

Statement of

Kibibi Tyehimba
Interim Co-Chair

National Coalition Of Blacks for Reparations In America (N'COBRA)

Before
Congressman John Conyers, Jr., and other members of the Congress

Concerning
Reparations and the need to pass H.R. 40

April 6, 2005

I am honored for this opportunity to testify before members of the Congressional Black Caucus and other members of the Congress on Reparations and the need to pass House Resolution 40 (H.R. 40) I am Kibibi Tyehimba, Interim Co-Chair of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations In America (N'COBRA), the leading coalition that, since 1987, is dedicated solely to the issue of Reparations for the American Holocaust of African Enslavement and Its Vestiges in the United States.

Roy L. Brooks begins his book, "Atonement and Forgiveness" with the following quote:

"When a government commits an atrocity against an innocent people, it has at the very least a moral obligation to apologize and to make that apology believable by doing something tangible called a "Reparation".

In light of the severity and the length of the crimes committed against Africans and their descendants in this country, there can never be forgiveness or trust in the government or the society until it expresses a clear understanding of the atrocities it has committed against us. As Mr. Brooks states "The Past is the Future"

Following a time and movement tested process, the 20th century legislative approach to reparations is moving full speed ahead. We must always express our sincere appreciation to Congressman John Conyers, Jr. for introducing H.R. 40 every year since 1989 as his efforts energized a movement that will never die until victory is won.

I am honored to report that legislation supporting the passage of HR 40 has been adopted by 30 cities across the country and by 3 states, with 2 more state resolutions pending. Additionally, national organizations such as the NAACP, the National Urban League, the National Bar Association, The Green Party, Caucasians United for Reparations and Emancipation (CURE), The United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, just to name a few, support the passage of HR40. The support of these organizations clearly demonstrates that the Reparations movement is not just the futile cries of a marginal group in our society.

NCOBRA's Legislative Commission has intensified its lobbying efforts at the federal level with its "A Year of Black Presence AYBP" lobbying initiative, presently under the leadership of Mr. Kedrick Bellamy. Since its inception in 2001, AYBP has mobilized large numbers of Reparations advocates to Capitol Hill to lobby for Reparations, and we will continue to assist grassroots organizers working for additional legislation supporting the passage of HR 40 and Reparations. I am also pleased to report that organizing on the legislative front in Pine Bluff, Arkansas produced a surprising result that could potentially be used by other cities with predominantly black populations. In November 2003, Reparations advocate, Ms. Barbara Blount Mohammad used the momentum created for the eventual passage of a resolution supporting HR 40, to elect the town's first Black Mayor in November 2004. To date, ordinances have been adopted by the State of California, in Chicago, Illinois; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Richmond, Virginia. These ordinances require corporations seeking government contracts to submit historic records documenting their participation and profiting from the enslavement of African

people before the contracts can be awarded. And in Chicago, this ordinance led to J. P Morgan Chase's admission of their crimes, an official apology and a \$5 million dollar scholarship fund for African descendants in the state of Louisiana.

While the struggle for Reparations must be waged at the grass roots, legal, legislative, and international levels, I believe it is safe to say that the far reaching steps that must be made to heal century's old wounds and eliminate present day disparities suffered by African descendants at all levels of our society, must ultimately be made at the federal level. The passage of HR 40 provides an opportunity for a national dialog about an era in U.S. history that still plagues us today. This dialog will lead the nation to an admission of the crimes committed. HR 40 can bring about an official apology; acknowledgement of this era in history with monuments, school curricula, accurate and balanced imagery in the media; a multi-generational approach to restoring and repairing the damages inflicted upon African descendants; and finally changes to the systems and institutions that made it possible for these atrocities to take place in the past and ensures they never take place again in the future.

America Must Atone for the Holocaust of African Enslavement. Forgiveness and the road forward to a future truly based on freedom, justice, and equality demands a substantive discussion about the African Descendants demand for Reparations. I urge you to take the necessary steps to pass HR40. Thank you.