

House Judiciary Committee

Hearing on Hate Crimes, White Nationalism, and White Supremacy

April 9, 2017

Good morning. Chairman Nadler. Ranking Member Collins

It is a great honor to be here this morning. I am President of the Equal Justice Society, a national racial justice organization located in Oakland California. We often watch these hearings and are startled at how much rancor exists between the two parties.

I have a favor to ask of the Democrats and the Republicans and ask for a brief moment of silence before I start..... For the next five minutes, I would like you all to give me the benefit of the doubt. I want you to listen as Americans who are trying to heal our nation and not as partisan enemies.

Rather than list my credentials, I want to tell you who I am. I was born in your state Representatives Jackson Lee, Escobar, Garcia, Gohmert in San Antonio Texas. My Dad was in the Air Force and served in Vietnam. I went to desegregated schools on military bases in England, France, and Illinois. I am also a Christian. Please do not dismiss me as a coastal elite. I come in peace.

Some of the things I am going to share with you are going to be hard to hear but please know I am representing the views of many Black people and our allies.

In August, 1619, four hundred years ago, 20 enslaved Africans arrived at Jamestown, Virginia. In order to sell, rape, lynch, and beat these Africans, white Americans-and yes I know that none of you owned slaves-had to see us as less than human. Thomas Jefferson described me and my ancestors as follows: they have no tenderness in their love; their grief is fleeting; they are intellectually inferior; and they are physically unattractive. Professor Shauna Marshall of Hastings College of the Law asserts that a narrative that Black people were only good for physical labor and were violent and sub-human had to be developed in order to justify slavery. White supremacy began. Many people still hold these racist views of African-Americans.

At our country's founding in 1776, slavery and white supremacy were features not bugs. I will now talk about how politics including the three branches of the federal government have played a role in the perpetuation of white supremacy and the continued mistreatment of Black people either through action or inaction.

In 1787, the US Supreme Court endorsed white supremacy in the Dred Scott decision by ruling that Black people have no rights that white people need respect.

Ultimately slavery ended and Reconstruction efforts began. Black men could vote. There were Black members of Congress. Then politics reared its ugly head in the election of 1876 when a deal was struck to withdraw federal troops from the South in exchange for installing Rutherford B. Hayes as president. The reign of terror began in the South. The KKK was formed-a terrorist organization that lynched Black people and made sure we did not vote.

The NAACP called upon Congress to pass anti lynching legislation. Congress refused.

Fast forward to 1964-our fellow Texan LBJ helped pass the Civil Rights Act. He famously said when he signed the bill that "We (Democrats) have lost the South for a generation."

Six years later, the Southern Strategy was devised to encourage white people to abandon the Democratic Party and vote for the GOP. It was a shrewd and effective political strategy but it drove yet another wedge between Black and white people.

Fast forward to 2008-Barack Obama. America elects a Black President. Unfortunately, this proved unsettling in that some white people who felt superior to Black folks had to deal with a Black President and a Black family in the White House.

In 2015, Donald Trump begins his campaign by calling Mexicans rapists. He tried to keep Muslims from entering the country. When white supremacists marched in Charlottesville chanting "Jews will not replace us" and "Blood and Soil"-a slogan right out of the Nazi playbook, Mr. Trump says there are good people on both sides. He recently called asylum seekers animals.

Dylann Roof goes into a place of worship and murders Black souls who were praying with him. Jews are massacred in the Tree of Life Synagogue on the Sabbath. Muslims are slaughtered as they start prayer in peaceful New Zealand.

White supremacy is alive and well. We want the Congress to take bipartisan action to denounce it. My written remarks have specific recommendations. We would like the Supreme Court to once again protect the interests of people of color. Chief Justice Roberts when you dismantled the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County v Holder*, your assertion that racism has been eradicated was just plain wrong. Please speak with Judge Bernice Donald of the Sixth Circuit who writes and speaks extensively on the resilience of racism.

We are hopeful that a majority of you who want to give the country a signal that we are “One nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.”

Thank you.