



**Task Force to Study and Develop
Reparation Proposals for African Americans
Hearing on Mental Health
January 28, 2022**

Overview of Testimony of
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Confronting the Root Cause of Anti-Black Racism

My name is Enola G. Aird. I am the founder and president of Community Healing Network (CHN). In my testimony, I will argue that, in the search for reparation proposals, it is essential to focus our attention on the driving force behind:

1. the European trade in African human beings that began in the 15th century;
2. the enslavement of Africans in the Americas from the 15th through the 19th centuries;
3. the brutal mistreatment of Black people during the Jim Crow era, from the 19th through the mid-20th centuries; and
4. the persistent devaluing of Black lives since the formal end of Jim Crow up to the present moment.

The driving force is the lie that Black people are inferior.

That lie is at the root of what the AB 3121 summary describes as the “legacy of slavery and racial discrimination [that] has resulted in debilitating economic, educational, and health hardships that are uniquely experienced by African Americans.” The lie of Black inferiority was first committed to writing by the Portuguese in the 1400s as they launched the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Their aim was to justify the enslavement and exploitation of Africans. For many Europeans, the lie helped to resolve the inherent contradictions between Christianity and the enslavement of human beings. For many Americans, it also resolved the contradictions between enslavement and the ideal of equality set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

The lie led to a ranking of human beings—with White people at the very top and Black people at the very bottom, and, all too often, not even in the human family. The lie essentially cast Black people out of the circle of humanity—and justified the mistreatment of Black people for more than 600 years around the world and 400 years here in the United States.

The lie is still at work today—adversely affecting the world’s perceptions of Black people and, all too often, our perceptions of ourselves. It has been the source of multi-generational harm and trauma for Black people. It is the thread that runs—invisibly—throughout the whole fabric of systemic anti-Blackness. The lie is the reason why, several years ago, in experiments that subliminally flashed photos of Black or White male faces on a screen to “prime” college students, researchers found a consistent association between Black people and apes. They found no ape association with White people or other non-White people. According to study co-author, Stanford University psychologist Jennifer Eberhardt, “there is one old race battle that we’re still fighting. That is the battle for blacks to be recognized as fully human.”

Launched in 2006, CHN is building the global grassroots movement for emotional emancipation—mobilizing Black people to heal from, and end, the trauma caused by the lie. Our aim is to end the centuries-old association between blackness and inferiority, and to restore the association between blackness and humanity. This is CHN’s overarching vision and mission.

CHN has developed a range of strategies to build the global movement for freedom from the lie, including:

- the **Defy the Lie of Black Inferiority and Embrace the Truth of Black Humanity** public education and pledge campaign;
- **Emotional Emancipation (EE) Circles**—a culturally-grounded self-help healing and support group process, originated by CHN and developed in collaboration with our colleagues at the Association of Black Psychologists to help Black people heal from the specific trauma caused by the lie. The EE Circle process has been endorsed by sister organizations including the All-Healers Mental Health Alliance, Black Psychiatrists of America, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, and the National Association of Black Social Workers.
- **The Valuing Black Lives Global Emotional Emancipation Summit**—to bring together Black people from across the African Diaspora to develop a common global approach to freeing ourselves, our children, and the world from the lie—once and for all; and
- **Community Healing/Wear Sky Blue Days**—an annual observance (on the third weekend of every October) launched by CHN in 2008 and endorsed by the late Dr. Maya Angelou, to put “time for healing” from the emotional damage caused by the lie at the top of the global Black community’s agenda.

Because of the lie, Black people have, for centuries, had to make the best of living in an emotionally damaging, anti-Black world. The lie is at the heart of the crime against the humanity of African people. The harm caused by the lie is the fundamental damage that must be repaired, and the greatest harm for which we are owed reparations—what we call “emotional reparations.”