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National African American Reparations Commission Applauds Recent Statements of Interest by 2020 Presidential Contenders

Calls on all the Candidates to Support HR-40

[Press Release March 11, 2019]

The National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC) applauds several Presidential contenders for their recent expressed interest in reparations and calls on all the candidates to prioritize reparatory justice as an issue of importance to Black voters in the weeks and months ahead.

NAARC is also calling on all 2020 candidates, as well as other lawmakers, to support HR40, the reparations bill authored by former US Cong. John Conyers, which has languished in Congress since 1989. HR-40, which was reintroduced in the 115th Congress, was developed in consultation with NAARC.

It calls for establishing a federal commission to study reparations proposals for African Americans that would repair the horrific socio-economic damages caused by the enslavement and generations of racially exclusive/discriminatory policies and practices post-emancipation.

The current reparations conversation is especially relevant in light of the fact that 2019 marks the 400th Anniversary of the arrival of Africans in chains in Virginia, which opened the era of slavery, one of the most sordid chapters in U.S. history.

“In general, the recent statements by presidential candidates are a positive development,” said Dr. Ron Daniels, Convener of NAARC and President of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century (IBW). “They reflect an increasing body of scholarship that definitively draws the connection between the enslavement of Africans and the persistent wealth-gap and underdevelopment of Black America.”

Candidates are also responding to the growing, multifaceted reparations movement in this country and to the fact that in recent public opinion polls, reparations now enjoys the support of a majority of African Americans as well as from a growing percentage of young white millennial voters.

“NAARC stands ready to educate and orient candidates and legislators on the definition, background, process, internationally accepted norms and historical precedents for reparations to repair damages inflicted on peoples and nations. Hopefully, this will enrich the public dialogue on this vital issue,” added Dr. Daniels.

NAARC was established in April 2015 at a National/International Reparations Summit convened by IBW in New York City. The nonpartisan Commission is comprised of distinguished Black leaders from across the U.S. in the fields of law, education, public health, economic development, religion, labor, civil and human rights.

For decades, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (NCOBRA) has been a leading force advancing the struggle for reparations in the U.S. Kamm Howard, National Co-Chairperson of NCOBRA and a NAARC Commissioner, welcomes the surge in support for reparations by the presidential candidates but insists that the discussion and debate be centered around reparations as full repair. “The international standard holds that reparations ‘must wipe out all consequences’ of the wrongful acts committed against enslaved Africans,” said Howard.

“To get us to full repair, policies programs and practices must be developed to produce the following outcomes: cessation and guarantees of non-repetition, restitution, compensation, satisfaction, and rehabilitation. These are the intended outcomes of HR 40. The candidates, some of whom are Senators, should craft a Senate companion bill. This can be done now if they are serious about their support for reparations.”

To help frame the public discourse and as a guide for action by governmental and private entities, NAARC has devised a comprehensive and detailed Ten-Point Reparations Program that addresses the issues of repair and restitution. The creation of a National Reparations Trust Fund is among the proposals outlined in the NAACRC Reparations Program. The Authority would receive grants of funds, scholarships, land and other forms of restitution to benefit the collective advancement of Black America. It would be comprised of a cross-section of credible representatives of reparations, civil rights, and human rights, labor, faith, educational, civic and fraternal organizations and institutions.

The Authority will be empowered to establish subsidiary trust funds to administer projects and initiatives in the areas of culture, economic development, education, health and other fields as deemed appropriate based on the demands of the Reparations Program. <https://bit.ly/2TOMhZt>.

To increase public awareness of the Program, NAARC has convened initial Hearings and Town Hall Meetings in Atlanta and New Orleans and plans to hold additional sessions in a number of cities across the country.

Pan-Africanist and international movements in support of slavery reparations have emerged across the globe, from the Caribbean and Latin America to Africa, Asia, and Australia. In that regard, it is significant to note that NAARC works closely with the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) which is claiming reparations from the former European colonial powers for Native genocide and African enslavement.

Advocates for reparatory justice explain that the issue covers both the past and the present and it contains the potential to defend and protect American democracy at a time when it is being threatened by a rise in white nationalism, autocracy and oligarchy. In a recent meeting, NAARC Commissioners also took note of the fact there are external forces that seem intent on sowing confusion within the American electorate to suppress the Black vote to favor the ascendancy of these reactionary forces.

NAARC Commissioner Dr. Iva Carruthers, General Secretary of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference stressed that, “reparations is a process that affirms the humanity of people of African descent and the healing of communities from trans-generational trauma. It is unquestionably the right and just thing to do. Reparations also carries a gravitas that the country as a whole can benefit from as it searches for a moral compass to guide it through these turbulent times which are exacerbated by deeply entrenched bigotry, institutionalized racism and structural economic disparities.”

“As the richest country on the planet, America has more than enough resources to sustain a comprehensive, national reparations program,” says NAARC Commissioner Dr. Julianne Malveaux, noted political-economist and educator. “America needs to accept its moral responsibility to repair and rectify the lingering damages of African enslavement and racially discriminatory policies after Emancipation.”

Dr. Ron Daniels concluded that “reparations is as relevant to our political agenda as any other issue. Finally receiving our ‘40 acres and a mule’ is a matter of ‘national emergency’ when dealing with the profound crises afflicting marginalized Black communities across this nation. The time for reparatory initiatives based upon the principles of justice and equality is now, and NAARC calls on all of the 2020 presidential candidates to endorse and vigorously support HR-40 as a vehicle to move the United States towards redressing one of the original sins of its founding.”

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