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June 24, 2015

President Barack H. Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Email Communication

Dear President Obama:

As you prepare to deliver the Eulogy at the home-going service for Rev. Clementa Pinckney on the occasion of the unspeakable tragedy of his murder and that of eight other members of the historic Emanuel AME Church, the National African American Reparations Commission strongly urges that you seize this moment to issue an Executive Order creating the John Hope Franklin Commission on Reparatory Justice. From Ferguson to Baltimore to Charleston this most recent period has revealed that white supremacy, in all of its individual, institutional and structural manifestations, is a deadly disease that remains deeply imbedded in the American psyche and the social, economic and political fabric of this society.

As you have related Mr. President, despite progress since the era of enslavement, Jim Crow and de facto discrimination/segregation, the “badges and indicia” of the longstanding exploitation and oppression of people of African descent are reflected in the devastating disparities in health, education, housing, employment, economic development, wealth and incarceration rates which harm large numbers of Black people each and every day in this land of enormous prosperity.

Despite these realities, polls and studies indicate that a substantial number of White Americans fail to see or are in denial about the stubborn persistence of racism and its effects on Black people. In fact, there is a tendency to blame Blacks for the conditions our people find themselves in and/or to express “racial resentment” of the perceived progress of Blacks, as being a function of encroaching on the success of Whites. Even among well meaning, sympathetic Whites, there is often a failure to recognize how implicit bias colors the countless decisions which constrain or kill the aspirations of Black people in this nation.

This year marks the beginning of the United Nation’s Decade for People of African Descent. We believe there can be no “more perfect union” in the United States until there is a thoughtful, frank, thorough and uncompromising examination of white supremacy as a malignancy which must be cured. The American nation cannot heal until it confronts and addresses the injustices of the past and those that are being perpetrated today against people of African descent as a consequence of systemic/structural bias that

infects every area of life in this society. There can be no real peace until there is justice, repair and healing for Black people in this country.

Therefore, Mr. President, in the name of the esteemed Dr. John Hope Franklin, whose father Buck Franklin defended Black survivors of the horrific 1921 Tulsa race riots that destroyed “Black Wall Street,” and who himself was the victim of racial insults and discrimination on numerous occasions, and in honor of Dr. Franklin’s 100th birthday, we call upon you to have the vision to create a Commission on Reparatory Justice in his name. This is only fitting as it also offers an opportunity to finish the unfinished work of President Clinton’s Commission on Race which Dr. John Hope Franklin chaired twenty-two years ago.

Please find appended to this letter the formal Declaration calling for the Commission and a list of the members of the National African American Reparations Commission.

Given the urgency of the crises confronting this nation as it relates to race/racism, we look forward to your prompt response and action on this request.

Respectfully,



Dr. Ron Daniels, President,
Institute of the Black World 21st Century,
Convener, National African American Reparations Commission

Attachments

Cc:

Congressional Black Caucus Members

G.K. Butterfield

Karen Bass

Yvette Clarke

John Conyers, Jr.

Elijah Cummings

Danny Davis

Keith Ellison

Sheila Jackson-Lee

Hakeem Jeffries

Hank Johnson

Barbara Lee

Gwen Moore

Charles B. Rangel

Bobby Scott

Maxine Waters

Civil Rights Leaders

Rev. Jesse L. Jackson

Marc Morial

Rev. Al Sharpton

Cornell Brooks

Melanie Campbell

Barbara Arwine