

(Title Slide 1) Good afternoon Madam Chair, members of the Task Force and happy Black History month! It's a pleasure to see you all again. Thank you for this opportunity to present a report on the modern Reparations movement from the point of view of the grassroots activists nationally who came together, engaged in the work and who have been driving the Reparations momentum for several years now. It's an incredible honor to be here today representing the National Assembly of American Slavery Descendants or "NAASD." We are a network of grassroots organizations and affiliates that formed in 2019 for the explicit purpose of advocating for compensatory Reparations for Black Americans who are descendants of persons enslaved in the United States.

(Slide 2) In honor of Freedmen history, I would like to start by showing appreciation to a few notable Reparationists who laid the groundwork for the modern movement. In no particular order, these include Rev. Garrison Frazier, Henrietta Wood, Frederick Douglass, Callie D. Guy House, Rev. Isaiah Dickerson, Queen Mother Audley Moore, Father Divine, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, Dr. Claud Anderson, Randall Robinson, Johnnie Lee Cochran, Jr., Charles J. Ogletree, Congressman John Conyers, Dr. William Darity and Kirsten Mullen. Without their selfless contributions and sacrifices, I doubt we would be here today.

(Slide 3) On a personal note, I want to wish my grandmother Bernice Allen-Stimley a happy, early, heavenly birthday today. She was born February 24th, 1909 in Meehan Junction, MS- a town you won't find on a map. She was a remarkable woman and a community nurturer. At top right is pictured Stimley-Allen grocery store that she and my grandfather, Charles, owned and operated for several years in their neighborhood of Georgetown in Jackson, MS. She loved our people dearly and deeply, worked to better her community and instilled the same ethic in her children and grandchildren.

On the left she is in her 100th year of life casting a vote in 2008 for Barack Obama. I saw the joy of someone who was the grandchild of enslaved people, had lived ½ her life under virulent Jim Crow terrorism, now able to vote for a "Black" president.

(Slide 4) The modern-day Reparations movement can be framed into two distinct phases, each characterized by its unique goals, strategies, leadership and effectiveness. Here I have bulleted a few distinguishing characteristics and milestones of each phase.

Phase 1 of the modern movement or, as I will call it, the Legacy Phase, saw the founding of the National Coalition for Black Reparations in America (N'COBRA) in 1987, gained momentum following the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, and triumphed with the introduction of Congressman Conyers' HR40 in 1989. This phase is largely characterized by Pan African ideology and led by the activists of N'COBRA and, its more recently founded partner organization, National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC). This phase gave rise to Federal Reparations legislation HR40 and kept the Reparations conversation alive. However, the Legacy phase of the modern Reparations movement unfortunately produced no significant national support for HR40 in 30 years of legislative life.

Phase 2 or the Contemporary Reparations movement began circa 2016 in the aftermath of the Obama administration and coalesced in online conversations around political education, data and lineage, which remain core pillars of this phase. The Contemporary movement was born out of the Black American

grassroots and is led by Black American grassroots organizers and activists who are self-advocating for our shared goals of Federal Reparations and lineage-based public policy. It's in Phase 2 that organizations such as NAASD and Coalition for a Just and Equitable California (CJEC) were born. The grassroots advocacy of these and other Contemporary Reparationist groups is principally responsible for mainstreaming Reparations and for moving Congressional and public support of HR40 to an all-time high. This Contemporary phase of the modern Reparations movement is where I am most familiar and where I will focus today.

(Slide 5) The Contemporary Reparations movement began largely in response to the failure of the Obama administration to produce any tangible results for most of Black America. For 8 years, other groups received policy and protections while Black Americans received a consistent diet of symbolism and cautious rhetoric. Adding insult to injury, the federal government's response to the extrajudicial police murders of Eric Garner, Mike Brown, Tamir Rice and Laquan MacDonald was the "Blue Alert Act" which granted more protections to police officers. Contemporary Reparationists view these years as a failure (1) of both the federal government to specifically address the Black American community's interests and (2) of the Black political apparatus to focus on a reparative policy agenda and hold our elected officials accountable to it.

(Slide 6) The Contemporary Reparations movement is also rooted in quantifiable data. A central tenet of Contemporary Reparationists is that if it can be measured, it can be improved. Grassroots Reparations activists across the country are studying, tracking, processing and advocating for wealth data that uncovers the specific, unique and urgent economic plight of Black American communities.

When reviewing the Obama years through data, we were able to see that outcomes specifically for Black Americans were disastrous. Between 2008 and 2016 Black American wealth declined sharply as white wealth hit new heights facilitated by government bailouts and financial assistance - further exacerbating the lineage wealth gap.

In online conversations, everyday Black Americans began to discuss what effective Black politics could and should look like. With burgeoning political education and a lens of data, Black America's decline as a result of government policy became apparent. Data also revealed the unique nature of Black American divestment compared to other "Black" groups. With release of the multi-city "Color of Wealth" reports in 2016 by Duke University, The New School, and UCLA, Contemporary Reparationists gained access to disaggregated Black wealth data and for the first time the wide wealth disparities between Black Americans who descend from US chattel slavery and more recent Black immigrants came into full view. In summary, we learned lineage was the key and that Black American politics must be agenda-focused and lineage first.

(Slide 7) Since formation, it has been NAASD's position that Black American descendants of US chattel slavery are the appropriate beneficiary class and that any Reparations effort must center the descendant community based on lineage. This is also not a new concept.

In his final book, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community," Dr. King writes,

"Every man must ultimately confront the question, "Who am I?" and seek to answer it honestly..."

“Who are we? We are the descendants of slaves. We are the offspring of noble men and women who were kidnapped from their native land and chained in ships like beasts.”

“But we are also Americans. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America, In spite of the psychological appeals of identification with Africa, the Negro must face the fact that America is now his home, a home that he helped build through “blood, sweat and tears.”

That was 1968.

This Task Force will make history this week when you vote on the question of who should be eligible for Reparations in California. We believe Dr. Weber was clear, just as Dr. King was clear, in their intent to center lineage in Black American identity and repair. NAASD is confident the Task Force, after hearing all of the evidence, will make the correct decision.

I should note here, that in addition to our recentering of Black American identity around descendant lineage, Contemporary Reparationists have resurfaced and affirmed our long lost political status as American Freedmen conferred onto the formerly enslaved in 1865 through Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th amendment to the US Constitution. By lineage we are Descendants of slaves. By political status, we are American Freedmen. Both will be necessary to ultimately reach our goal of Reparations..

(Slide 8) Also in 1968, in his “Two Nations of Black America” address, Dr. King provided marching orders to Contemporary Reparationists.

[Play video]

(Slide 9) Driven by political education, rooted in data and with the urgency of pending economic extinction, contemporary Reparations activists emerged all across America committed to completing Dr. King’s mission of economic justice. We came together offline, we organized and we went to work.

(Slide 10) As we spread the Reparations message in our communities, the Contemporary movement grew. From hundreds to thousands to tens of thousands, soon to be millions.

(Slide 11) Grassroots Black Americans across the country took action and began to self-advocate our collective interests, centering Reparations and lineage-specific policy.

(Slide 12) We sought out our representatives both locally and nationally and demanded their support for Reparations in exchange for our voting capital.

(Slide 13) When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the country in 2020, Contemporary Reparationists continued to advocate virtually utilizing technology to communicate and organize. The pandemic has been a test of the strength and resilience of the Contemporary Reparations movement– but the grassroots have proven sturdy.

(Slide 14) When corporate interests attacked the Civil Rights Act of 1866 seeking to roll back our oldest and most fundamental Constitutional protections, it was grassroots Reparations activists that rallied and protested on the steps of the Supreme Court in defense.

(Slide 15) Here you can plainly see the impact of the second, Contemporary phase of the modern Reparations movement. Before the emergence of contemporary Reparationists, HR40 had not achieved more than 50 co-sponsors in any legislative session. It is the work of grassroots Reparationists nationally that should be credited for the nearly 200 Congressional co-sponsors now attached to the bill. The chart to the right shows the dramatic and correlating increase in internet searches for “Reparations” which took off circa 2019 – again pointing to the impact of the Black grassroots.

(Slide 16) The grassroots Reparations work has been effective, compelling on Juneteenth 2019, for the first time in a decade, a hearing on HR40 by the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. On that day, anyone paying attention, could again see the Black grassroots impact throughout the halls of Capitol Hill. The Black American grassroots was clearly demanding to be heard on Reparations.

(Slide 17) On the subject of HR40, it’s important to clarify the position of NAASD and of Black American Contemporary Reparationists. HR40 is a poorly constructed piece of legislation that has undergone significant revisions in recent years. These revisions threaten its integrity and chances for success. Among its myriad of flaws stand out the fact that: 1) HR40 does not specifically identify eligible recipients for Reparations; 2) HR40 does not speak to direct payments to eligible recipients; 3) HR40 does not identify closure of the lineage wealth gap as a primary goal of Reparations; 4) HR40 does not identify the Federal government as the capable and culpable party for Reparations.

But, in addition to those legislative flaws, the April 2021 revision of HR40 removed application of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) that ensures transparent deliberations, public meetings, and ongoing public reporting, while also maintaining GS-18 equivalent compensation as payments to commission members. That is unacceptable to Contemporary Reparationists.

For several years NAASD and our affiliates supported HR40, but we have also persistently advocated for edits to fix these flaws in order to strengthen the bill’s chances of becoming law. Thus far, our calls have gone unanswered. As grassroots Black American Reparationists truly and selflessly committed to the goal of Reparations, we find ourselves unable to support HR40 any longer. Stated clearly, support of HR40 in its present form is not support of Black American Reparations. Our community has been awaiting Reparations for more than 150 years and we deserve strong Federal legislation that has the best chance of success.

(Slide 18) Notably, NAASD’s position on HR40 aligns with leading Reparations scholars Dr. William Sandy Darity and Kirsten Mullen, foremost American Constitutional scholar and UC Berkely Law Dean Erwin Chemerinsky, and Mr. John Tateishi, former Director of the successful Japanese American Redress campaign that produced the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. It would be foolhardy not to heed their expert warnings.

I believe you all agree that California is leading the Reparations conversation and that what is done here will resonate with the Federal government. In that leadership capacity, part of your responsibility is to advocate for Federal legislation and a process that mirrors AB3121, particularly in specificity on eligibility and transparency to the Black American grassroots community. Please be bold in that leadership.

(Slide 19) Policy writing is a core component of NAASD's contemporary Reparations advocacy and we have developed a strong alternative bill to HR40 that we are calling "HR1865" paying homage to the year of American Freedmen Emancipation. HR1865 has the support of Dr. William Darity and Kirsten Mullen, and NAASD is presently seeking a Congressional sponsor to introduce the legislation. In the same way Contemporary Reparationists uplifted HR40, we will build grassroots support around HR1865, a true Reparations bill.

In addition to improved Federal Reparations legislation, in August 2021, NAASD released the historic REPAIR Act, which is an acronym for Reconciliation, Equity, Protections, Atonement, Investment and Remuneration. The REPAIR Act is a lineage-based, policy platform designed to address the deep inequities Black Americans face across all areas of socio-economic activity. We have shared the REPAIR Act with various Biden administration staffers including the Domestic Policy Council whose feedback was that it was the most comprehensive policy package they had ever seen from a grassroots advocacy group.

Priorities for Presidential Action, a subset of the REPAIR Act, consists of 12 legislative memos that can immediately be enacted via Presidential Executive Order. Chief among them are: Formation of the John Conyers' Reparations Commission based on HR1865; Creation of a new Census Designation specifically for Black American U.S. Slavery descendants; and re-establishment of a National Freedmen's Bureau.

(Slide 20) Specific to California, NAASD, CJEC and local affiliates have been advocating around AB3121 before there was a bill called AB3121. And when formally introduced in the California State Assembly, members of NAASD Los Angeles and CJEC played a pivotal role in crafting the eligibility language that appears in AB3121 today. We worked closely with Dr. Shirley Weber, state legislators and community stakeholders for years to advance, raise awareness and ultimately pass AB3121 into law. This hard work was recently recognized with the selection of CJEC as an Anchor organization.

Other local legislative efforts of NAASD and CJEC include AB1604: The Upward Mobility Act of 2022. This bill, introduced in the current session of the California State Assembly, contains language that would for the first time ever require all state agencies, boards and commissions to disaggregate the "Black/AA " category in their data collection and collect data specifically on the Black American descendant community. This is an historic effort essential to the output and efficacy of this Reparations body. NAASD and affiliated grassroots Reparationists are pushing similar data disaggregation efforts in New York, Maryland, and Texas.

NAASD and CJEC are also rallying support around ACA3: The California Slavery Abolition Act, a bill that will finally close the abomination of a slavery loophole in the California State Constitution ending involuntary servitude as punishment for crime in the state. NAASD and CJEC are proud to also partner with Mr. Samuel Brown, principal author of ACA3 who crafted the bill's language while serving a 24 year incarceration sentence. If Samuel is watching, welcome home again brother and thank you for your work.

In 2021, following meetings between NAASD Los Angeles and Mayor Eric Garcetti, Executive Director of the LA Civil Rights Department Capri Maddox, and Deputy Mayor Brenda Shockley, the Mayor introduced a Reparations Commission similar to this Task Force. The LA Commission will serve in an advisory capacity to the Mayor, develop a pilot reparations program and NAASD Co-chair KJ Muhammad has been appointed to the Commission by Mayor Garcetti.

(Slide 21) Here you see some of NAASD's partner organizations and affiliates, who are working in tandem with us to achieve the goal of Federal Reparations for the Descendant community. We are

committed to educating and training American Freedmen, the Black American Descendants of US Chattel Slavery, around civic engagement, political science, non-profit formation, and policy writing so that our people can self-advocate and be successful. Education and training are hallmarks of the Contemporary Reparations movement.

(Slide 22) Finally, last year I had the honor to interview two living icons of the Civil Rights movement, Mr. Courtland Cox and Mr. David Dennis, Sr., both of whom worked alongside Dr. King, Medgar Evers, Stokely Carmichael, Ella Baker, James Farmer, and many other Black American freedom fighters of the 1960's. In conversations with Mr. Cox and Mr. Dennis, they shared the movement ideology that fueled their advocacy and success. Simply stated, that ideology is that movements are best bottom up, not top down and movements are fundamentally about people, not organizations. That is the same ideology which drives the Contemporary phase of the modern Reparations movement and, in that spirit, this slide recognizes some of the grassroots organizers and activists who are makers of the modern movement.

(Slide 23) In closing, we descendants of slaves, the emancipated American Freedmen, the builders of this country, are owed a debt of Reparations by the US government. We are coming to get our check.

All Power to the People and Reparations By Any Means Necessary.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.