NBUF, Genocide, and the Reparations Movement

Dr. Conrad W. Worrill
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By Conrad W. Worrill

Introduction

The National Black United Front (NBUF) launched the NBUF Genocide Campaign in October of 1996 and this initiation brought NBUF into a more active role in the worldwide Reparations Movement. We began to work closer with the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA), an organization that NBUF has supported as an organizational member since the inception of N'COBRA in 1988. NBUF's work in the Reparations Movement then intensified through an alliance with the December 12th Movement. The primary focus of this alliance has been the organization of African people for participation in the United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa (August 31 to September 7, 2001).

During the past two years, NBUF and the December 12th Movement, along with African governments, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the African and African Descendants Caucus, have fought for inclusion of the Africa Group Resolution in the World Conference Against Racism Durban Declaration. This resolution takes the position that both the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery were Crimes Against Humanity and that adjudication of these crimes requires an examination of the Economic Roots of Racism. This position is the basis of the Movement's stance regarding reparations for people of African descent. The European Union, led by the United States, is opposed to the inclusion of the resolution

Acknowledgements

The Creator has a way of inspiring us to continue the struggle for the redemption, salvation, and liberation of African people. This book is just a small contribution to this on-going project. I'd like to thank my secretary Rosetta Cash, my lifelong friend Leon Harris, and my elders Floyd Rowland and Dr. Jacob Carruthers for all of they did to make this project successful. Without family and extended family there is no movement. In this regard, I'd like to thank my wife Talibah and all of my daughters for their continued love and support.

Finally, I want to thank all of the members, supporters, and friends of NBUF whose undying dedication to the African Liberation Movement is unquestioned since our founding convention twenty-two years ago. Let us honor our ancestors as we follow in their footsteps.

Hotep and Black Power!

Conrad W. Worrill
National Chairman
National Black United Front
August 8, 2001
in the Durban Declaration. They obviously do not want to admit that the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery were Crimes Against Humanity, nor do they want to be found culpable and liable for reparations.

Our voices have been loud and clear as we continue our effort to organize our people to participate in WCAR. In this regard, the theme of NBUF's Twenty-Second Annual Convention in San Francisco, California (July 12–15, 2001) was “Reparations: The Key to the African Struggle—Building a Black Mass Movement through Block-By-Block Organizing.” The central focus of the convention was the growing interest in reparations among people of African descent in the United States, as well as the rest of the world, and the various demands and strategies in the worldwide African Reparations Movement.

This growing demand for reparations is fueled by ongoing, long-term racist governmental policies and practices. The interest has moved beyond the scope of the slave trade, chattel slavery, and the “Jim Crow” era to encompass a more comprehensive case for reparations against not only governments, but also the private corporate intitnies. NBUF takes the position that this more comprehensive case and the emerging strategies for the organization of our people around the case for reparations is a means of addressing the larger and more important issue of mobilizing our people for the total liberation of African people worldwide.

Historical Background of NBUF

NBUF has been in existence twenty-two years. It grew out of the spirit of the 1960s and 70s when African people in this country were aggressively organizing around numerous issues. The activism of the Civil Rights Movement and its challenges against de jure and de facto segregation was a spark that set off the mass movement of African people in America. The organization and mobilization of the Civil Rights Movement provided the springboard for the emergence of the Black Power phase of our movement in the late 1960s and the renewed call for Black Nationalism and Pan Africanism.

Through the disruptive tactics of the United States Government via its counterintelligence programs, also known as COINTEL PRO, the African Liberation Movement in America suffered serious setbacks. Many leading activists and organizers were arrested and convicted on false charges, some of whom remain locked up as political prisoners. Others such as Malcolm X, Dr. King, Fred Hampton, and Mark Clark were assassinated or otherwise silenced.

Thus, by the late 1970s, the African Liberation Movement was in serious disarray. This stimulated numerous leading black activists, organizers, and leaders to convene a series of meetings. A meeting of several organizations was held in 1976 and another in 1977, both in Brooklyn, New York. The purpose was to address the ideological disunity among the various forces in the Black Movement and to formulate a united front. Many members of NBUF remember the all-day meetings held in the East in an attempt at national unity. But the discrete commitments,
points of view, and organizational interests were intransigent. The mistrust and apprehensions of the past years lingered in the memories of most participants. However, a core group of participants in these meetings from around the country agreed that it was urgent that a call be made to convene the founding convention of the National Black United Front/NBUF.

The founding convention was held in Brooklyn, New York at the Old Armory in June of 1980. More than one thousand activists from thirty-four states and five foreign countries participated in this four-day convention. Rev. Herbert Daughtry was elected the interim National Chairman, and a draft of the Constitution and By Laws was approved. Rev. Daughtry was elected chairman and served until 1985 when I was elected chairman, a post I have held since then.

At the second national convention in July of 1981, which was also held in Brooklyn, NBUF ratified a permanent Constitution, By Laws, and leadership structure. NBUF Chapters emerged across the country in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Raleigh, Greensboro, Mississippi, Houston, Dallas, Kansas City, St. Louis, Portland, Seattle, the Bay Area, Muskegon, Lansing, Detroit, New York, New Jersey, Milwaukee, Memphis, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. Most of these chapters continue to function today, twenty-two years later.

Over this twenty-two year period, NBUF has organized around the following principles:

- To struggle for self determination, liberation, and power for African People in the United States.

- To work in common struggle with African liberation movements and African people throughout the world.

- To build a politically conscious, unified, committed, and effective African mass movement.

- To struggle to eliminate racism (including Zionism and Apartheid), sexism (the oppression, exploitation, and inequality of women), monopoly capitalism, colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism, and national oppression.

- To maintain strict political and financial independence of the National Black United Front.

- To build unity and common struggle with oppressed peoples in the United States and throughout the world, as long as the best interests of people of African descent are not contradicted or compromised.

- To continue to struggle to maximize the unity of the African Liberation Movement and people of African descent; to eliminate internal violence, character assassination, and self-destruction; to establish a viable process to arbitrate all major conflicts within the African Liberation Movement and the African community.

- To continue the political/cultural revolution to create a new vision and value system and a new
man, woman, and child based on the common struggle around the needs of the African majority.¹

NBUF believes that in order for African people in America to become free, self-reliant, and independent, we must be organized. Therefore, we believe all African people should join an organization that works in the interest of African people. We believe that the National Black United Front is one such organization.

Key Concepts in the Reparations Movement

At this current stage of history in the Reparations Movement, it is important that key concepts be revisited and re-discussed in our continued efforts to seek clarity on the ideas that are fundamental to the white supremacy foundation of America and why African people are owed reparations worldwide.

First, there is the idea and concept of the African Holocaust of Enslavement, which we refer to as the Maafa.² The term Maafa is the Ki-Swahili word for disaster which we are now using in addition to the use of holocaust to reclaim the right to tell our own story. When we discuss genocide against African people in America, we must also discuss the African Holocaust, because it was this Holocaust that has historically created the ongoing genocidal conditions inflicted upon African people in America.

Holocaust is generally defined as “any widespread destruction.” Certainly our encounter with the European world during the last six hundred years has generated a history that has been both destructive and disastrous for African people. As African Holocaust researcher Michael Scott explains, “No African was waiting as a slave to be traded to the Europeans. In all regions of Africa, from which Africans were transported, the African was involved in a brutal war declared by the European aggressor, interested in exploiting the human and natural resources of the richest continent on the earth.”³ Further, Brother Scott reveals, “These Africans who became prisoners of war were placed in detention camps and then transported to the Americas to be enslaved by the benefactors of their captors. No African began his or her ordeal as a slave. Africans were reduced to slavery by conquest.”⁴

It is important for African people to understand and internalize these historical facts, just as the Jews, or any other group of people in the world, have internalized their holocaust and acted accordingly. African people must come to the collective reality that there is an African Holocaust and then act in a manner consistent with this reality.

Finally, Brother Scott instructs us that,

Our foreparents were innocent victims of this heinous system of forced labor. They were never able to comprehend being seized in early morning attacks on their villages by vicious raiding parties. They were never able to understand why the avaricious middlemen were selling them. They could never fathom why they were being marched in fetters and chains to the coast where they were bartered for European merchandise especially rum
and guns. They could never appreciate why they were being warehoused in hell-like dungeons in Elmina and Goree.¹⁵

Once black people have an insight into the idea and concept of the African Holocaust, it should be easier to understand the idea and concept of genocide. Olomenji, in White Genocide, Black Obsolescence, the Question of Black Survival in White America, defines genocide very succinctly as the “deliberate and systematic destruction of Black people by white American socio-economic and cultural forces.”"⁶ According to Brother Olomenji, America has created an ideology that justifies the annihilation of African people in this country. This is the function of genocide by those who inflict it on a mass of people. That is, they created a rationale for the annihilation and then try to camouflage its existence.

According to Professor Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz of California State University at Hayward, “the issue of African slavery in the United States falls within the 1948 Genocide Convention, an international treaty that has no statute of limitations and is retroactive.”⁷ The provisions of the Genocide Convention are:

**Article 1.**
The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law, which they undertake to prevent and punish

**Article 2.**
In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following Acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group such as:

a) killing members of the group  
b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group  
c) Deliberately inflicting on the group, conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part  
d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group  
e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

*Article 3.*
The following acts shall be punishable:

a) Genocide  
b) Conspiracy to commit genocide  
c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide  
d) Attempt to commit genocide  
e) Complicity in genocide⁸

As a result of the African Holocaust and the act of genocide against African people in America, the demand for reparations must be expanded, and support for the work of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America must be increased.

Reparations simply means repair for injuries, harm, and damages. As it has been pointed out, over and over again, we were the victims of the European slave enterprise which reduced us to chattel for nearly 250 years with no
compensation for our labor. After “emancipation,” slave-like conditions prevailed throughout Reconstruction and beyond. White men and white women stole and criminally appropriated the labor of black people and then passed the wealth accumulated from the enterprise to their children through inheritance. This process helped create the United States of America (and Europe), a fundamental premise of the movement for reparations.

A significant part of the agenda is extensive education to dismantle the mental shackles that limit African people. Every race and ethnic group in the world protects their interests and African People must do no less.

A Historical Sketch of the Reparations Movement

When we discuss reparations for African people in the United States we are talking about “slave labor, humanity, culture, legacies, names, language that were taken outside of the law and natural process by forceful demand of white captive slaveowners.”

The Reparations Movement for African people in America emerged from:

The National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief Bounty and Pension Assocation in the 1890s. According to the research of Mary Berry, Sister [Callie] House organized a black mass movement demanding reparations from the 1890s to 1915. Berry reveals that, “working through meetings, literature, and traveling agents, the organization successfully developed membership across the South as well as...Oklahoma, Kansas, Indiana, Ohio, and New York.”

Further, Berry pointed out:

The Association’s 25 cents annual membership fee and the ten-cent monthly dues, along with $2.50 charged local affiliates for a Charter, augmented by an occasional extraordinary levy of five-cents to defray special expenses, provided the funds for this mass-based movement’s work. The objective was to organize a demand throughout the Black nation which would force the United States to provide the needed and well deserved pensions they sought for the aging persons formerly held in slavery, their surviving spouses, care-givers, and heirs.

In Eight Women Leaders of the Reparations Movement U. S. A., Linda Allen Eustace and Dr. Imari Obadele state that, “[Led by Sister House,] the movement’s successful organizing, coupled with the ubiquitous white supremacist values of whites generally and especially United States officials, which disposed them in those days, as today, to attempt to defeat any significant self help efforts among Black people resulted in a ten year postal investigation.”

Eustace and Obadele point out that, “after finding no evidence of federal violations, U. S. officials indicted Ms. House and a number of other members, at Nashville for fraud, for using the mail to distribute one of the Association’s carefully drawn leaflets. She was found guilty and sentenced to a year and a day in the federal prison at Jefferson City.”
Although this phase of the Reparations Movement was not successful, its spirit and demand were revived in the Garvey Movement, and it resurfaced again through the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X in the 1960s, making the demand for reparations through *Muhammad Speaks*, the print voice of the Nation of Islam. The Republic of New Africa made a reparations demand in 1968, demanding payment of $400 billion in damages for slavery.\(^{14}\)

The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America was organized in 1988 following in the tradition of Sister Callie House. Since 1988, N’COBRA has developed a number of strategies designed to gain reparations for African people in America and to also help advance international efforts to win reparations.

In each session of the United States Congress since 1989, Congressman John Conyers has introduced a bill calling for the U.S. government to hold a probing study of reparations. This bill is currently receiving wide support, primarily due to the work of N’COBRA.

Beginning in the late 1980s, to the present day, a string of organizations, including the December 12th Movement, the Uhuru Movement, IHRAAM, The Lost and Found Nation of Islam, the Republic of New Africa, and the National Black United Front has continued to organize around the demand for reparations. Recently, the Tulsa Race Riot Commission, under the leadership of Representative Donn Ross has also generated interest in the movement. So too has Attorney Deadria Farmer-Paellmann’s research on the insurance companies that held policies on enslaved blacks in the 1850s has added to the reparations discussion over the last two years. The resolution on reparations sponsored by Alderman Dorothy Tillman in Chicago’s City Council received wide publicity and also generated a great deal of interest among black people in the United States regarding the demand for reparations. Finally, this visibility was further assisted by the publication of *The Debt: What America Owes To Blacks* by Randall Robinson in January, 2000.

The Reparations Movement has moved from the realm of ideas pushed by a handful of intellectuals and activists to the masses of black people. This is an indication that African people have not lost memory of the historical atrocities inflicted upon us and that we will never forget them or dismiss the continuation of this mistreatment of our people.

**NBUF’s Campaign Against Genocide**

On Friday, October 25, 1996, the National Black United Front (NBUF) held a press conference in Chicago, Illinois to announce its campaign to submit petitions to the United Nations charging the United States government with genocide. The campaign was inspired by a series of articles published in the *San Jose Mercury News* which tied the United States government to the sell of illegal drugs within predominantly black communities of Los Angeles, California. The series was given broader coverage in the September 3, 1996 issue of the *Final Call Newspaper*, a publication of the Nation of Islam. It was the coverage in the *Final Call* that brought the issue to the attention of NBUF.
The series, titled "Dark Alliance: The Story Behind The Crack Explosion," was published in three parts: "Crack Plague's Roots In Nicaraguan War," "Odd Trio Created Mass Market For 'Crack,'" and "War on Drugs' Unequal Impact On U. S. Blacks." The series implicated the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States government in a drug network that netted the government millions of dollars which it used to finance the CIA-backed Contra army of Nicaragua. The articles, authored by Gary Webb, implied a connection between the CIA, Nicaraguan drug dealers, and the sell of crack cocaine in the black community by the Crips and Bloods, two notorious black super street gangs in Los Angeles. According to Webb, the "drug network opened the first pipeline between Columbia's cocaine cartels and the Black neighborhoods of Los Angeles, a city known as the 'crack' capital of the world."

An act such as this by an agency of the United States government seems incredulous. However, there are precedences for such behavior. An issue of the Chi-Town Low Down enumerated three such instances of the U. S. government utilizing illegal drugs to further its political objectives: During World War II, the CIA's predecessor, the OSS, created the heroin connection between the mafia forces and suppliers in France; 2) In the 1960s the U. S. military intelligence modernized and restructured the golden triangle heroin and opium trade in Southeast Asia; and 3) During the 1980s, the CIA used drug connections in Pakistan to help further the cause of rebel forces in Afghanistan. 15

It was obvious to the National Black United Front that this "dark alliance" was much more than a political issue or common criminal enterprise. This was a scheme involving an agency of the United States government which targeted people of African descent for the distribution and sell of a deadly drug, crack cocaine—a scheme that has had a far-reaching, cataclysmic impact on the African community in America across the country.

Thus, after careful consideration of the evidence, historical and contemporary, the National Black United Front launched its campaign to charge the government of the United States with genocide. The precedent followed by NBUF in this regard, was the action taken by the Civil Rights Congress a half century ago.

1951 Genocide Campaign

William L. Patterson, National Executive Secretary of the Civil Rights Congress, Paul Robeson, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, and a host of others organized a genocide petition campaign that "was first presented to the world in 1951. Addressed to the United Nations, it was submitted to that body in Paris, France at the Palais Chaillot where the Fifth Session of the General Assembly had gathered."16 The historic publication, We Charge Genocide, edited by William L. Patterson, which was first published in 1951, stated that, "Simultaneously a delegation led by Paul Robeson presented copies to the office of the Secretary General of the UN in New York."17 Patterson pointed out that, "We had two aims: to expose the nature and depth of racism in the United States; and to arouse the moral conscience of progressive mankind against the inhuman treatment of Black nationals by those in high political places."18
As Ossie Davis wrote in the preface of the 1970 edition of *We Charge Genocide*: “This is not the first time the Black people of the United States have issued a warning. W. E. B. DuBois himself said plainly in 1900—the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line.” In this same connection, Davis wrote, “We say again, now: We will submit no further to the brutal indignities being practiced against us we will not be intimidated, and most certainly not eliminated.”

**NBUF’s Petition and the United Nations Genocide Definition**

NBUF’s framework, once again, took up the call to charge the United States government with genocide and was inspired by the dedication and commitment of the Black activists of the 1920s, 30s, 40s, and 50s. Thus, the heading and the content of the NBUF petition:

**Declaration of Genocide by the U.S. Government Against the Black Population in the United States.**

Whereas, We the undersigned people of African ancestry understand that the proliferation of the distribution and sale of crack cocaine by African in America street organizations has reached epidemic proportions, causing serious harm to the African Community in America. Therefore, we understand this harm can only be described as acts of genocide by the United States government through its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The resolution quoted the definition of genocide found in Article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted on December 9, 1948 (see page 5 above).

In addition to the acts of genocide perpetrated through the CIA, NBUF determined that acts of genocide could also be attributed to the government’s use of taxpayer resources to wage war on a segment of the American population. This was evidenced by the following: 1) cutting back on welfare; 2) privatization of public housing and land grab schemes; 3) privatization of public education; 4) racist immigration policies; 5) privatization of basic health care; 6) building prisons and the expanding incarceration of millions of African and Latino youth; and 7) disproportional location of environmentally hazardous, health-impacting, polluting industries, toxic waste containment facilities, and so on in poor and African communities in the United States.

**Phase I**

In Phase I of the campaign, October 25, 1996 through May 26, 1997, NBUF was able to acquire more than 157,000 signatures on the petition charging the United States government with genocide. The Petition/Declaration was officially submitted on May 21, 1997 to the Commission of Human Rights of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The NBUF delegation, led by me, consisted of Valerie Michaud, the former National Secretary of NBUF and member of the Houston Chapter of NBUF, and Somari Grace, the National Outreach Coordinator of NBUF from the Kansas City Chapter of NBUF. We were assisted by Bob Brown, National Genocide Campaign Consultant to NBUF and the Director of the Kwame Ture
Work-Study Institute and Library, and James Muhammad, the editor of the Final Call Newspaper, who traveled with us as an observer. The Petition/Declaration was processed by the Officer in Charge of the High Commission of Human Rights of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The Centre for Human Rights in Geneva is the International Headquarters for all human rights work of the United Nations.

Phase II
In Phase II of our campaign, May 26, 1997 through October 31, 1997, NBUF continued to circulate and solicit signatures on the Petition/Declaration. We also continued to aggressively research and gather data to further substantiate our charge of genocide against the United States government. In Phase II, we were able to collect over 60,000 signatures.

Phase III
Phase III of the campaign was the final phase. It began on November 1, 1997 and ended on March 6, 1998. In Phase III, we emphasized the importance of our NBUF chapters and supporters concentrating on the creation of activities and events that helped document the massive and gross human rights violations by this country against black people, further substantiating the demand for reparations.

Impact of the Genocide Campaign and International Petition to the United Nations

William Jefferson Clinton, former President of the United States, decided to speak on the question of race relations in America at the University of California at San Diego in the summer of 1997. During this period, Clinton announced the appointment of a special panel to examine race relations in America which was to be headed by noted black historian, Dr. John Hope Franklin. Further, Clinton announced he would also have a series of town hall meetings throughout the country to address this issue.

In this same connection, President Clinton responded to proposed legislation “introduced by a dozen white members of Congress who argued that a formal statement of regret (national apology to African Americans whose ancestors were sold into slavery) would help bind the wounds that still sting 134 years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves in the Confederate South.”

Clinton was quoted as saying on CNN’s Late Edition that, “An apology under the right circumstances, those things can be quite important.” Continuing, he said, “Surely every American knows that slavery was wrong, and that we paid a terrible price for it and that we had to keep repairing that....And just to say it’s wrong and that we’re sorry about it is not a bad thing. That doesn’t weaken us.”

This tradition of African leadership in this country seeking relief for our grievances through international bodies is eighty years old. Within recent years, this tradition has been carried out by the petitions to the United Nations by

It is our position that the international work of these African Liberation Movement organizations has placed tremendous pressure on the United States government to respond to the various petitions of these groups without identifying them. Through the procedures of the United Nations these official complaints are forwarded to the State Department. That means the government is fully informed as to the complaint against it by these non-governmental organizations and the nature of the complaint. In fact, through this process nations throughout the world are informed of the complaint.

Other factors that caused the United States government to respond to the condition of African people in this country as a result of international pressure, can be cited by three additional examples.

In response to these complaints and petitions, Mr. Maurice Glélé-Ahananho, United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, conducted an official mission to the United States on October 9-12, 1994, "to meet with representatives of the U.S. government and individuals in the political, economic, and social fields who were in a position to provide him with information relating to various aspects of his mandate." Mr. Glélé-Ahananho (who is from Benin in Africa) reported that, "racism and racial discrimination persist in American society, even if not as a result of a deliberate policy on the part of the United States Government." Also, he found that sociological inertia, structural obstacles and individual resistance hindering the emergence of an integrated society based on the equal dignity of the members of the American nation and willing to accept ethnic and cultural pluralism. Vested interests, competing influences and the power struggle between the various political and social components of American society also provide opportunities for residual racism and racial discrimination to linger on.

This report was widely read and generally accepted for its veracity by government leaders, scholars, and activists. The U.S. government, however, was critical of the report.


Mr. Yanshi revealed, "The U.S. Government, posing as the human rights judge of the world, turned a blind eye yet again, to the serious human rights problems in its own country and did not utter a single word about them in the report. In fact, it is the United States itself, the self
declared human rights authority, that has a very poor human rights record in the world today.30

The third example of international pressure placed on the United States concerning the condition of African people was the Million Man March, led by Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, which took place on October 16, 1995. The impact of this march around the world is yet to be determined. But it was clear that it was the most powerful demonstration in the history of this country.

If the government apologizes for their involvement in the slave trade industry, they should not stop there. The United States government should not only apologize for its participation in the Maafa and the campaign of genocide against African people, it should be prepared to begin the process of negotiating reparations to African people. This is the real issue!

It was during the summer of 1997 that the discussion of reparations due African people in America was elevated to public discussion like at no other time in the history of this country. The discussion continues to be elevated and intensified by the organizing work of reparations organizations and activists.

The December 12th Movement

The December 12th Movement International Secretariat, the International Association Against Torture, and North South XXI have official Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status with the United Nations. Over the last decade, this group has committed much of its organizing efforts to participate in the United Nations Human Rights Commission by presenting numerous issues that impact African people in America. They have been NBUF’s eyes and ears at the UN.

As Atty. Roger Wareham of the December 12th Movement recently revealed in an article circulated on the Internet, “Since 1997, when the UN agreed to hold this World Conference, the United States, Canada, and Western Europe (the WEO Group of countries) have done all they can to prevent it from succeeding.”31

In the spring of 1998, at the Africa Group meeting during the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, a resolution was drafted identifying the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade as a Crime Against Humanity. The United States, using all of its influence, succeeded in blocking the resolution. However, this did not stop the momentum throughout the African World to push for this resolution to become an official position of the United Nations World Conference Against Racism.

At the African Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Conference Against Racism, held in Dakar, Senegal (January 22-24, 2001), the African Ministers developed what is called the “Dakar Declaration.” In their deliberations, they affirmed, in part, the following:

- Affirm that the slave trade is a unique tragedy in the history of humanity, particularly against Africans—a crime against humanity which is unparalleled, not only in its abhorrent
barbaric feature, but also, in terms of its enormous magnitude, its institutionalized nature, its transnational dimension and especially its negation of the human nature of the victims.

Further affirm that the consequences of this tragedy, accentuated by those of colonialism and apartheid, have resulted in substantial and lasting economic, political, and cultural damage caused to the descendants of the victims, the perpetuation of the prejudice against Africans on the continent and people of African descent in the Diaspora.

Strongly reaffirm that States which pursued racist policies or acts of racial discrimination, such as slavery, colonialism, and apartheid, should assume their full responsibilities and provide adequate reparations to those States, communities and individuals who were victims of such racist policies or acts, regardless of when or by whom they were committed.

International law supports the position that the enslavement of Africans was a crime against humanity. The Charter of the Nuremberg Tribunal defined crimes against humanity as: "Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population...whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated."

The African Reparations Movement explains that, Historians and their experts can show, without difficulty, how the invasion of African territories, the mass capture of Africans, the horrors of the middle passage, the chattelization of Africans in America, and the extermination of the language and culture of the transported Africans, constituted violations of all these international laws.

Thus, the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade was a Crime Against Humanity, and it is clear, African people throughout the world are owed reparations.

Again, as Atty. Wareham explains,

Before the U.N. World Conferences are actually held, they are preceded by PrepCom (Preparatory Committee meetings) in the various geographical regions of the world where the actual content of the final document and program of action is worked out. All of the regional PreComs are over. In Geneva, Switzerland, a working group meeting held March 6th-9th to consider a Draft Declaration (the Durban Declaration) and tried to resolve a dispute about whether compensatory relief (i.e. reparations) should even be considered as a theme of the World Conference. This was only an issue because of U.S. and Western European opposition.

The dispute was not settled and another meeting was held in May in Geneva.

A recent New York Times article revealed, "A conference on racism this summer could be one of the most explosive meetings this organization [United Nations] has ever held,
with moves afoot to cast globalization as a racial issue and to demand reparations for the slave trade and colonialism.\textsuperscript{36}

For more than a decade, the December 12th Movement International Secretariat has fought in defense of the human rights of African people at the United Nations, in both Switzerland and New York. During this time, they have come to help us understand that while we, as African people, may not recognize the importance of the international agency to the progress of our struggle, the United States and its allies are crystal clear about it.

NBUF agrees with the December 12th Movement that we must step up our organizing efforts to attend this historic World Conference Against Racism. Our presence will definitely have an impact—a huge impact!

**The Reparations Movement Intensifies**

Throughout this country, and other parts of the African World Community, African people on a daily basis are discussing the demand for reparations. In the stores where I shop, at gas stations, on street corners, and in my daily activities, the discussion of reparations is constantly brought up. It is my observation that most African people in America, and other parts of the world, are clear that some form of reparations is due to African people for what happened to us historically and continues to happen to us in its various manifestations today.

The spirit of our ancestors has instilled in African people a profound sense of not forgetting what they endured by the assaults of the Europeans on Africa. African people seem to be clear that our ancestors became prisoners of war and "were placed in detention camps and then transported to the Americas to be enslaved by the benefactors of their captors."\textsuperscript{37} Further, African people understand that "no African began his or her ordeal as a slave. Africans were reduced to slavery by conquest."\textsuperscript{38}

Deep down in the spirit of African people a river flows; it flows through our veins causing a stirring in our souls. This stirring in our souls stimulates us to want to vindicate the capture and enslavement of our ancestors. This spirit penetrates our connection to all of our African ancestors who perished in the African Holocaust/Maafa.

The current reparations movement, in part, is a project, for all of our African ancestors who perished in this Holocaust of Enslavement in the Americas and in Africa. To those who resignedly accepted their uncertain fate. To those who refused to submit and were tortured. To those who attempted to escape and were killed [murdered]. To those who were defiant, their shouts pierced the courtyards of these slave dungeons until death spared them of a life ignominy.\textsuperscript{39}

The vindication for the African Holocaust/Maafa and the continued assaults on African people by the white supremacy forces, through the former slave trading nations of England, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and the United States have inspired African people worldwide to join the ranks of the Reparations Movement, thus causing this movement to intensify.
This intensity was felt at the Twelfth Annual Convention of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America on June 22–24, 2001 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The convention was held on the campus of Southern University, one of the historical black colleges. More than five hundred brothers and sisters from over thirty states participated with great enthusiasm during this three-day convention. The work of N’COBRA has helped spark the mass character of the Reparations Movement and its intensification, which we are witnessing today.

One of the significant highlights of the convention was the Saturday morning Sunrise Tour to the plantation corridor several miles outside of Baton Rouge. On one of the plantations, Sister Kathie Hambrick has established the River Road African/American Museum. On this plantation we were able to feel the spirits of our ancestors as we participated in the libation ritual. In part, the leader of this libation ritual led us in the ceremony with the following:

Leader: To our ancestors, in your honor
Group: We promise to assume our responsibility in continuing to struggle and build upon the foundation you have laid before us.

Leader: To our ancestors, in your honor
Group: We promise to reclaim our cultural heritage, stripped and stolen from you and us, and to rebuild a new world for our children based on our traditional cultural principles and values.  

This was a profoundly moving ceremony which greatly touched all of us.

The intensity of the Reparations Movement was also felt on Tuesday, June 19, 2001 at Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney’s Black Caucus Roundtable discussion on the upcoming United Nations World Conference Against Racism. The testimonies and presentations from Atty. Adjoa Aiyetoro of N’COBRA, Atty. Nkechi Taifa of Howard University School of Law, Viola Plummer and Atty. Roger Wareham of the December 12th Movement, Dr. Raymond Winbush of Fisk University, and myself put into perspective the spirit of our ancestors by reaffirming the position of the Africa Group Resolution.

Conclusion

As Professor John Hope Franklin has pointed out in response to an advertisement by David Horowitz in the student newsletter of a major university:

Most living Americans do have a connection with slavery. They have inherited preferential advantage, if they are white, or the loathsome disadvantage if they are Black; and those positions are virtually as alive today as they were in the 19th century. The pattern of housing, the discrimination in employment, the resistance to equal opportunity in education, the racial profiling, the inequities in the administration of justice, the low expectation of Blacks in the discharge of duties assigned to them, the widespread belief that Blacks have physical prowess but little intellectual capacities, and the widespread opposition to affirmative action, as if that had not been enjoyed by whites for three centuries, all indicate that the vestiges of slavery are still with us.
Professor Franklin added that until we address what really happened during slavery to African people “we will [continue to] suffer from the inability to confront the tragic legacies of slavery and deal with them in a forthright and constructive manner.” Fundamentally, the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery were Crimes Against Humanity and Reparations are owed African people worldwide. This crime must be addressed if we are to ever move forward as a people.

Our esteemed ancestor, Dr. John Henrik Clarke, reminded us repeatedly, that,

history is the clock that people use to tell their political and cultural time of day. It is also a clock that they use to find themselves on the map of human geography. The role of history in the final analysis is to tell a people where they have been and what they have been, where they are and what they are. Most importantly, the role of history is to tell a people where they still must go and what they still must be. To me the relationship of a people to their history is the same as the relationship of a child to its mother.

Thus, as symbolized by the Sankofa bird of the Akan, we must look backward to go forward. It is the only way that we can repair ourselves and forge a future of our own making and a world safe for human habitation.

End notes


4. Ibid., 1.

5. Ibid.


8. Ibid., 2.

9. National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations In America Membership Brochure


11. Ibid., 8.

12. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 1.


38. Ibid., 1.

39. Ibid.

40. Excerpts taken from handouts that were distributed at the River Road African/American Museum. The libation ritual is a tradition African people have developed over thousands of years. It is performed before any important occasion, celebration, gathering, et al. During this ritual, everyone present participates, the ancestors are called forth and remembered in honor and respect of the contributions and good works they made to their communities when they were living. They are called forth because their wisdom and guidance is still sought and needed.
It is also believed that the community is not complete if the ancestors are not present.


42. Ibid., 1.
