nikole Hannah-Jones, July 14, 2019 New York Times.

WHEREAS the unpaid, underpaid, and inadequately paid labor of African-Americans has historically been an essential source of the accumulation of wealth and power by the richest and most powerful corporate owners and investors of American society, and has been a necessary support of the growth of the American economy into the strongest economy in the world;

WHEREAS in 2019 racial discrimination continues to be a severe hardship to African-Americans in the U.S.A., depriving them of equal access to work, education and health care; and impedes their ability to raise families and to generally participate in the ordinary affairs of life;

WHEREAS the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N’COBRA) has been working and organizing for 30 years to obtain passage of a congressional resolution authorizing congressional discussion and exploration of reparations for African-Americans;

WHEREAS National Lawyers Guild member Congressman John Conyers first introduced a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1989 calling for the study of proposals for Reparations for African-Americans, and re-introduced this resolution in every Congress until 2017;

WHEREAS in 2019, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee introduced HR 40 in the U.S. House of Representatives, and Senator Cory Booker introduced SB 1083 in the United States Senate; both bills are entitled: “The Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African-Americans Act”; and these bills are presently pending consideration; HR 40 currently has 65 co-sponsors and SB 1083 currently has 12 co-sponsors;

WHEREAS the descendants of enslaved Africans have incurred economic damages estimated at several trillion dollars, to which they are entitled in the form of financial payment as well as the

delivery of services designed to restore, repair and remedy the protracted deprivation of adequate housing, education, language, culture, health care, and physical loss of freedom in jails and prisons, due to over-policing, profiling and over criminalization in their communities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Lawyers Guild joins with N'COBRA in demanding that the United States and any state or local governments implicated in the enslavement of African peoples and their descendants in the United States and the continuing policies and practices that treat African descendants in the United States as less than whites provide reparations in the form of full repair for the injuries inflicted upon African descendants;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Lawyers Guild urges the use of public hearings to collect testimony from African descendants and experts who have researched and published on these injuries as well as the collection of documentation to establish the extent of the injuries and the forms the repair should take. The results of the hearings and the collection of supportive documentation shall be presented to the responsible government entities for adoption and implementation of a reparative justice plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Lawyers Guild supports continuing efforts to bring both HR 40 and SB 1083 to the floor of their respective chambers of Congress for open, public, and national discussion of the merits these provisions;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Lawyers Guild supports the passage of HR 40 and SB 1083, and all subsequent congressional proposals that are to the same effect.

This proposed Resolution is endorsed and supported by the Michigan/Detroit Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild. John Royal will be responsible for communicating the passage of this resolution to N'COBRA; and for communicating with and urging efforts to implement this resolution to all appropriate NLG Chapters, Projects, and Committees.