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“A Fundamental Misunderstanding”

The anxiously anticipated Interim Report of the California [Task Force to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans](#) (the report) was released this week. Like *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century*, the report is a masterful work of history. It could serve as a superb Black American history textbook because it chronicles in a very significant way the wide breadth of dastardly historical deeds that White America has visited upon Black America. Importantly, the report not only conveys the history of the nation in this regard, but also the horrendous deeds of White Californians (separately).

However, the report has several weaknesses. These shortcomings pinpoint divides that may disrupt efforts by Black and White Americans to reconcile on Reparations.

The first and most important concern with the report is that it reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of whom and what Black Americans are confronting. Simply put, Black America has been at war with White America for over 400 years. Read the report, know the history, analyze it and any sane person will conclude that a war is ongoing. It is a long and simmering war based on traditional violent warfare (killings/murders), but also on economic, educational, health,

criminal justice, and cultural warfare—and more.

In fact, a key reason Black Americans fail too often to see that we are at war is because of our Christian indoctrination. This is a story with which you should be familiar. White Supremacy as promulgated through Christianity convinced(es) Black Americans at a deep psychological level that Whites are akin to a White Jesus and God. Therefore, because Black Americans love and fear God, we cannot not love White America and we are simply unwilling to strike out at God (White Americans) to address injustices that are imposed upon us. In fact, it is this Christian mindset that must be addressed first, and it brings us to our second concern.

The report holds until its penultimate chapter (Chapter 12, “Mental and Physical Harm and Neglect”) consideration of the mental/psychological aspects of Black suffering in America. This should be the first Chapter of the report. If Black Americans can reconfigure our minds correctly to address the mental pain and suffering that we have endured, then that is the first step on the road to recovery. While White America may never extend full Reparations (however defined), even if they did, that would only be one-half of the healing. The other half is for Black Americans to reorient our minds completely about our American sojourn so that we can

put the American nightmare behind us. We must recognize that we are in an abusive relationship, and that the most fundamental required change for healing is to exit the abusive relationship.

This brings us to the report's third shortcoming. The report contains five important pages of recommendations, which are mainly aspirational directives, but there is no break with the *status quo* on report writing about Black American suffering and what to do about it. Where is the call for Black Liberation and prospects for separation? "Black Liberation" only appears once in the text proper of the report. Because Black Liberation is not addressed, the recommendations only propose tinkering around the edges of an essentially all White American socioeconomic framework, which will not place Black Americans on the path to healing.

The latter point illuminates an important disconnect in the report. Consider as an example that the report goes on *ad nauseum* in Chapter 11 ("An Unjust Legal System") concerning how the American criminal justice system is unjust to Black Americans and that our presence in the system is attributable directly or indirectly to ubiquitous anti-Black discrimination, bias, and White hate. If true, then under a banner of pure justice no Blacks would be in the system. Yet, instead of requesting a full release of Black Americans from the criminal justice system, the report's recommendations include a litany of directives that are designed to only diminish—not eradicate—the pain of incarceration. This is absurd! Open the prisons! Release them all! Of course, we can never recover the lives of those killed extrajudicially.

We will stop here on the report's shortcomings and urge you to read it. Again, we were impressed by the report, but it has many holes. We were not impressed, however, by the fact that most of the report writing and editing appears to have been performed by non-Black Americans (mainly California Attorney General Office personnel). Black Americans are demanding Reparations. Black Americans should have prepared the report.

On the other hand, the State of California, a very racist state historically, must be commended for being the first state out of the shute with a Reparations report. But there are at least two strikes against the report. First, the Interim Report will be followed by a Final Report by June 1, 2023. At that time, the entire nation may be in an economic slowdown, and the California Legislature may conclude that resources are unavailable to implement many (if any) of the recommendations. Second, Black Americans comprise less than seven percent of California's population. Consequently, that population may not be able to apply sufficient pressure to secure favorable returns from the report.

Before the Final Report is released, we hope that the Task Force will consider the points made in this commentary. If not, then the report will continue to reflect the fundamental misunderstanding to which we alluded. Such a misunderstanding portends unfortunate ends for those at war. Slavery in its many attendant forms places the slave and the slaver at war. Black America is at war with White America. If a historically untrustworthy White America becomes trustworthy and the war approaches an end, then this may usher in a day for Reparations.

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