

I am deeply honored to be here today offering my testimony at this historical meeting about the reckoning of a crime against humanity that was foundational to the development of democracy and material wellbeing in this country.

A national reparations policy is a moral, democratic and economic imperative.

I stand here as the great grandson of former slave Mary Brown who was freed with the Emancipation proclamation on January 1, 1863. I also stand here as the grandson of Reese Mae Hunley and Rufus Mack Hunley, my maternal grandparents who were both born before the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision in 1896. For a significant portion of their lives they were sharecroppers and tenant farmers in rural Georgia, until they saved enough money to purchase a small farm.

Despite much progress over the century, this hearing is yet another important step in the long and heroic struggle of African Americans to secure reparations for the damages inflicted by enslavement and post-emancipation and racially exclusionary policies.

Many of the organizations who are present today at this hearing are amongst the historical contributors to the present national discourse, congressional deliberations and Democratic Party presidential campaign policy discussions about reparations.

We are also indebted to the work of Congressman John Conyers for shepherding this legislation. The adoption of HR-40 can be a signature legislative achievement especially within the context of the United Nations International Decade for People of African descent.

We should also note that the Common Market Nations and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Reparations Commission, Chaired by Professor Sir Hilary Beckles - who is here with us today - has exercised a leadership role from which we as a nation can benefit.

{GLOVER ADDITION HERE – 30 SECONDS }

I close with the insightful and still relevant words of Martin Luther King in 1968:

WHY IS THE ISSUE OF EQUALITY STILL SO FAR FROM SOLUTION IN AMERICA, A NATION THAT PROFESSES ITSELF TO BE DEMOCRATIC, INVENTIVE, HOSPITABLE TO NEW IDEAS, RICH, PRODUCTIVE AND AWESOMELY POWERFUL? ...

JUSTICE FOR BLACK PEOPLE WILL NOT FLOW INTO SOCIETY MERELY FROM COURT DECISIONS NOR FROM FOUNTAINS OF POLITICAL ORATORY. NOR WILL A FEW TOKEN CHANGES QUELL ALL THE TEMPESTUOUS YEARNINGS OF MILLIONS OF DISADVANTAGED BLACK PEOPLE. WHITE AMERICA MUST RECOGNIZE THAT JUSTICE FOR BLACK PEOPLE CANNOT BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT RADICAL CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF OUR SOCIETY. THE COMFORTABLE, THE ENTRENCHED, THE PRIVILEGED CANNOT CONTINUE TO TREMBLE AT THE PROSPECT OF CHANGE IN THE STATUS QUO.”