

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2003

Dear Reparations Supporter:

The legacy of slavery lingers heavily in this nation. While we have focused on the social effects of slavery and segregation, its continuing economic implications have been largely ignored by mainstream analysis. These economic issues are the root cause of many critical issues in the African-American community today, such as education, healthcare and crime. The call for reparations represents a commitment to entering a constructive dialogue on the role of slavery and racism in shaping present-day conditions in our community and American society.

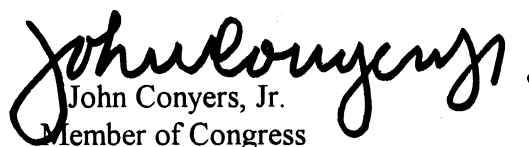
I congratulate the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) for launching its "A Year of Black Presence (AYBP)" lobbying initiative and the reparations resolution drive to encourage state and local legislatures and organizations to support H.R.40. These initiatives will be important to growing the reparations movement, both nationally and internationally, and building broad support for the passage of federal legislation.

A massive educational program is necessary within the African-American and the nation at-large to understand fully the continuing implications of slavery. H.R. 40 is designed to initiate that effort by establishing a national commission to examine the institution of slavery. That commission will study the impact of subsequent and continuing discrimination against African-Americans, resulting directly and indirectly from slavery, during the apartheid of reconstruction, desegregation and the present day. The commission will also make recommendations concerning any form of apology and compensation to begin the long delayed process of atonement.

In the wake of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, reparations supporters must redouble their efforts to support the passage of H.R. 40 and to create a substantive national dialogue in the halls of Congress. Nations like Switzerland and South Africa have shown that confronting the sins of the past is imperative to developing a real commitment to equality. This nation must make the same commitment to understanding how the legacy of slavery and its vestiges contribute to present day societal and economic inequality.

Your efforts will make the difference in determining whether America finally acknowledges its debt. Please urge your congressional delegation to cosponsor H.R. 40 and petition your city council and state legislature to adopt a resolution supporting federal reparations study legislation.

Very truly yours,


John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress