

## **Community of Eligibility Panel - Jessica Ann Mitchell Aiwuyor Testimony**

### **To the AB 3121: Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans:**

Thank you for your work and for including me in this critical discussion concerning reparations and the future of Black America.

My name is Jessica Ann Mitchell Aiwuyor, and I am a descendant of Africans that were enslaved in Georgia and South Carolina. My family descends from enslaved Africans located in Georgetown, Charleston, and Florence, South Carolina, on my paternal side. On my maternal side, my family descends from enslaved Africans in Warren County, Georgia.

My oldest known ancestor from this side is John Hamilton, born in 1853, and his wife Delaney Hamilton, born in 1857, both designated "Mulattos" in the 1880 U.S. Census and later "Black" in Warren, County GA. Their granddaughter Flossie Hamilton was my great-grandmother, later known as Flossie H Wilder when she married my great-grandfather George Pierce Wilder.

Though by the time of their marriage, slavery had been technically abolished, like many other African Americans living in the South, Flossie and George were not allowed to live freely due to the oppressive system of sharecropping that made many Black families indebted and penalized for trying to leave. So they fled in the middle of the night with their children to Augusta, Georgia, where most of my maternal family resides today.

Flossie and George are not distant relatives that I learned about through other people. They were still alive when I was born. And I spent time with them growing up as a young child. Though decades removed from the plantation, George still feared that the overseer was coming to get him, and he would swear that he saw them waiting for him around the corner.

Though he was free, my great grandfather never fully felt or lived freedom, constantly experiencing post-traumatic stress, passed down to this family as epigenetic harms.

I bring up this story because it highlights two significant factors of importance concerning the community of eligibility: lineage and harms. For reparative justice, both lineage and harms should be considered if possible. The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade, chattel slavery, Jim Crow, and systemic racism are complex systems - with complex histories, experiences, and harms. There is no one sufficient answer to address these complexities.

### **I will now review and analyze the following key discussion points (one-by-one):**

- Lineage and Special Consideration to Direct Descendants of Africans Enslaved in the United States

- Proof of Lineage for recipients of reparations for chattel slavery, Jim Crow, and subsequent harms
- The question of Black immigrants
- Remedies for Harms of Systemic Racism

**In conclusion, I will discuss how Reparative Justice can be implemented through a three-pronged approach that is both lineage and harms-based.**

- Reparations for Chattel Slavery and Jim Crow
- Satisfying eligibility requirements without causing additional harms
- Understanding Remedies for Harms of Systemic Racism and Black Communities

Thank you for your time and consideration.