

John Legend's Statement - House Judiciary Subcommittee's Hearing on H.R. 40

Dear Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Subcommittee Chairman Steve Cohen, and Chairman Jerrold Nadler,

Thank you all for holding this important hearing today on H.R. 40, which marks the beginning of an important path forward towards restorative justice in our nation.

H.R. 40 was introduced to create a commission to study the legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its continuing impact on the African American community. It was introduced to begin to explore federal options to repay slavery's compounding moral debts and, thereby, to heal divisions left by the darkest chapters in our national history.

*Sixty-five years since *Brown v. Board of Education*, and half a century after Congress adopted civil rights laws prohibiting second-class citizenship, widespread disparities persist across wealth, education, and health and are almost entirely attributable to policies which have yet to be remedied following our nation's history of slavery.*

Too many individuals and communities have been disadvantaged due to their family's history of arriving to this land or due to the color of their skin and economic status. Too many families, including my own, have suffered for decades due to mass incarceration, the manifestation of modern day slavery.

As a country, we've made some positive strides since slavery was abolished. We still have a long way to go. The time is now for our nation to study and acknowledge the effects and impact of slavery in America. The time is now to shed light on our shared truths, to enable healing through a national reckoning, and to embrace and uplift our shared humanity.

H.R. 40 is a critical, first-of-its-kind piece of legislation. It will go beyond exploring the economic implications of slavery and segregation. It will serve as a holistic inquiry to address the gaping wound in the soul of America; one that demands to be healed now.

I'm glad the Committee is having these discussions today, and am grateful for the opportunity to join this conversation. I look forward to more progress to come.

*Thank you,
John Legend*