

## EDITORIAL/OPINION

### National African American Reparations Commission Applauds Congressman Conyers on his Revised HR40 Reparations Bill

*The Bill Seeks Remedies for the Ongoing Effects of Slavery*

The reparations movement in the United States and around the world took a significant step forward last week when Congressman John Conyers, the longest serving member of the US Congress, introduced a revised version of HR40, his long-standing reparations bill, at the start of the 115th Congress.

The new bill, entitled, *The Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act*, will focus on reparations remedies.

"The revised bill reflects the advances in the legal and societal discussion of the transatlantic slave trade and reparations," said Congressman Conyers. "The call for reparations represents a commitment to entering a constructive dialogue on the role of slavery and racism in shaping present-day conditions both in our community and in American society as a whole.

Slavery is a blemish on this nation's history, and until it is formally addressed, our country's story will remain marked by this blight."

The revised bill has received enthusiastic support from advocates for reparatory justice in the United States and across the globe. To date, some 20 members of the US Congress along with dozens of national associations and civil society organizations are supporting the bill and

Congressman Conyers hopes to garner up to 100 co-sponsors in the weeks ahead.

Dr. Ron Daniels, convenor and chairman of the National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC), and President of the Institute of the Black World (IBW), applauded the new version of HR40.

"Once again, Congressman John Conyers is to be commended for his vision and courage for introducing this vital measure," said Daniels. "Updating HR-40 to examine reparations remedies is a significant step forward in addressing the devastating inter-generational harms inflicted by centuries of enslavement and structural racism on African Americans.

This assessment and action is especially important given the "state of emergency" in numerous Black communities across this country," added Daniels.

Kamm Howard, chairman of the Legislative Committee of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (NCOBRA), and a member of NAARC, played a leading role in mobilizing public support for the new bill.

In adding his commendations to the revised bill, Howard said, "NCOBRA is very pleased with the forward, progressive action of Congressman Conyers with the introduction of the revised HR40. The new legislation, in accord with international

norms and standards of reparatory justice, seeks to truly address the multi-generational injury, mass inequalities and discrimination that plague, and will continue to plague African descendants in America, if left un-addressed.

This can be model legislation for African Descendants globally."

The revised version of HR40 comes in the wake of other important developments in the global movement for reparatory justice in recent months. National reparations commissions are currently in formation in Canada, Britain, Brazil, Colombia and also in Central America.

And, in 2016 the Illinois State Assembly passed a unanimous resolution supporting the establishment of a reparations study commission in that state and called on President Obama to establish a similar commission at the Federal level before he leaves office.

The National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC) noted that in the past, the focus on the social effects of slavery, segregation and its continuing economic implications remained largely ignored by US mainstream analysis.

Yet, these economic issues are the root cause of many critical issues in the African-American community today, such as education, healthcare and criminal justice policy, including policing practices.

### Statement by Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch on the Sentencing of Dylan Roof

Washington, D.C. - Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch released the following statement on the sentencing of Dylann Roof:

"On June 17, 2015, Dylann Storm Roof sought out and opened fire on African-American parishioners engaged in worship and bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

He did so because of their race. And he did so to interfere with their peaceful exercise of religion. The victims in the case led lives as compassionate civic and religious leaders, devoted public servants and teachers and beloved family members and friends.

They include a young man in the bloom of youth and an 87-year-old grandmother who still sang in the church choir. We remember those who have suffered, and especially those that lost their lives; Cynthia Graham Hurd, 54, Susie Jackson, 87, Ethel Lance, 70, Reverend DePayne Middleton Doctor, 49, Reverend Clementa Pinckney, 41, Tywanza Sanders, 26, Reverend Daniel Simmons Sr., 74, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, 45 and Myra Thompson, 59.

Today, a jury of his peers considered the actions Roof took on that fateful day, and they rendered a verdict that will hold him accountable for his choices.

No verdict can bring back the nine we lost that day at Mother Emanuel. And no verdict can heal the wounds of the five church members who survived the attack or the souls of those who lost loved ones to Roof's callous hand.

But we hope that the completion of the prosecution provides the people of Charleston, and the people of our nation, with a measure of closure. We thank the jurors for their service, the people of Charleston for their strength and support, and the law enforcement community in South Carolina and throughout the country for their vital work on this case."

### Sessions' Testimony "A Whole Lot of Nothing"

Washington, D.C. - Senator Jeff Sessions' commitment to upholding the rights and freedoms of Americans as Attorney General remains in doubt following his testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee recently, according to Alliance for Justice President Nan Aron who issued the following statement:

"What we heard from Senator Sessions at his hearing was frankly a whole lot of nothing. We heard plenty of pat assurances that he'll follow the law, but none of the passion for civil rights, intellectual firepower or commitment to the cause of justice that an Attorney General should possess.

Senator Sessions was certainly much better rehearsed than he was at his hearing for a federal judgeship thirty years ago. But he did nothing to inspire confidence in his ability to be the lawyer for the American people.

On key issues of abortion, marriage equality, and the U.S. prohibition against torture, Senator Sessions offered pledges to uphold the law, but failed to show any investment in the principles at stake.

He evaded direct

answers to questions about whether Americans could again be interned as Japanese-Americans were in World War II; whether he supported the use of an especially inhumane punishment in Alabama prisons known as the "hitching post;" and what should be the fate of 800,000 children of immigrants, the "DREAMers" President-elect Trump threatens to deport.

On other points, his answers were more specific but no more reassuring. Asked whether there ought to be a religious test for immigrants entering the U.S., Senator Sessions said no, but qualified his answers to leave room for a wide range of subjective exceptions.

He claimed that the Voter ID laws widely understood to discriminate against African-American voters were probably acceptable, and appeared to double down on his past claims that the Voting Rights Act was "intrusive legislation."

His response to a probing line of questions about his participation in civil rights cases was especially troubling. Pressed by Senator Al Franken to explain his involve-

ment in cases he listed on his Senate Judiciary Questionnaire as among the most important he had personally handled, Senator Sessions let slip that he had never met an attorney who had handled one of those cases.

Senator Sessions also failed to inspire confidence that he would be an effective check on the myriad conflicts of interest likely to plague President-elect Trump. In response to repeated questioning about whether he would be willing to appoint a special counsel to investigate such conflicts, or whether the President-elect should be subject to the Emoluments Clause, Senator Sessions offered only qualified answers or claimed insufficient familiarity with the circumstances.

He showed no demonstrable concern about the risk of conflicts, or commitment to independence from the president-elect. Alliance for Justice remains deeply concerned about the lack of transparency and clarity in Senator Sessions' responses to many legitimate questions about his positions, past and present.

### Colleges Are Failing to Prepare Students for Work Here's the Solution

By Francine Glazer

Job prospects for today's college seniors are looking up. The hiring of bachelors-degree holders is expected to jump by 19 percent this year.

But few are actually prepared for employment. Even though nine in 10 recent college grads believe they're ready for the workforce, only half the nation's employers agree.

Colleges and universities need to address this. Specifically, they should aggressively incorporate into their courses high-impact educational practices (HIP), which connect academic lessons to real-world problems and foster the creativity and critical thinking employer's value. These practices can turn academically engaged students into profession-ready graduates.

Today, academic skills alone aren't sufficient for career success. Employers also want workers who communicate effectively, know how to manage their time, and can get a task done

with minimal supervision. Indeed, over 90 percent of businesses value such "soft" aptitudes more highly than any specific college major.

High-impact practices provide this pre-professional base, often through extended research, collaborative projects, or community-based service jobs. In every case, a central feature is frequent, rigorous feedback.

Students improve through input from peers and professors. Instead of toiling away at solo homework assignments and term papers, students operate in an environment that approximates the working world.

It's no surprise, then, that students feel more confident with their professional prospects after participating in HIP, with 75 percent reporting that this work prepared them for life after college.

Employers also highly value HIP experience. Ninety-four percent of employers are more likely to hire a recent college grad who has completed a long-term project that included intensive re-

search and problem-solving skills.

And student participants don't have to wait until they get to the workplace before reaping the benefits, since HIP programs immediately enhance their academic performance.

Consider a study of nearly 400 colleges and universities. Researchers tracked students in "learning communities," where folks took classes together and lived in close proximity, and found that these students put more effort into their school work, took harder courses, and developed closer relationships with faculty than those who did not.

Likewise, research from Kent State University shows that students with more HIP engagement have higher GPAs. Some higher-education institutions have already recognized the power of HIP.

At the University of Iowa, for example, students interested in business live together in the "BizHawks"

### SC Middle Schoolers...

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The Future City Competition is a project-based learning experience where students in 6th, 7th and 8th grade imagine, research, design, and build cities of the future. Keeping the engineering design process and project management front and center, students are asked to address an authentic, real-world question: How can we make the world a better place?

A recent study by the UN-Habitat's Global Urban Observatories Unit found that cities that devoted about 50 percent of their space to public use tended to be more prosperous and have a higher quality of life.

To commemorate its 25th year, Future City is honoring those whose tireless con-

tributions make the competition possible. Highlighted on its social media pages and on FutureCity.org are blog posts featuring 25 exceptional students, educators, mentors, volunteers and partners who have participated in the program - past and present.

One of the nation's leading engineering education programs and among the most popular, Future City has received national recognition and acclaim for its role in encouraging middle schoolers nationwide to develop their interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

In 2016, the Future City Competition was the recipient of the 2016 Henry C. Turner Prize for Inno-

vation in Construction, presented by Turner Construction Company and the National Building Museum.

In 2015, Future City was named the grand prize winner in the UL (Underwriters Laboratories Inc.) Innovative Education Award program, receiving a \$100,000 award.

The UL award highlights the essential, urgent and significant value of E-STEM education.

Major funding for the Finals comes from Bechtel Corporation, Bentley Systems, Shell Oil Company, and DiscoverE. To learn more, visit [www.futurecity.org](http://www.futurecity.org).

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